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The Day of the Dead in the United States

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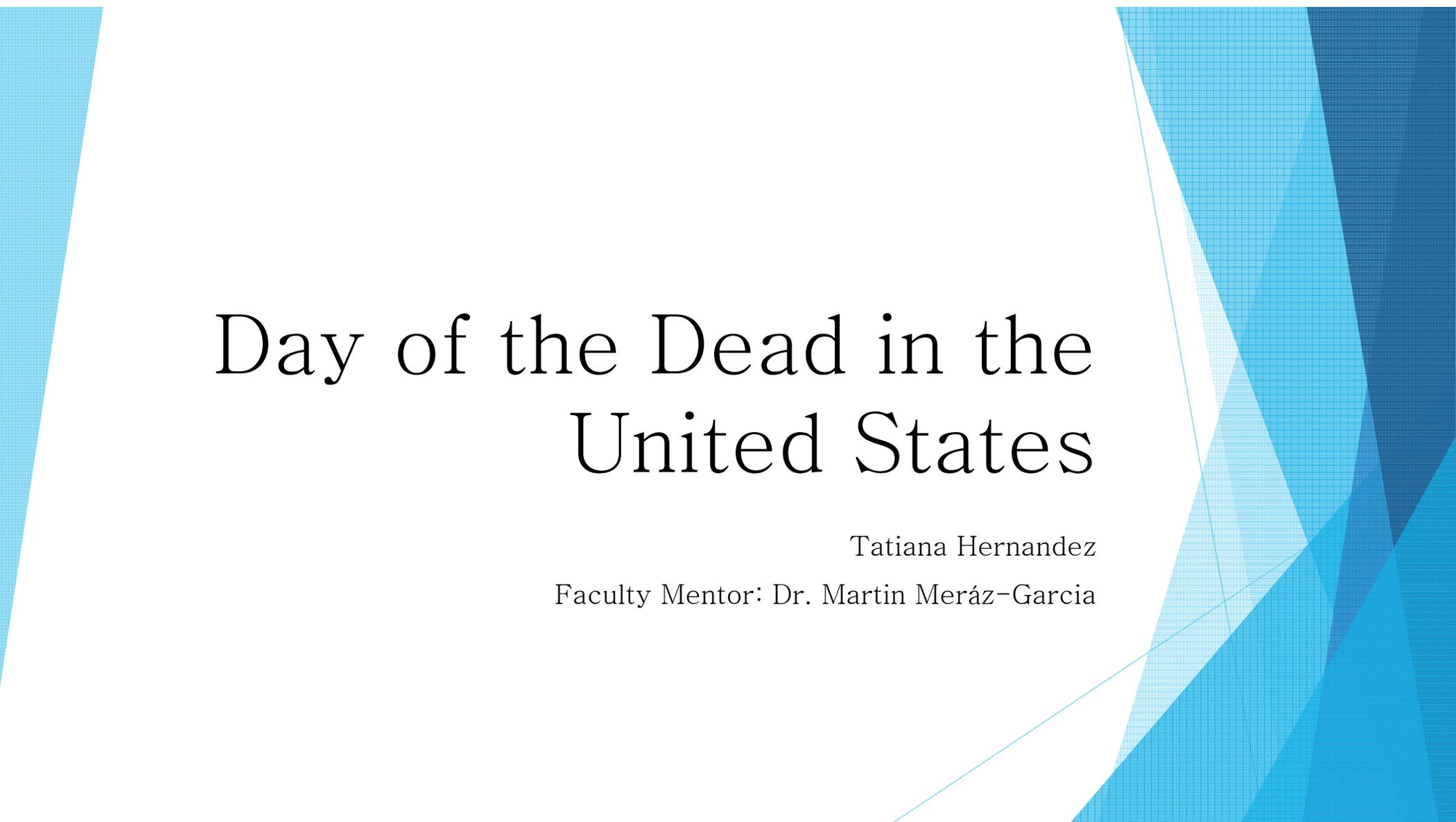


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Day of the Dead in the United States

Tatiana Hernandez

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Introduction

- ▶ Origin
- ▶ What is Day of the Dead about?
- ▶ Mexicans and Americans: Different Views on Death
 - ▶ Basis for the Mexican View on Death
- ▶ Day of the Dead in America
- ▶ Chicanos in America: Why don't all Chicanos celebrate it in the U.S.?
- ▶ Conclusions

Origin

Aztecs

- ▶ Use of skulls
- ▶ Afterlife
- ▶ Mictecacihautl (Lady of the Dead)

Spanish

- ▶ Catholic beliefs
- ▶ “Pagan barbarians”
- ▶ November 1st and 2nd

“In Mexico everywhere the Day of the Dead celebrations combine a curious admixture of ancient Indian and Catholic beliefs and practices”. – Haberstein and Lamers.

What is Day of the Dead about?

- ▶ Mexico's Halloween
 - ▶ The similarities
- ▶ Honoring loved ones that have passed
- ▶ Stereotypes
 - ▶ “Morbid Mexican”
 - ▶ “[They are] obsessed with death”

“[Halloween] was also a day of the dead, a time when it was believed that the souls of those who had died during the year were allowed access to the land of the living. It was a time when spirits were believed to be wandering”. – Jack Santino.

Different Views on Death

American

- ▶ Avoid death
- ▶ Too taboo to even talk about
- ▶ Hide from death

Mexican

- ▶ Confront death
- ▶ Important part of their cultural identity
- ▶ Embrace death

“The word death is not pronounced in New York, in Paris, in London, because it burns the lips. The Mexican, in contrast, is familiar with death, jokes about it, caresses it, sleeps with it, celebrates it; it is one of his toys and his most steadfast love. True, there is perhaps as much fear in his attitude as on that of others, but at least death is not hidden away; he looks at it face to face, with impatience, disdain, or irony...” – Octavio Paz.

Basis for the Mexican View on Death

- ▶ Why do Mexican's have this view?
- ▶ “Death is about moving on, not coming to an end”. – Jorge Garcia Navarro.

“The Mexican, fatalists that they are, accept death uncomplainingly but bravely. They fraternize, play, joke with death even while they weep. In their blood is the spirit of adventure of their conquerors...Also in them is the blood of their ancestors, who met death of their own volition for the sake of their gods”. – Frances Toor.

Day of the Dead in America

- ▶ Non-Hispanics celebrating
- ▶ U.S. Cities that celebrate it
- ▶ New York City
- ▶ Los Angeles
 - ▶ Commercialization
 - ▶ Hollywood Forever Cemetery

“You can even get Dia de los Muertos stuff at Wal-Mart”. – Carlos Hernandez.

“Many people outside of Latino communities have begun participating in Day of the Dead festivities because they provide outlets for remembering loved ones admits a culture that ignores death”. – Regina Marchi.

Chicanos in America

- ▶ Why don't all Mexican's in America celebrate Day of the Dead here?
 - ▶ Not as important here as in Mexico
 - ▶ Some traditional elements are hard to recreate
 - ▶ Cemetery difficulties
 - ▶ Bodies transported back to Mexico
 - ▶ Halloween

“I thought about doing it for years, but I got caught up in Halloween”. – Levi Guerrero.

“I've been here 20 years and I don't do anything. It's a big thing in my country. In Mexico, it is a big holiday, everyone is off on Nov. 2. You can't do that here”. – Nancy Alvarez.

Conclusions

- ▶ Wonderful holiday
- ▶ Symbol of Mexico's identity
- ▶ Curiosity and Popularization
- ▶ Growing Hispanic population

Day of the Dead Songs

- ▶ Amparo Ochoa- Viene La Muerte

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KN7FlnDg3xI>

- ▶ Oscar Chavez- La Calaca Flaca

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7HFUx93_fo

- ▶ Voltaire- Dia de los Muertos

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGcWOapC49A>