

Juana Alicia Araiza was born in Newark, New Jersey in the year 1953, to immigrant parents. Although very little is known about this talented multi-cultural American artist, Juana Alicia Araiza was inspired by Martin Luther King to lead her own social rights movement. After Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in April 4, 1968, this tragic episode became a motivation for her to stand in solidarity with the Mexican-American, chicano and Filipino community farm workers movements. She was later offered an opportunity to work for the United Farm Workers Union in the City of Salinas California. Similarly to her career as an art performer in the early 1970's, she found overlapping factors that farmers were facing as well, such as; discrimination, poverty and lack of education. Juana Alicia attributes her strong advocacy spirit to her mother, an attorney at law, who fought for different laborers sectors in the Detroit community. Her passions as a socialist, artist, muralist and educator continue to be her main focuses, and her professional demeanor is to uphold her beliefs and convictions by creating art that reflects and recognizes her Mexican-American culture.

Juana Alicia grew up in Detroit, Michigan, a city known for its artistic historical murals, the same ones that inspired Juana Alicia as an adolescent to become an artist herself, she attributes her inspiration to Diego Rivera's murals, which are located in this city. She received her masters degree in Fine arts, in the San Francisco Art Institute. Nevertheless, her beginnings as an artist started off differently. In 1971, she was invited to contribute to work for the United Farm Workers Union, in the city of Salinas California, where she shared her artistic talents as a printmaker for the laborer unofficial newspaper called "["El Malcriado"](#) by Cesar Chavez, this paper depicted revolutionary art, and critical messages in favor to the farm workers community. During these social movements, Juana Alicia also chose to contribute to work in the fields, picking strawberries, lettuce and celery from the years 1971 to 1976. This gave her the opportunity as a worker to witness workers exploitation, which included sexual harassment episodes against vulnerable women; during these years she advocated for field workers as well.

In effect, these life events motivated her advocacy to become stronger as an activist and muralist, but her devotions and inspirations became a platform to shape her career. Juana Alicia has had the opportunity to teach art in several northern California universities, and foreign countries as well, like Mexico, and Nicaragua, where she did individual art, collective, and community murals. Consequently, Merida, Yucatan, has culturally opened a special place for her, and this has given her the opportunity to teach design, and practice Chicano mural techniques, at the *Escuela Superior de Artes de Yucatán*, a state that houses her for extended seasons of the year. It is important to remark that for over the past forty years, Juana Alicia's strong character has allowed her to reflect back on her beginnings, which have been social causes, and climate change awareness. Juana Alicia wants to leave a legacy behind by bringing awareness to future generations' consciousness about social issues (Watch, "["Interview with Artist](#)

["Juana Alicia Entrevista a la artista Juana Alicia"](#)).

Her *fresco* style, art techniques allow her to portray social justice messages as a manifesto, the vast majority of these murals are located in the California Bay Area. In 1983, Juana Alicia created her most memorable art mural titled "Las Lechugueras." which was located in the City of San Francisco California a mural that honors



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farm workers, where men and women are harvesting lettuce, including a pregnant woman being exposed to the chemical pesticides from a crop-duster plane above the fields contaminating everyone, and everything around it, in fact she was one of the many pregnant women, who was silently being poisoned by the field pesticides during her first pregnancy. This amazing mural is by far a clear representation of the hard labor, struggles of many immigrants and chicanos in this country that have dedicated their lives to fields. "Las Lechugueras" mural was replaced by another mural called "La llorona's Sacred Waters." A mural that depicts social women's struggles, drowning silently, and being ignored by their struggles, claiming justice to the sea, another woman drowning her children into the unknown.



In conclusion, this talented artist was presented in a list of other thirty three talented artists in class; however, Juana Alicia's passionate story captivated me enormously. She is not only a talented artist, but a dedicated social activist that creates art stories that unify, and educate others. She is a woman of many talents that will continue to illustrate, and voice out social injustices that are relevant to our community. Juana Alicia is an essential community leader to the remembrance of the

labor civil rights movements where she fought along with Cesar Chavez. Her mission is to continue to motivate others in ways that they can be socially connected, and responsible citizens for positive historical changes, especially in Mexican-American, Chicanx communities. Therefore, it is important to recognize the job that Juana Alicia has done to continue to be part of an active team that is crucial to the social equality causes.

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