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Synopsis

In a small town in Mexico, once a year, men transform into women and become the Chuntá. Follow two gender-bending gangs of dancers as they face off in a struggle between queer identity and powerful traditions.

Press release

New Gender-bending Mexican Film Challenges Stereotypes

“We don’t know why men began dressing up as women,’ says Gerardo Madrigal, as he looks out over the river running through his hometown in Mexico. He is one of thousands of men who undergo stunning transformations during a traditional festival held every year, known simply as the Fiesta Grande. Later, his wife puts the finishing touches on his makeup before he steps out into a cheering crowd.” [...] Read the full press release online at:

<https://laschunta.com/2019/03/03/press-release-march-2019/>



“There’s a cost for the Chuntas going against gender roles and machismo, and coming out as homosexual. People don’t like it because it makes them uncomfortable. Traditional celebrations like the Fiesta Grande can help us to raise consciousness about this.”

– José Eliezer Esponda Cáceres, pictured above

Photos

Film stills:

[Online](#)

[Google drive](#)

Photos of screenings:

[Online](#)

[Google Drive](#)

[Headshots](#)

Additional info

Duration: 61 minutes

Location: Filmed in Chiapa de Corzo,
Chiapas, Mexico

Genre: Documentary, drama

Language: Spanish with English subtitles

English title: The Chunta

Spanish title: Las Chuntá



“It’s about accepting ourselves just as we are. Respecting each other, and dancing with joy. For me it’s a very emotional thing to do a fertility dance. It means belonging to the earth, belonging in this world.” – Isauro Vidal. Above, Chunta dancers Isauro Vida (L) and Domingo Flores (R) prepare their paper headdresses. Photo by Genevieve Roudané

Video files

Trailer

[Online \(Vimeo\)](#)

[Video file \(Google Drive\)](#)

Night scene

[Online \(Vimeo\)](#)

[Video file \(Google Drive\)](#)

Screeener

- Screeener available by request, contact us at chuntachiapas@gmail.com
- Screeener available to festivals on our [FilmFreeway](#) and [Withoutabox](#) pages

In depth interviews

[Online \(Spanish only\)](#)



“I made this film as part of my dream of breaking down the wall between queer communities in the U.S. and Mexico,” says Roudané. “We need stories about LGBT people from around the world– their hopes and dreams, everyday lives and everyday struggles. We need to challenge stereotypes about Latinx identity and sexuality. I hope that this story can part of the fight for LGBT visibility, rights, and happiness.” -- Genevieve Roudané. Above: director Genevieve Roudané listens to an audience member, alongside Chunta dancers Fabian Chairó, Isauro Vidal, and Domingo Flores.

Bio

Genevieve Roudané is a queer filmmaker who has worked as director, cinematographer, editor, educator, and organizer on diverse productions across the Americas over the past decade. She is the director of the documentary film *The Chunta*, the story of a queer gang of gender-bending dancers fighting to exist in southern Mexico. Roudané’s work focuses on the intersection of art and activism, and she has been a part of grassroots media organizing projects in Mexico and Central America. She is a co-leader of the Portland chapter of Film Fatales. Roudané is a member of Women in Film, the Mexican Documentary Filmmakers Network, and the Women Behind the Camera cooperative; co-founder of Proyecto Medusa and the Ocote Film Festival; and founding member of Cine Catrina productions.

[Additional crew bios available online here](#)

Director's Statement

Now is the time for films that challenge stereotypes about queer communities, Latinx people, and all those whose identities challenge societal norms. In a time of news cycles filled with hate, this new story of brotherhood and creativity is revolutionary.

As a queer woman and independent film director, I believe in breaking expectations: I believe in women leading, innovating, and continuing to build a thriving film community for all filmmakers and audiences. I made this film as part of my dream of breaking down the wall between queer communities in the U.S. and Mexico. We need stories about LGBT people from around the world— their hopes and dreams, everyday lives and everyday struggles. We need to challenge stereotypes about Latinx identity and sexuality. This film is a powerful tool in the broader fight for LGBT visibility, rights, and happiness. We also need more female and LGBT filmmakers. As a queer woman and independent filmmaker, I have faced many challenges, but the support of a team of women and genderqueer crew members continues to inspire me.

My style as a film director is greatly influenced by my background as an anthropologist, as an editor, as an activist, and as an artist. I prioritize listening, observing, and participating together with the subjects of my film before shaping my interpretation of events. My work style often involves spending much more time with the camera turned off, building relationships that will allow me to access the heart of a story respectfully. As a director, I communicate the importance of communication and consent to my crew when interacting with subjects, especially in their homes, their sacred spaces, and when capturing intimate details of their story. For example, I spent three years filming *The Chunta* documentary, but prior to that I spent four years attending ceremonies, marches, shared meals, and community events to get to know as much as possible and tell the story in the way it deserved to be told.



Director Genevieve Roudané, above, speaking with Chunta dancer Josué Moises at a film screening.

Photo credit: Elena Martínez.

Credits

Special thanks to Esther Noriega Molina and Gerardo Madrigal Nigenda
And all of the Chuntá from Chiapa de Corzo, Chiapas.

Director: Genevieve Roudané

Editors: Genevieve Roudané and Madely Trujillo

Producers: Genevieve Roudané, Catalina Ausin, Cecilia Monroy Cuevas, Kristian Sibast

Principal interviews with: Esther Noriega Molina, José Domingo Flores, José Eliezer Esponda Cáceres, Saraf Hernández Hernández, Isauro Vida, Mario Artemio Aguilar Nandayapa, Gerardo Madrigal Nigenda

Additional interviews with: Esteban Madrigal, Edilberto Molino Santiago, Josué Moisés Borbolla, Juan Carlos Rodríguez Soriano, Cruz Manuel Centeno Camas, Martín Aníbal Vázquez Jiménez, Rutilo Vila Pérez

Traditional music interpreted by: Daniel y sus Tamborileros de Cunduacán

Cinematography: Genevieve Roudané, Catalina Ausin, Cecilia Monroy Cuevas

Production Assistants: Madely Trujillo, Alma Valeria Ruíz, Cristina Megchun, Raquel Hernández, Alejandro René Gómez Aldama, Sam Smith, Ana Hernández, Nestor Jimenez, Marissa Revilla, Gladis Hernández

Audio postproduction: Manuel Antonio Durán Cruz

Script advisors: Madely Trujillo, Alejandro René Gómez Aldama, Cecilia Monroy Cuevas, Medhin Tewolde Serrano

Technical support: ProMedios de Comunicación Comunitaria, Koman Ilei, Kinoki Foro Cultural Independiente, Cecilia Monroy Cuevas, Tim Russo, José Manuel Gómez Aldama, Eloy Orantes Hospedaje, transporte, y alimentación: María Alejandra Aldama Pérez, Esther Noriega Molina, Domingo Flores, Isauro Vidal

Post Production coordinator: Madely Trujillo

Post Production volunteers: Sam Smith, Katherine Wu, Rosemary Sokolov, Caroline Blair, Sam Law

Transcripts: Genevieve Roudané, Ana Isabel Guadarrama, Medhin Tewolde Serrano, Francisco Vázquez, Alma Valeria Ruíz, Néstor Jiménez

Subtitles and Translation: Genevieve Roudané, Francisco Vázquez

Festivals and premieres

***The Chunta* (World premiere, English language version)**

Panorámica Stockholms Latinamerikanska filmfestival, Stockholm, Sweden: September 2018.

***The Chunta* (U.S. premiere, English language version)**

Portland Film Festival, Portland, Oregon, USA: October 2018.



***Las Chuntá* (World premiere, Spanish language version)**

MIC Género festival, Mexico City, Mexico: August 2017.

Other festival screenings

- San Diego Latino Film Festival (USA)
- qFLIX Philadelphia (USA)
- La Muestra Internacional de Cine con Perspectiva de Género (Mexico and Argentina)
- El Festival de Cine de Mujeres de Zaragoza (Spain)
- Panoramica Latin American Film Festival (Sweden)
- Ocote Miradas Encendidas (Mexico)
- OutFest Perú (Peru)
- MIX México Festival Internacional por la Diversidad Sexual (Mexico)
- Cinema Queer (Sweden)
- Espacio Queer (Argentina)
- Festival Internacional de Cine Queer, Monterrey (Mexico)

Special community screenings

- Kinoki Foro Cultural Independiente (Mexico)
- El Centro Cultural Ex Convento de Santo Domingo (Mexico)
- Semana de Cine en tu barrio Campeche y Quintana Roo (Mexico)
- Colectivo Nosotres (Cuba)
- El Chopo Museum (Mexico)
- La Universidad Intercultural de Chiapas (Mexico)



FAQ

Who are the Chuntá?

The Chuntá is a traditional female character that is reenacted every year by thousands of men (and some women) during a celebration known as the Fiesta Grande in the town of Chiapa de Corzo, Chiapas, Mexico.

What are the Chuntá's origins?

There are two main explanations about the origins of the Chuntá: one is a local legend, the other is a hypothesis about the indigenous roots of the practice. According to legend, the Chuntá represent the indigenous servants of a Spanish woman, Maria de Angulo. The legend has it that in the 1700s, Maria de Angulo traveled to Chiapas with her sick son, and after a local healer cured him, she threw a huge celebration to thank the town, which was facing a famine. The Chuntá announce the beginning of the celebration, known as the Fiesta Grande, by dancing through the streets, handing out food to local spectators.

The contemporary Fiesta Grande is celebrated from January 8th-23rd in honor of Saint Sebastian. As in other parts of Latin America, the Catholic church often superimposed saints onto preexisting pagan deities. Some scholars and local historians believe that the origins of the Chuntá are connected to precolonial indigenous celebrations in honor of their calendar's New Year, and that the cross-dressing Chuntá figure was part of the symbolism of a time of year when rules could be broken and roles reversed.

What does Chuntá mean?

The word “Chunta” (pronounced choon-*tah*) is reportedly from the indigenous Chiapaneca language. Most claim that it means “servant.” Others sources claim that the name comes from the word *shaunta*, which translates roughly to “dressed backwards,” possibly a reference to the tradition of men dressing as women. The word “Chuntá” is generally used for both the both singular and plural; variations include “Chuntás,” “Chuntae,” and “Chuntaes.”

Are the Chuntá men or women? Gay or straight?

One cannot know a chuntá’s gender identity or sexual orientation just by looking at them. During the festival, people with diverse identities dress in similar costumes, and it becomes particularly important not to make assumptions. Traditionally, the Chuntá have been represented by straight men dressed as women. Today, thousands of people dance as Chuntá, and they may be of any gender and any sexual orientation. This includes men, women, boys, and girls; straight, gay, bisexual, asexual, and questioning people; transgender and cis people, as well as and people who identify outside of the gender binary.

Is Chuntá an identity?

The Chuntá is not an identity, it is a symbolic character that is part of Chiapa de Corzo’s annual celebration. People dress as the Chuntá only during the festival, not as part of their daily lives. In this way, it differs from the Muxe in Oaxaca or other third genders in cultures around the world.

Where are the Chuntá from?

The Chuntá are part of a large festival known as the Fiesta Grande, which takes place every year in the town of Chiapa de Corzo, in the state of Chiapas, on Mexico’s southern border.

Links

Website: www.laschunta.com

Facebook:

[@thechunta: www.facebook.com/thechunta](https://www.facebook.com/thechunta) (English)

[@laschunta: www.facebook.com/laschunta](https://www.facebook.com/laschunta) (Spanish)

Instagram:

[@thechunta: www.instagram.com/thechunta](https://www.instagram.com/thechunta)

Press

- [Press release](#)
- “The Chunta” review in [Reed College Magazine](#)
- [“The Harsh Reality of the Chuntas.”](#) in The Mesa Press
- [Spanish interview on Univision TV](#)
- [Buscando America Spanish radio interview](#) on KBOO Radio (around minute 60)
- Broadly article: [“The Queer Dancers Fighting to Take Part in an Annual Gender-Bending Celebration”](#) (note: article uses former, working title of film)
- Reed College: [“Anthro Alumni Make Documentary Film in Chiapas, Mexico”](#)
- The Portland Tribune: [“The Chunta Transforms Tradition”](#)

Contact

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View press kit online at <https://laschunta.com/explore/press/>