Welcome to the Folklife Today Podcast, I’m John Fenn, the head of research and programs at the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress, and I’m here with Steve Winick, a folklife specialist at the center and the creator of the Folklife Today Blog.

Thank you, John, and I will note that did not interrupt you this year to shout Happy Halloween. But it is October, and both our blog and podcast did debut on Halloween, so we celebrate those anniversaries. This year, though, we have added the somewhat more serious and contemplative holiday of Día de los Muertos to our blog and podcast content, and we’re focusing on the Latin American story of La Llorona, the spirit of a woman who can be heard at night, weeping for her children.

Yes, La Llorona has been called Mexico’s best-known legend, and there are also versions all over Latin America. So Steve, for the blog you’ve been doing some research on the story. What are your favorite things that you’ve discovered?

Well, the first was new to me but well known to scholars. And that is that what appears to be the first reference to a spirit answering the description of La Llorona is in a 16th Century manuscript describing experiences of Aztecs ten years before the coming of the Spanish to Mexico.

Wow! Tell me more about this manuscript.

Well, It’s called The General History of the Things of New Spain, but more commonly called the Florentine Codex. It was drafted in the 1550s and finished in the 1570s by a Spanish priest named Bernardino de Sahagún. As a folklorist, the most interesting thing to me was that Sahagún lived for years in Mexico, where he learned Nahuatl, the Aztec language, and extensively interviewed several Nahuatl speakers, so the book is in parallel text in Nahuatl and Spanish. And it covers history, mythology, ritual, belief...all kinds of topics of interest to ethnographers. And it says that ten years before the
Spanish arrived, a woman’s spirit was heard weeping and wailing in the night, crying “My Children, where can I take you?” So I say more about this woman and who the Aztecs thought she was in the blog, where I also link to the manuscript, which is digitized and online via the World Digital Library. But many scholars think this is part of a more widespread belief in weeping woman spirits among Indigenous peoples in North and Central America, and that this part of the La Llorona story is therefore Indigenous, although she isn’t called La Llorona in the Indigenous versions.

John Fenn 2:56
Wow, this is amazing and deeper history than I knew for sure. Did you find out anything else?

Stephen Winick 3:01
Lots of things, but I’ll just mention one more. About 50 years ago, scholars noticed that, in addition to the Indigenous elements, some La Llorona stories have European antecedents, so there are motifs to the story that seem to be European. But the weird thing is, they couldn’t locate any versions of this family of stories from Spain—only places like Germany and Britain. And it was considered an anomaly because the spread of the stories in Latin America was so great that it wasn’t all that plausible that it came there with German immigrants to Mexico, for example. So the scholars of that era expressed puzzlement at the absence of Spanish versions.

John Fenn 3:40
Interesting. And I take it that you found something relevant to this puzzle.

Stephen Winick 3:45
I did! I found a story about La Llorona as the ghost of a weeping woman in a Spanish publication from 1866, showing the story was certainly known in Spain and the character was even called La Llorona there. I have to say I lucked out—it’s one of those examples where the constant addition of more and more books to what is available in regular Internet searches makes it possible to find evidence now that you couldn’t have found even 2 years ago.

John Fenn 4:12
Well, that’s exciting for our listeners and researchers. So people can find links to that story, as well as the Florentine Codex and other primary sources over at the blog at blogs.loc.gov/folklife

Stephen Winick 4:25
Exactly. And I do feel like my main function in the blogs is to turn up interesting primary sources and make them accessible to people interested in the story. And then also to point out important interpretive work on the legend. But as an Anglophone white guy, I’m not interpreting it much myself. For the most part, I’m pointing the way to Latinx voices on the legend.
Indeed, that’s a wise approach. And for that very reason, we have invited several guests to talk with us about La Llorona. We’re starting with Allina Migoni, who is the AFC reference team’s Latinx subject specialist, and Camille Acosta, our recent intern, who was just a guest on our last episode too! Hello Allina and Hello, Camille.

Allina Migoni and Camille Acosta 5:06

Stephen Winick 5:10
Hi guys. Yeah, you both been guests on the podcast before. So welcome back to Folklife Today. And in the interest of full disclosure, I’ll say that Camille did her master’s thesis at Western Kentucky University on La Llorona. So let’s start with Camille, could you tell us or summarize what you call the kernel story, the version of the La Llorona tale that you remember from your youth?

Camille Acosta 5:33
Yes, absolutely. Um, so with my best memory, I feel like the story went, you know, a long, long time ago in México, there was the most beautiful woman in the world, and her name was Maria. And no man could ever win her hand or win her heart. She was just far too beautiful for anybody to compare to. Until one day a man came riding in on his horse into the village. And Maria felt like she had to have him he was so mysterious and so handsome and so beautiful that she needed to be with him. Long story short, they got married, and they had two wonderful children. And in the story I heard they were both boys. One day, however, this wonderful, amazing man rode to Maria’s house and told her he was leaving her for another woman and leaving the family completely and left them. That night in a fit of, you know, rage and jealousy and anger and heartbreak, Maria took her two children in the middle of the night to the river, and she drowned them. And when she realized what she had done, she then drowned herself. So then you know the Llorona legend goes, that Maria became a ghost that night named La Llorona or the Weeping Woman. And what she does is she trails you know, the rivers or any any areas with water in the southwest and Mexico, to find her missing children. And if you are a child, and you happen to be there past your bedtime, it’s possible that she may snatch you up and think that you are one of her own. So yeah, that is that is kind of the, the legend that I grew up hearing.

John Fenn 7:14
Wow, that’s a powerful and traumatic story. So you heard it growing up as a child. And then years later, as a graduate student, you interviewed other children about it? What did you learn from talking to kids coming up?

Camille Acosta 7:28
Yes. So this was probably my favorite interview experience. I had interviewed kiddos from Santa Ana, California, they were former students of mine. And again, because of the pandemic, we were all in a big huge zoom interview, there was about five or six of us. And it was really exciting talking to kids about La Llorona because it was spooky. It was scary. I mean, this legend is still so fresh in their minds, like they probably heard it
for the first time a couple of days ago. And so this apparition this woman is so exciting and new to them, and so scary. And so whenever they would tell their version or variant of the narrative, and it got more and more scary, it got more and more exciting. But I think the most fascinating tidbit that I learned from these kids was, how much emotionality they added to the narrative of La Llorona. A lot of interesting research, it felt like they had done on her, even though they hadn't, they were just thinking about her in so many different ways that I never thought to think about her at eight 9-10-11-12 years old. And one interesting thing that I remember, we were talking about La Llorona, we were talking about little motifs about the story we were talking about, if she, you know, allowed to come into people's houses, is she not allowed to come into people's houses? What have you heard, you know, things like that picking each other's brains. And one student said, I have a theory Miss Camille. I feel like she's not allowed to enter family's homes, because it breaks her heart. And it reminds her of the family that she could never have. And I was like, whoa, oh my gosh, I never, I never would have thought of that, especially at 12 years old. And I just thought it was beautiful. I thought it was it was fascinating. And I think it really says something about the up and coming generation to see a spirit to see what people deem a monster as something human as something that we can all share. So I thought that was really cool.

Stephen Winick  9:23
Yeah, your chapter on kids really was fascinating. And it is true that in a lot of La Llorona stories, she's outside the door, she's outside the window, you can hear her there. And you know, you might even find that she tried to get in, but she typically doesn't get in. So that's an interesting connection that the kids made on that. Another highlight from your thesis to me was your conversation with your mom about the story. Tell us a little bit about that.

Camille Acosta  9:53
Definitely. So obviously this idea of being a mother or being a failed mother is really huge in the narrative of La Llorona, and for my mom, the scariest part of the whole story wasn't necessarily a scary ghost or someone haunting around, you know, the river hunting around your home, the scariest part of the narrative for my mom was hurting your own children. You know, when I was talking to my mom, I asked her what scared her most as a kid. And you know, she would say all the typical things, you know, I didn't want to get stolen. But she said, once she became a mother, the narrative changed for her. And one of the most damned things, or one of the most terrible things a woman or a mother could do was be a bad mother. And it was such an emotional, complicated conversation, right? Because I think there is a lot of toxic machismo, there's marianismo, a lot of a lot of difficult things that Mexican women have to have to grow up with, in terms of trying to be the best mom, the best woman. And so there's a lot of trauma there. You know what I mean? There's a lot of difficulty in trying to be the best. So I it was very interesting to me to hear that from my own mom, to hear that a story, a ghost story could bring that fear out of her. So that was probably the most fascinating thing there.

John Fenn  11:18
Oh, yeah. Very, very moving. You also interviewed your brother and your dad. And note that everyone has a kind of different memory of the story. What do you think this tells you about how the story operates within communities.

Camille Acosta  11:32
So I think that this story serves as a tool of communication. It's so much more than at face value, a ghost story, an amazing ghost story at that. Right? A ghost story is wonderful. I love a ghost story. But it also doubles as a way for us to talk about the things that we fear most, that may not be as easily digestible or easily talked about among families and when communities right so like for my brother, he, you know, grew up in that toxic machismo world. And he will always feared being someone that was hurtful because he was a man, right? My dad had actually viewed La Llorona as a version of escape, like, Oh, my gosh, she could be away out of a really difficult home life have a really difficult life in Mexico, where my dad grew up. And I think that's really exciting. I think it's really exciting that we can start these conversations with a metaphor with a ghost story, you know what I mean? I don't know. I think it's very fascinating. I love learning what everybody believes later on, it is for them the parts of the story that stuck to them the most, right, I feel like it's a huge reflection of them and, and the power that they have to overcome their fears.

Stephen Winick  12:47
Yeah, and you put two of those interpretations into the title of your thesis. So you called the thesis the second part of the title is “a story of survival and a reclamation of the monster.” So what did you mean by those two phrases?

Camille Acosta  13:04
Yeah, I think there are so many meanings to that idea of reclaiming the title of the monster. For one, you know, on a more specific level, like I had mentioned, I think it's reclaiming this fear. You know, this generational trauma this this scary thing many kids grew up with, and kind of showing how you can defeat the monster how you can you know, through communication, through connection through family through love through listening to each other. And that can all stem from a story. And I think at the same time, you know, unfortunately, there is a lot of racism towards Mexicans, Mexican Americans you know, and in terms of immigration or or what have you. And I think it's kind of beautiful that as a culture as a community, you know, we say we reclaim this idea of the monster and say, “Hell yeah, like I am the monster,” in the sense of I am this powerful, scary, beautiful, amazing being and monster doesn't necessarily have to mean a bad thing. It doesn't necessarily have to mean this terrifying thing. It means something that's beautiful and powerful and willing to break all of these cultural walls and borders that that maybe the Western world has built maybe we have built ourselves and it's reclaiming that as a tool of brilliance and a way to survive, have a way to become closer and have a way to communicate. So I think there's a lot of little hidden gems of meaning in that and I think it's powerful, I really do.

Stephen Winick  14:41
All right, well that is fascinating and and as you say, powerful, Camille. We want to bring Allina in as well. Allina, when did you first hear about La Llorona?
Well, I actually heard about La Llorona later on in life. As a child, I was afraid of my own shadow. So I think my family knew not to bring legends of GUI and to try to make me stay home. I think that would have traumatized me further. But I am from San Diego, and part of my middle school high school education, I had mandated Spanish language classes. And in these classes, we discussed our home lives. And we also discussed our traditions and La Llorona came up, probably in sixth grade for me, and I had heard of this legend. But it wasn't until having a more sanitized version of the loss of her children, maybe not because she killed or murdered her own children, but just that they had drowned in the river. And she was destined to wander the earth to find the souls of her children. And I realized how many of my fellow classmates knew this story and how it resonated and we all told different interpretations. And so I heard some more—more morbid versions. But it wasn't until I was an undergraduate and graduate school that I really started to learn more about La Llorona, as part of a Mexican and Chicano nationalism, or interpretation of our heritage, and our culture, and modern reimaginings of what La Llorona could mean in our culture.

Is there a version of the story that sticks with you that you've heard anytime from middle school on, that you could share with us?

I think the most interesting version is that La Llorona was actually an indigenous woman and who was left by a Spanish conquistador. And so it predates this more modern retelling of a scorned woman who was cheated on. And it seems more of a creation myth. Back to our cultural heritage versus a woman who just couldn't control herself as a failed mother.

Earlier, John and I were talking about the indigenous roots of the La Llorona legend in Mexico and what you were saying ties directly into that because one thing I noticed was that when Mamselle Ruiz sang about La Llorona, in the homegrown concert series this year, she said that La Llorona was also La Malinche; they're the same woman. So could you fill in that story for us? Who was La Malinche?

So La Malinche very briefly summarized was an indigenous woman who was enslaved and captured by her Hernán Cortés and his fellow conquistadores. And she was used as an interpreter and translator for his eventual conquest of the Aztec empire, and she was also his concubine. And so there are different interpretations of her role in the fall of the Aztec empire. She is known as the traitor a traitor to her race and her people. Her translations directly led to the fall of Tenochtitlán. Other modern interpretations see her as a more nuanced figure. She was, again captured and enslaved and this may have been against her will, to bring the downfall of an entire Empire. She is also known as the mother to the mestizo the first mestiza or mestizaje and of La Raza, meaning that her as an indigenous mother, paired with Cortez, as a Spanish father,
created the first of what is now known as the Mexican identity. Of course, that is not nuanced at all. It is very much a black and white understanding of what mestizos are. And the Mexican identity is because we do know now that there is a diversity of cultures that create the Mexican identity and Chicano identities. But that to briefly summarize is who she is and her role in La Raza.

John Fenn 18:52
So you’ve kind of touched on this next question as well, Allina, but what else can we take away from the notion that La Llorona and La Malinche are equated by a lot of Mexican Americans, people of Mexican descent today?

Allina Migoni 19:07
La Malinche and La Llorona, can be tied in the sense that they both have this tainted motherhood, the sense of failed motherhood as a traitor to herself, her people, her children. And so it's interesting to tie those two together. Because the nuance would be, is she a victim of the wrath of a man who left her or is she the victim of colonization, and that she's also an empowered and nuanced figure with agency to make her own decisions. And so now La Llorona is this doomed mother destined to walk and wander the earth and again La Malinche is a traitor to her people, known forever as both the mother who birthed our, our culture and also the traitor to an entire Empire. So It's interesting to see this grief this forever damnation that we both are held to. And it's sad. And there is a dichotomy in Mexican American, Mexican culture Chicano, Richie Fenix culture of La Virgen de Guadalupe the pious mother, La Llorona, the failed mother and La Malinche, the damned mother. And it's interesting that La Llorona is actually a combination of the Virgin and the traitor La Malinche. She is destined to walk the earth forever hoping to find her children. In the end she was a pious mother to some extent, where La Malinche is known as the damned and the traitor and I don't know obviously she was a traitor to her own children. So there's a lot of nuance there. There's a lot of theorizing, especially feminist activism and feminist thought around this dichotomy that I feel is really interesting to delve into.

Stephen Winick 21:09
Amazing. So, you know, the story of La Llorona is really popular, you find it in movies and songs and novels, all kinds of cultural productions. Actually, I've read three different books by Rudolfo Anaya now. And they all have different versions of the story. One of them the sort of one that you heard as a kid, sanitized, so she doesn't actually kill her children, and then other versions, you know, one in which she's La Malinche. So it's, it's really interesting that even one person can interpret it several different ways and come up with different stories. So So why do you think this story continues to speak to people so strongly, even today?

Allina Migoni 21:48
Well, I think it serves so many purposes. One for children, it keeps them safe, it keeps them indoors, it keeps them away from rivers and streams where they could drown, right. But it also is just a very kind of seductive story as well, if you want to refer to, let's say, in Coco, the, the song is actually used the traditional folk song, La Llorona is used in the Disney movie, Coco. And it seems almost romantic, it seems like a longing for a
woman and not necessarily about, you know, a mother who killed her to her infants. And so it touches kind of on womanhood and motherhood, it touches on loss and grief. And also it speaks to our understanding of culture. Again, she's a story that's been told generations upon generations, and so there's almost a nostalgia when you tell the story of the boogeyman of La Llorona to your own children. And as an adult, you can interpret it in a different way. As Camille said, it's very powerful to parents who are afraid of hurting their own children or being a failed parent. And so it just touches on kind of all cycles of our life.

John Fenn 23:02
Yeah, so let's bring Camille back in. Um, Camille, different form of the question. How do you think this very old story of law your honor continues to connect with people and make meaning in today's world?

Camille Acosta 23:15
Yeah. Well, as Alina had brilliantly mentioned, you know, there is a lot of nuance to her today that she's reimagined into this almost human like experience, you know, she is human, she was a human at some point. And I think she is such a reflection of us, I think a lot of us see ourselves in her in a scary way, but also in kind of a relieving way, a hopeful way. Like for example, I used La Llorona now as, as a tool of talking about mental health and talking about, you know, how hard it is for, for Chicana for Mexican American for Mexican women and Mexican individuals in general to talk about their brains and talk about how hard life can be. And I think she's a really, really awesome gateway to talk about that kind of stuff. Right? Allina had also mentioned talking about, you know, like immigration and how she safely guides children, you know, across the border or across the river. I've seen that used a lot of times to and I just think it's so exciting that people are grasping this, this kind of ancient part of our culture, something you know, many of us feel like we were born with, La Llorona the story of her in our in our blood in our veins, but using it as something as something to help us through our most difficult times. And I just love the idea, and maybe the pandemic, you know, brought this all out of us, but that we can all return to a story at the end of the day to show us how to have a happy ending. So I think there's so much opportunity and possibility with her today.

John Fenn 24:49
Oh, great. Thanks. Um, Camille and Alina, we are grateful that you joined us on the podcast today. So thank you.

Stephen Winick 24:55
Yeah, thanks to both of you for being here. This was fantastic.

Camille Acosta 24:59
Thank you for Having us. Yes, thank

Allina Migoni 25:01
Yes, thank you so much for letting us speak on such a powerful story.
Indeed. We have one more guest up our sleeve to talk about later on the songs. But first, maybe we should hear a song about La Llorona.

Good idea. This is Mamselle Ruiz, a Mexican singer who lives now in Montreal and sings many of her songs in both French and Spanish. In this version of La Llorona you’ll also hear Zapotec, the Mayan language of the area of Oaxaca where this song comes from. So here’s Mamselle.

500 years ago, thank you. Hernán Cortez, the conqueror of Spain, arrived to America and to conquer Mexico. he bought a native slave who had many talents to learn languages. Her name was La Malinche. La Malinche was treated like a traitor by her own people. And the legend tells that she already walks on the streets and cries nonstop. And we call her “The Crier”: “La Llorona.”

Once again Mamselle Ruiz with La Llorona. We are continuing to talk about La Llorona, and as we promised we have another guest. We are very happy to welcome to the podcast Juan Dies, a member of the Sones de Mexico Ensemble. Juan has done a number of programs with us at the American Folklife Center, including a corrido writing workshop a few years back, so you can find him on the Library of Congress website. And he is a trained folklorist, with a degree from Indiana University, just like our own John Fenn. Welcome, Juan!

Thank you, Steve. Glad to be here.

Yeah, it's great to have you on the podcast with us, Juan. First of all, we wonder if you heard about the La Llorona legend growing up? And if so, what was the version of the story that you encountered?

Well, of course I, I heard about La Llorona. Growing up, I grew up in San Luis Potosi in Mexico, and we we heard as children, the legend of La Llorona. When I heard it, it was basically the the outline was that this was a spirit woman that could be heard weeping either down the streets of Culhuacán in Mexico City at night, for some unknown reason, at the time when they didn't tell us why she was crying. But they said that you should never you should hide your curiosity and not go follow her and find out, you know, who she is, you know, you should hide from her. There were I learned about other versions from other parts of Mexico where instead of roaming the streets, she was in the river by the river. And this was probably more a story from Oaxaca where
probably where the story originates. It did crossover into popular culture because I remember going to see movies in the in the theater in probably in the late 60s or 70s, where La Llorona would make an appearance.

Stephen Winick  32:08
So as a folklorist yourself, you must have seen interpretations of the story as well as having heard it yourself. Does any of the interpretation stand out to you as being particularly interesting?

Juan Dies  32:20
Yes. Well it's interesting that in the musical interpretations that I've heard, there is no reference to the legend itself. The stories, the song talks about a lonely woman, an impossible love, a death, implied death, but there is no narrative that tells the story of La Llorona in the versions that I heard growing up.

John Fenn  32:51
Now one of the reasons we thought to ask you on the podcast in particular is that you've recorded a version of a song called La Llorona on one of the Sones de Mexico Ensemble's albums. Can you tell us a bit about that particular version and how you brought it into the Ensemble's repertoire?

Juan Dies  33:05
Oh, yes. Yeah, we recorded that in our 2007 album, Esta Tierra Es Tuya, This land is your land. That was that version. Of course. It's a very well known in Mexican repertoire, and we wanted to represent that. And we had also been working with that piece in collaboration with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra brass section we did a number of outreach programs in the neighborhoods of Chicago with the CSO brass. And that was one of the pieces we chose to arrange for us to collaborate. So La Llorona, in this version features brass quintet, and our string ensemble and some percussion like a marimba and singing of course.

John Fenn  33:59
Great well let's hear a clip from the Sones de Mexico Ensemble's version of La Llorona.

Stephen Winick  38:47
Once again that was La Llorona by the Sones de Mexico Ensemble and we are here with Juan Dies and so you mentioned the way that you arranged the song. What's typical for an arrangement of the La Llorona song?

Juan Dies  39:02
Well La Llorona music comes from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Istmo de Tehuantepec, in southern Mexico in the state of Oaxaca. So their music is very diverse in that area. So we can hear this song played by brass ensembles by brass bands. It's also been heard it with marimbas with a marimba ensemble. This is the territory where the marimba is also used. And it's also performed by just musicians on guitars doing vocal arrangements with two or three vocal parts accompanied by
guitars. So there's a variety of arrangers, but it's typically its sung either in time signature of three-four as a waltz, interspersed with a with 6/8 more of a sort of a swaying rhythm in. Sometimes they alternate between six/eight and three/four.

Stephen Winick  39:06
Stephen Winick  40:27
Interesting, yeah I’ve definitely heard it done in a very waltzy way yeah very much as a waltz. So, in an email to me you suggested that I should consider the thesis that the La Llorona song is not actually about the legend and you mentioned that before, that it doesn't make direct reference to it. Is that how you interpret it, that it's, it just happens to use the same word, Llorona?

Juan Dies  40:51
Yes, this is something very recently that I just started considering. I had a conversation. A couple of weeks ago with one of my bandmates. We are currently in a production of the of a play called American Mariachi at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, and “La Llorona” is one of the pieces there so while we were waiting to come out, he mentioned to me that there was an alternate explanation of La Llorona that it was, it was the same name, it was about a Weeping Woman, but it had nothing to do with the legend of La Llorona. And that made a lot of sense to me because I never heard the lyrics, tell the story of the song, and that would explain that, that that difference. And then he went on to say, and I wasn't able to contact him before today's interview but, but he does have that alternate explanation of another woman who was weeping for a different reason, and got to be featured in that song.

Stephen Winick  41:53
That's really interesting and one of the things that I find kind of interesting is that depending on which verses you choose for the song, it can be pretty plausible that it is about the legend and also pretty plausible that it's not. So singers might be deciding what themes, they want to emphasize by selecting particular verses. We know that Mamselle Ruiz who performed in our concert series this year, presented the song as not only about the La Llorona legend, but about the version that equates her with La Malinche. So there's a wide range of interpretations possible for the song.

John Fenn  42:27
Yes, and in doing research for this episode we even found a couple of son huasteco songs on the La Llorona theme with completely different lyrics from the Oaxacan one. One did seem to be about the legend, the other not so much. So let’s hear a clip of one of them by Trio Aurora

[Music: “La Llorona” by Trio Aurora. Public Domain and included in the Free Music Archive.]

Stephen Winick  43:34
Once again, that was a La Llorona song in son huasteco style, and we are chatting with Juan Dies. Juan actually helped me translate that song for the Folklife today blog so look for it there on the blog at blogs.loc.gov/folklife. Juan, in that song, one of the band
members mentions googling her band and finding contact information online, so it's a very modern song, and it just underscores that the La Llorona theme continues to be adapted in Legends, songs, novels, poems, movies, you find it everywhere. So what do you think makes it such an enduring part of Latin American culture?

Yeah, well...the theme of the song is about infanticide, you know it's a woman that murders her children, and lives in penance, so I think it's a very strong theme, especially for children listening to this story. It is arguably Mexico’s best known legend. La Llorona, and it has found its way into popular culture. I saw, I mentioned earlier a movie about La Llorona, fighting a Mexican luchador El Santo, Santo versus La Llorona. Back in the day I found it a very scary movie back then. And then, later in the 90s I think there was an episode in the X Files where La Llorona was featured. So, and they give a deeper explanation of why she had murdered her children I never heard it until the X Files that they explained that her husband had left her and they had a deeper backstory. And suddenly, I started hearing people giving that explanation for, for the reason she murdered her children, it was more complete. And, and, in, when I go to schools and I talk to children, they tell me the story of La Llorona and they're filling in things that I suspect came from, from that episode of The X Files. That's great. And later now. Now we see the movie, it popped up again in the movie Coco which every child in America has seen. And they're, they're also very, very aware of that song. So I think the legend. In popular culture, and songs, feed each other, and complete each other. So now we see La Llorona, which is a very popular song popping up in the Huasteco region. Probably by musicians who are being asked to play that song, they came up with a version that fits their style, and they fill in the details now we have an understanding that there may be a relationship with the legend, so they incorporate the legend. So, “how come the story the song doesn’t tell the legend? Well, let’s make it so, we'll make some verses that do!” But I don't think this originally was where it came from. So it's constantly evolving and it just shows the effect of, you know, putting a song like this through, through the mills of social life and social networking.

John Fenn 46:45
Yeah just illustrates that dynamic relationship between continuity and change, right? That sort of ongoing conversation. Well Juan, thank you so much for guiding us through some of the complex and fascinating backstory of La Llorona.

Stephen Winick 47:00
Yeah, thanks so much for being with us, Juan, it was great to have you here,

Juan Dies 47:04
Well, you're welcome.

John Fenn 47:05
We're getting through the end of our exploration of La Llorona. Once again, there's more at the blog which is at blogs.loc.gov/foolife

Stephen Winick 47:14
Yes over at the blog, we've got a dramatic version of the story by Joe Hayes, a post about La Llorona songs, and the missing link to Spain.

John Fenn 47:22
We are going to close out with another song but first let's say thanks to a few people.

Stephen Winick 47:27
Agreed! Thanks to all of our guests, Juan Dies, Allina Migoni, and Camille Acosta.

John Fenn 47:33
And thanks to our engineer Jon Gold, and all the staff members at the Library of Congress who help us make this podcast possible.

Stephen Winick 47:40
And let’s remember that Día de los Muertos goes back to some of the older roots of Halloween, to celebrate those who have gone before us, and to remember them. This version of La Llorona that we’ll hear is by Navigaciones Pedro Manuel, and it's rewritten to remember all the women who have been murdered in Mexico. It's called “La Llorona Asesinada.” So as we listen, let’s give a thought to the tragic figure of La Llorona, and all the people she weeps for. We will see you next time on Folklife Today.

[Music: “La Llorona Asesinada” by Navigaciones Pedro Manuel. Shared to Soundcloud with a Creative Commons License.]

Announcer 54:26
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