



Contact: Renee Fajardo. 720329.0869 [Jtoh2016@gmail.com](mailto:Jtoh2016@gmail.com)

## Denver, Co.-Colorado Aztec Community Mourning Loss Mexica dance icon Raul Chavez Portillo

The Colorado Aztec dance community is mourning the loss of renowned Mexica dance icon and curandero, Raul Chavez Portillo who died on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Chavez was born on 02/29/1952 in Mazatlán Mexico into a family of Mexica Aztec danzantes and healers. He was given the name of Tlaloc at the age of five by his grandfather, in order to preserve the traditions of his ancestors. He spent his formative years studying and perfecting his knowledge and skills.

In 1969 he immigrated to Colorado and in 1981 helped local Chicano youth establish their own danzante group, under his family name of Grupo Tlaloc, he remained with them for a decade. In 1992 he formed a small family dance group under the name of Huitzilopochtli.

Huitzilopochtli's circle is currently made up of dancers from Mexico and Colorado, along with their families, and those that have been guided to this path. Every year Grupo Huitzilopochtli donates more than 600 volunteer hours to neighborhoods, churches, food banks, and nonprofits. Chavez helped communities from Topeka Kansas to Breckenridge Colorado to MSU Denver and state-wide kick start their own Día de Los Muertos celebrations many years before the holiday was popular. He believed this holiday was a means to connect all people to their common humanity. Chavez also was a yearly participant for 25 years at the free Aurora Fox Theater Cultural Concerts series, where made his last performance on May 4th for the Colorado Folk Arts Council.

Chavez guided Grupo Huitzilopochtli on a journey to enrich the lives of thousands of Mexican/Chicano youth and their families, as they struggled to connect to their cultural roots. Chavez always maintained an open-door policy, welcoming all who wished to join his troupe, regardless of their ancestry. He recognized the indigenous heritage of all people and he embraced diversity while striving to instill community stewardship and tolerance.

In 2013 Chavez was the Cesar Chavez Peace and Justice Committee of Denver, *Male Leadership* recipient. "To Raul as a society, we are one. Even though we are not all blood-related, we are a family. Even when you're not a part of the group, just being near him you can feel the energy given off, that sends a strong bond through anyone who meets Raul. He fights for the peace and dignity of his community and fights to better the lives of the working people. He welcomes all to his group" stated a young MSU Denver student Lisa Rosales in 2012 when writing his nomination letter.

In 2016 the Denver's Mayors Awards for Excellence in the Arts honored Chavez's group Huitzilopochtli with the 2016 ARTS & CULTURE IMPACT AWARD. He was instrumental in *bridging*

*the gap between Mexican youth and Chicano/Colorado youth, demonstrating for the past 40 years how the arts can heal through cultural inclusivity and respect for one another.*

Recently Chavez, after years of searching for a permanent home to practice, relocated his dance troupe to Lakewood United Methodist Church in the 40 West Arts Dist. He followed long-time partners Chicano Humanities and Arts Council, Fiesta Colorado, and the Pirate Art Gallery here to help establish a Latinx presence in the neighborhood.

He leaves behind a legacy of compassion, inclusivity, and kindness. His services take place on Thurs. May 19<sup>th</sup> and are open to the public.

### **Raul Chavez Celebration of Life May 19, 2022**

Latina Funeral 3020 Federal Blvd.

9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Viewing at 9 am-11 am

Funeral Service Mass at 11:30 am

Danzantes Tribute 12:30 pm -2 pm

Graveside Service Crown Hill Cemetery 2:30 pm

7777 W. 29th Ave.

Wheat Ridge, CO 80215

For more information contact [jtoh2016@gmail.com](mailto:jtoh2016@gmail.com)

A Go Fund Me has been established to help with funeral cost

#### **CHAC (Chicano Humanities and Arts Council) Gallery**

*Mailing Address: PO Box 140847, Edgewater CO 80214 Phone Number: 720-662-4822*

*CHAC is an inclusive community of all creatives that are dedicated to preserving, showcasing, educating and reflecting the essence of Chicana/o/x, Latina/o/x and other multicultural/multiracial communities.*

*We are a 501(c)(3) Non Profit! All support comes from people like you! We truly appreciate your help to keep CHAC's doors open to the community!*