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The Taíno Experience

By [Teresa Carbajal...](#), Austin Latino Neighborhoods Examiner
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... and the dead shall rise
 Photo: Gabriel Gaytan

I came into foreign language teaching by way of need. As a graduate student working on a Master's degree in Spanish literature & linguistics, I was awarded an assistantship that necessitated the teaching of Spanish 101, 102, and their accompanied labs. Hijole! Not in my plans. To stand in front of a class, full of mostly freshmen, and teach Spanish vocabulary and grammar to students that were only there because of a degree requirement, talk about hazing!

However, I needed the funds to continue my plan. That was, to become a feminist writer, living a single's life back in

Mexico, and giving the Mexican male traditionalist an earful. Ha! If you know me, you know that I have a wonderful partner and we have five stimulating children. I write, however I write to share my culturist views.

Nevertheless, I was pleasantly surprised that I enjoyed my teaching assistantship. The graduate mentor and director of our group of TAs was phenomenal, Dr. Richard Curry. I am certain he continues to be a unique treasure for the Department of Hispanic Studies at Texas A&M University. Dr. Curry had an intuitive way of knowing each of our diverse personalities and talents and used this knowledge to guide and instruct us in our teaching. He made me realize that although teaching was not in my future's reality, it lending itself to what was on my agenda. He had my *modus operandi* pegged. My agenda and manner of working was, and continues to be, the sharing of cultural experiences in order to promote the appreciation of diverse cultures, ethnicities, races, and genders. A cultural experience is not void of the culture's language(s) and learning a foreign language does not only require the memorization of vocabulary and grammar, most importantly, it requires the experience of the people giving the language life. Hence the ability to teach a foreign language demands a sharing of its culture(s). A quick shout out to Dr. Curry and a *caluroso agradecimiento*.

Herewith, I will share a cultural experience with you and invite you to join me.

Last weekend I attended a cultural workshop with an intriguing title, Taino 101: History, Myth & Reality. Sponsored by the Puerto Rican Folkloric Dance & Cultural Center and presented by the center's director, Dr. Ana María Tekina-eirú Maynard. Tekina-eirú is a blood descendant of the native Tainos from the island Borikén, known as Puerto Rico. She has devoted her energies to sharing her Taino heritage & culture with the Austin community, Central Texas, nationally, and abroad. Together with her Borikén pueblo, she has worked to change the perception that the Tainos did not survive the Spanish Conquest of the Americas. Through the 2010 Census the Tainos have made a strong effort to be counted as surviving indigenous people in the Western Hemisphere.

Taino heritage and descendants have grown to an identified 61% Puerto Rican population, and many more unknown, with the sharing of the Taino reality. Since 1992, El Concilio Taino Guatu-Ma-cu A Borikén, a 501c3, has been working to "bring awareness and increase public knowledge of the Taíno people through education and the restoration and sharing of our culture." Reviving of the Taino consciousness in Puerto Rico and abroad has given many the opportunity to recognize their roots, to take pleasure in the wondrous traditions passed down through generations, and to return into the Cordillera Central mountains of the island and experience the ceremonial grounds and petroglyphs in mountain caves. To others, El Concilio Taino's mission gifts the opportunity to share in this indigenous experience and connection between us.

Saturday, August 21, 2010, the Puerto Rican Folkloric Dance & Cultural Center will again open its doors to the Austin community and share the film premier of "...and the dead shall rise." A documentary about the efforts of the Chicano Movement to revive the indigenous tradition throughout US communities, "...and the dead shall rise" guides the viewer through the "literal rebirth of practices once thought lost in a remote time." A panel discussion will follow with the film's producers, Carlos Aceves and Gabriel S. Gaytán and Dr. Ana María Tekina-eirú Maynard.

Saturday, August 21, 2010

Puerto Rican Folkloric Dance & Cultural Center

701 Tillery Street, Austin, TX 78702

7 PM

FREE

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