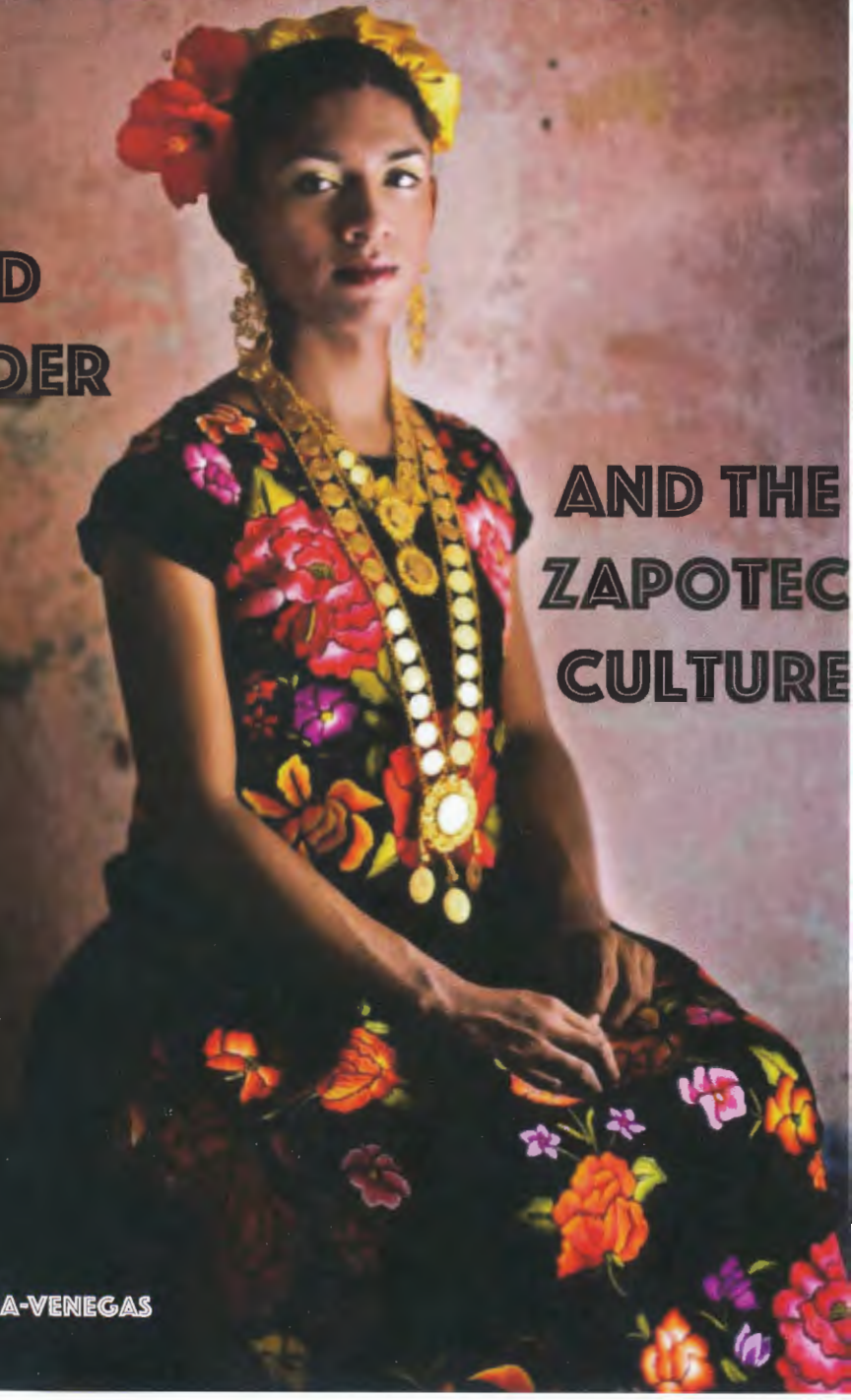


# LAS MUXES

THE  
THIRD  
GENDER

AND THE  
ZAPOTEC  
CULTURE

BY IZZY PEÑA-VENEGAS





# WHAT IS A MUXE?

**A MUXE IS A PERSON WHO IS BORN A MAN BUT DISPLAYS FEMININE CHARACTERISTICS. THEY ARE USUALLY COMFORTABLE IN THEIR MALE PHYSIQUE AND ENJOY DRESSING IN TRADITIONAL WOMEN'S ATTIRE.**



**MANY DO NOT IDENTIFY AS A MAN OR WOMAN, BUT AS A MUXE. SOME MAY FLUCTUATE THEIR GENDER IDENTITY BETWEEN MAN OR WOMAN BASED ON HOW THEY FEEL, BUT ULTIMATELY CONSIDER THEMSELVES AS A MUXE.**



**"A TRANSVESTITE IS A BOY WHO DRESSES AS A GIRL, A MUXE DRESSES WITH HIS TRADITIONAL HUIPILES AND ENAGUAS, IS PROUD OF WHERE SHE COMES FROM."**

**"IT'S A ROLE WHERE CULTURE PLAYS A FUNDAMENTAL PART THAT IS ALIGNED WITH SEXUALITY, A MUXE IS A TRADITIONAL WOMAN: SHE FEELS DREAMED ABOUT."  
- MARITZA SANCHEZ  
MUXE**

**MUXES TYPICALLY LIVE IN A RURAL TOWN IN MEXICO CALLED JUCHITAN IN THE STATE OF OAXACA.**





# ZAPOTEC

**JUCHITAN IS MOSTLY A MATRIACHAL SOCIETY DEEPLY ROOTED IN ANCIENT ZAPOTEC CULTURE. INDIGENOUS PEOPLE MAKE UP MOST OF THE TOWN'S POPULATION.**



**THE JUCHITAN HAS BECOME A COMMUNITY MODEL OF PASTICHE; SURVIVING THROUGH SPANISH COLONIALISM BY SUCCESSFULLY ADAPTING TO SPANISH CULTURE WHILE STILL CONSERVING THEIR STRONG ZAPOTEC ROOTS.**



**THE PRIMARY LANGUAGE OF THE TOWN IS ZAPOTEC WITH SPANISH BEING THE SECONDARY ONE.**



# CULTURE

**THOUGH MUXES' ORIGINS ARE DEBATED, IT IS THOUGHT THAT THEY ORIGINATE FROM THE ANCIENT ZAPOTEC CULTURE, CONSIDERING ZAPOTEC'S GENDERLESS LANGUAGE.**



**REGARDLESS OF THEIR EXACT ORIGIN THE MUXES HAVE FOUND THEIR PLACE IN THE PAN-ETHNIC TOWN, COEXISTING WITH THE RESIDENTS.**





# THE MUXES IN JUCHITAN



UNLIKE THE NORMATIVE MASCULINE CULTURE OF MEXICO, FEMINE ATTRIBUTES ARE PRAISED AND WOMEN ARE HONORED FOR THEIR HARD WORK IN JUCHITAN.

AS A RESULT OF JUCHITAN'S MATRIARCHY, INTERSECTIONALITY HAS BECOME PRESENT IN THE TOWN. MUXES ARE RESPECTED AMONG WOMEN BECAUSE OF THEIR FEMINE CHARACTERISTICS AND ARE ACCEPTING OF THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION.



SOME WOMEN DESIRE MUXES IN THEIR FAMILIES. THEY CONSIDER IT TO BE A BLESSING TO HAVE A SON BECOME A MUXE.



"SONS AND DAUGHTERS GET MARRIED AND HAVE FAMILIES OF THEIR OWN, SO THE PERSON THAT STAYS TO CARE FOR THE PARENTS IS THE MUXE. THAT'S WHY THEY ARE SO HIGHLY VALUED."  
- PEDRO MARTINEZ LINARES, MUXE



JUCHITAN HAS PROVIDED A SANCTUARY WHERE MUXES CAN FULLY DEVELOP AND PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMUNITY.





# THE MUXES IN JUCHITAN



**THE MUXES PLAY AN INTEGRAL ROLE IN PRESERVING THE TOWN'S ZAPOTEC CULTURE.**

**THEY KEEP THE CULTURE ALIVE WITH THEIR SKILLS IN ZAPOTEC CUISINES AND TRADITIONAL EMBROIDERY.**



**MANY OF THEM WORK IN RESTAURANTS, DESIGNING CLOTHES, OR SALONS AND SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMY.**





# THE MUXES AND RELIGION

**THOUGH THE CATHOLIC SPANISH COLONIZATION DEEPLY ABHORRED HOMOSEXUALITY, JUCHITAN WAS ABLE TO DELINK THAT PARTICULAR ASPECT FROM ITS CULTURE.**



**THE TOWN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH RECONIZES THE MUXES AS IMPORTANT COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND SO ACCEPT THEM INTO THE CHURCH.**



**"JUCHITÁN HAS HAD THIS CULTURE FOR TWO THOUSAND YEARS; RESPECT FOR THESE PEOPLE IS A SACRED DUTY. THE CHURCH SOMETIMES DOESN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY. BUT THIS IS OUR CHURCH, OUR TOWN."  
- FATHER FRANCISCO**



**EVERY YEAR, JUCHITAN'S PRIEST HOLDS A SPECIAL SERMON HONORING THE MUXES AS PART OF A SPECIAL QUEER-FRIENDLY FESTIVAL.**



# SEX AND

**THE MUXES ALSO PLAY ANOTHER ROLE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY. IT IS TRADITIONAL FOR JUCHITAN MEN HAVE THEIR FIRST SEXUAL ENCOUNTER WITH A MUXE.**



**THEY TEACH AND INTRODUCE THE TOWN TO THE WORLD OF SEX.**



**THE QUEER FRIENDLY SEXUAL ATMOSPHERE DEVELOPED IN JUCHITAN IS WIDELY DIFFERENT FROM THE HOSTILITY THAT THE REST OF MEXICO EXHIBITS.**

# THE MUXES

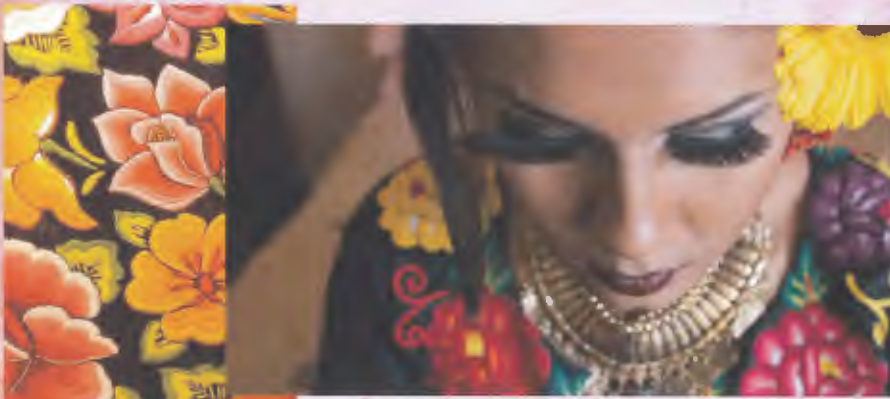
**NAOMI MÉNDEZ ROMERO, A MUXE ACTIVIST, HAS TAUGHT ABOUT THE DANGERS OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES AND HOW TO PROTECT ONESELF.**



**"THERE'S A TRADITION OF FATHERS BRINGING THEIR SONS TO A MUXE FOR THEIR FIRST SEXUAL EXPERIENCE" - RUBEN MARTÍNEZ "RUBITCH", MUXE**



# DISCRIMINATION



**UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN MUXES ATTEMPT TO LEAVE THEIR ACCEPTING TOWN THEY ARE OFTEN MET WITH DISCRIMINATION.**



**THE REST OF MEXICO IS SO CEMENTED IN THEIR MACHISTA VIEWS THAT MUXES BECOME TARGETS OF HARSH TREATMENT.**

**THEIR BODIES DO NOT HOLD THE SAME RESPECT AS THEY DO BACK IN THEIR BELOVED TOWN. IN THE END, MANY MUXES RETURN HOME.**



# RESISTANCE



**SINCE THERE IS WIDE DISCRIMINATION OF MUXES OUTSIDE OF THEIR TOWN, THEY HAVE BECOME POLITICALLY ACTIVE AND WORK TO EXPAND MUXE RIGHTS.**



**NAOMI MÉNDEZ ROMERO HAS FOUGHT FOR HER RIGHTS TO USE THE WOMEN'S BATHROOM WHILE AT HER UNIVERSITY. SHE IS ALSO THE FIRST MUXE TO LEGALLY CHANGE HER SEX FROM MALE TO FEMALE ON OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS.**





# A FESTIVAL

**IN 1970, THE "LAS AUTÉNTICAS INTRÉPIDAS BUSCADORAS DE PELIGRO" ASSOCIATION WAS CREATED IN ORDER TO PROMOTE MUXES' VALUE.**



**AS A WAY TO BOTH COMBAT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MUXES AND TO CELEBRATE THEIR RICH AND UNIQUE CULTURE, THE ASSOCIATION PUTS ON "LA VELA DE LAS INTRÉPIDAS" EVERY YEAR.**



# FOR MUXES



**LGBTQ PERSONS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD COME TO JUCHITAN TO PARTICIPATE OR WITNESS THE FESTIVAL.**

**THERE ARE EXTRAVAGANT PERFORMANCES FROM PERSONS WITH DIFFERENT GENDER IDENTITIES AND COMPETE TO BE NAMED QUEEN OF JUCHITAN.**





