SANTES Episode 5: Tina Aguirre

Chapter 1: Intro

[match strikes]

[solemn acoustic guitar]

♪♪ [flame flickers] ♪♪ [long exhalation]

LUNA: Hi, everyone! Welcome to episode 5 of Santes, a podcast for future ancestors. I'm Luna Merbruja. [chill lo-fi music]

SMF: And I'm StormMiguel Florez. We are so glad to be dropping this episode with Tina Valentin Aguirre this week because we get into some rich San Francisco queer and trans Latinx history and stories about some of the people who paved the way.

Chapter 1a: Preserving Our Trans and Queer Stories

And I've been thinking a lot about the importance of history preservation and archival preservation as we navigate this particular moment of fascism in the United States and around the world. We know that one of the things that comes with fascism is the intentional destruction of archives and records. This is why it's so important for us all to find ways to continue to tell our stories, share our stories, to create zines, art, podcasts, videos, to ask our elders to share their stories, and with their permission, of course, to pass their stories on to younger folk. Let's spread our stories across all mediums, ensuring our queer and trans legacies live on.

So Luna, what are some of the ways that you find to preserve our collective histories and stories as trans and queer BIPOC? And I'm gonna be real. This is where I want you to plug your publishing company and your latest book, The Hex, that just came out, like, what, today? I think the day we're recording this is the release date of The Hex.

Chapter 1b: Luna’s new book, The Hex

LUNA: Yeah. Well, I may or may not be biased because I run a small publishing press for queer and trans writers of color called Pomegranate Books. Shameless plug.

SMF: Yes.

LUNA: But—

SMF: Plug!

We just said butt plug at the same time, but go ahead. [both cackle]

LUNA: But(t) plug, I feel that books are a crucial way of preserving our histories and creativity. I'm just now discovering whole books and essays I didn't even know about by legendary writers like James Baldwin and Audre Lorde whose words and ideas have already shaped my life. As a publisher, I really want QT BIPOC writers to have the opportunity to share themselves in this moment because someday it'll become wisdom and a lesson for the future generations.

I'll say I just released my third book, The Hex, and I'm excited for folks to read it because I really captured a lot of the trans experience that's happening right now through my characters. The Hex is a collection of short stories. There's this trans scientist who biohacks hormone replacement therapy and then unlocks shape shifting. So there's this whole host of protagonists that experience really hard shit, but I spun it so that there's like redemption or vengeance or release in a way that we don't always get in our day to day lives. I wanted to write a book that really reflected this current political moment, but also myself as an artist and a spiritual person. The Hex is messy as fuck, and it's written to make people a little bit mad, but that's also what makes it kind of fun.

SMF: Oh my gosh. I cannot wait to read it. And I love a messy protagonist.

Chapter 1c: Introducing Tina Valentin Aguirre

LUNA: Yes. Mess. Mess. Messy! But you know who's not messy, though? Our next guest.

SMF (chuckles): Our next guest is a badass, powerful human, and remarkable artist and would probably argue that they can be a little messy because being messy is being human. It is such an honor to introduce Tina Valentin Aguirre. Tina is a pillar of the San Francisco Bay Area arts community. They're originally from Logan Heights, San Diego, and moved to the Bay Area for college in 1986, where they found a vibrant queer Latinx community mobilizing against AIDS. Tina is also a published poet, arts curator, serves as the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District Director, and has also served as the Chair of the Board of Directors of the GLBT Historical Society. Tina's done pretty much everything, as you'll see in this episode.

LUNA: Seriously, there isn't a bio that could capture all the amazing work that Tina has done. So in this episode, you get a little bit of their work and their history when we talk about their time in San Francisco in the Mission And Castro Districts and also about their deep love and adoration for Teresita La Campesina. Without further ado, let's welcome Tina to the podcast.

SMF: And welcome all of you to Santes. ♪♪

Chapter 2: Welcome Tina and Welcome Ancestors

SMF: Welcome, Tina. It's really great to have you on Santes today.

TINA: Thank you for having me. I'm really happy to be here.

SMF: We're really excited to have you. How's everybody doing today?

LUNA: I'm feeling so good. I'm so excited. Yeah. There's something about— it's a Wednesday as we're recording this It's the middle of the week, and I'm just, like, anticipating the weekend and I just have all this energy. So I'm, like— I'm excited. Stoked to be here.

TINA: Me too. I think that there's a lot happening in the world, and I am happy to be here with both of you. And we can talk about community and art, which makes me happy.

SMF: Yay! Well, one of the ways we start always is to invite an ancestor to join us. And if they so choose, then they will, hopefully. But, yeah, each of us just like can call in whoever we like. So how about either of you? Is there anyone you want to call in today and say anything about them as much as you want to say about them?

TINA: Sure. I'll share that I am calling Rodrigo Reyes into the conversation with us. And Rodrigo was one of my mentors when I got to San Francisco. He died of AIDS, but before he died, he just did an amazing amount of community work, cultural work, policy work. He was the co-founder of GALA, Gay Latino Alliance in the 70s, and also CURAS, Community United Response to AIDS/SIDA in the 80s. I worked at CURAS and he was a playwright, reporter, Chair of the Board of Mission Neighborhood Centers, and a big queer homosexual joto who just loved, loved, loved being queer. And he taught me a lot about how we can be many things and how we can strive for fabulosity.

[SMF & Luna vocalize appreciation]

SMF: Was "Viva 16" or "Diecieseis," your film?

TINA: Yes, at the very, very end he says a quote about each of us. His hope was that each of us one day would love ourselves.

SMF: That was really sweet. Yeah.

TINA: That was... He's a great person— human, like all of us. So, you know, there's complexities and flaws with that, but he was a great writer and he did one of the earliest Chicano poetry anthologies with Juan Pablo Gutierrez and Francisco Alarcón called Ya Vas Carnal. And yeah, I'm thinking of him right now.

SMF: Thank you.

LUNA: Thank you for inviting him.

SMF: How about you, Luna?

LUNA: Yeah. I'm thinking about my ancestor right now. And when I think about my experience growing up in the Bay Area, I think about my grandpa Jesse. He was an activist in the 60s Chicanos movement in San Jose. And growing up, he was just so proud to be Chicano, and he gave me that identity, and all of us in my family, just to be proud of being brown.

And I'm thinking about him right now because he was someone who, when I was a young kid, I remember he would be on the floor stapling all of these packets together. And I had no idea what they were, but I would go and mess up the order and, like, shuffle them up and cause mischief. And it wasn't until years later that my godmother actually told me that, you know, she was like, you know, those were papers for people who were in a program for recidivism. Like, he was helping people who had just recently got released from prison to like get back into social services and to get jobs. And I'm over here, eight years old just messing with their paperwork.

So [laughter] she was like, "You were causing a lot of mischief when you were younger." But I love to think about that 'cause I, as someone who's like now 30 years old and working in the field and doing that work, it just reminds me like it's part of my ancestry, part of my family's legacy that we do this kind of work for our community.

TINA: Thank you.

SMF: Thank you. Well, I've been thinking about my Auntie Lala and one of the reasons is because I was watching your shorts on— well I think in three of the films I watched, Teresita La Compesina shows up and singing huapangas "Cucurrucuchu Paloma" and time I hear that music, I'm taken back to my family on my dad's side, and my Auntie Lala. In particular, she had a record store called La Discoteca in Roswell, New Mexico.

TINA: Oh! Wow.

SMF: And I remember... I mean, I didn't speak any— I still barely— I don't really speak Spanish, but I remember just like being in there all day and helping customers and dusting with the little feather duster. You know, me and two other cousins would be hanging out. And I just remember like that's such a beautiful memory and other memories of just being surrounded by the family and them singing all the songs. And my Auntie Lala was just always— I just loved being around her, being in her presence. You know, she came to my wedding, my queer very queer wedding, along with a lot of my relatives. So I'm inviting my Auntie Lala today.

TINA: Thank you.

SMF: She was— I just have a picture of her holding a Coors and a cigarette and [laughter] listening to music.

TINA: I guess all of us can be holding things as we think about, you know, some of our fabulous cultural productions and things that move us to do this work. So yes.

SMF: Mmhm.

LUNA: Mmhm.

TINA: Maybe after the recording of the podcast, I might have a cocktail. [laughter] Probably not, but at some point in the near future, I will.

SMF: We have had a guest bring a cocktail. So, you know. [laughter] And I'm sure some of these ancestors too. Yeah. I mean, my Auntie Lala might just be here smoking her cigarette—

TINA: I think Rodrigo just did a line of coke and has a beer. [70s disco music] ♪♪

LUNA: Yeah, I'm curious about some of this history. When I was doing a little bit of the research that you shared with us about your work. Congratulations, by the way, on the Creative Power award. That's fucking fantastic. SMF (snaps): Yes!

LUNA: Amazing!

TINA: Oh, thank you! Yay!

Chapter 3: The first time I saw a trans person...

LUNA: Yeah, I think it's so important that talking about, like, queer art, especially how it's existed just because when I was, growing up, I found it so inspiring as like a young artist, a young trans person to see possibilities. I remember the first time I saw a trans person was actually in the Castro and I'm don't mean like in real life, I mean it was— they were pictured on a postcard and they were naked. And I was like, oh my God, you can have like titties and a penis? Like that— I've never even thought of that before. I was 15 years old and losing my mind over it. But I remember I was with some other, like, queer youth at the time and we all were just, young and exploring. And I think about that image a lot because someone took that photograph, someone printed that postcard, someone put it in this store on the Castro. And that was my queer, like, awakening to my gender, was like seeing that. Right?

TINA: Wow.

LUNA: So, I would love to hear more about your art, Tina, just like some of the things you've done or like what's inspired you because like I'm so moved by it and I'm just so proud of you for getting this award. I would love to hear more about your process.

TINA: Oh, thank you so much. Thank you for sharing that. I will share, as a young elementary student in Logan Heights, San Diego, where I'm from, that my first reference for a trans woman was in the playground, there used to be, when I would play like foursquare or whatever, hopscotch, I was really little, that there would be a Black trans woman who would pass by sometimes. And she was really nice. And she was the first trans woman that I remember talking to her and probably she thought I was sweet. I think that's what Black trans folks, queer folks will say, you know, "Oh, that one's a sweet— That one has some sugar in their tank," or whatever. And I think they recognized in me. 'Cause I was like, 'Hi! Who are you? What's going on? What's happening?' [laughter] And then she would make a point to kinda like walk by sometimes when there was recess and eventually the teachers were like, "You shouldn't talk to the adults who are out there." And they discouraged me, but I do— hearing you talk about the first time that you encountered transness reminds me that, yeah, my first time was on the playground on the elementary and yeah, that makes me happy. And thank you for congratulating me on the Creative Power Award. Super happy about that.

Chapter 4: Tina talks about winning the Creative Power Award, and revolutionary philanthropy

SMF: That's really exciting. Is there a project that you're working on with that? I know a lot of awards come with a fellowship or some kind of, cohort.

TINA: Actually, this is a new program of the Walter and Elise Haas Fund, and it's a little revolutionary for philanthropy in that it's an unrestricted grant. SMF (whisper cheers): Yesss!

LUNA: Oh my god!!

TINA: $100,000 for each recipient.

SMF: Yes!

LUNA: Absolutely, yes!

TINA: It's amazing. It's wild. And it's the first year of this program. It's created by Natalia Vigil.

SMF: Yes!!

TINA: We love, love, love Natalia.

SMF: Love Natalia.

TINA: Whoo. Natalia has been working on this developing this new iteration. Really, it's an organizational shift and maybe a model for philanthropy to just say that people who do this work, cultural work, we know what to do with it, but sometimes grants come with big expectations, overhead... By the time you're done with the grant, maybe you're not better off than you started. And in this case, they were really clear to say, "Use this to do what you need to do, and that's it."

And we got to name an organization that is a part of the ecosystem in the city, but also that's important to my artistic practice. And each of us, each of the recipients of the Creative Power Awards were given the opportunity to name an organization and then the organization received $75,000 in unrestricted funding.

SMF: Wow. Creative power.

TINA: Yes. I'm super happy about this. And my designation was for Queer Ancestors Project. I've worked with them for years as a teaching artist. They have two cohorts. One is their screen printmaking cohort and the other is a collaboration with Still Hear SF. And it's called Kaleidoscope and it's a writing workshop. Both of them are ten weeks in duration. And I'm one of the teaching artists for both cohorts. And I could not be happier about this Creative Power Award, for me, and I do have some plans for that. And that award for Queer Ancestors Project came at a time after cuts on the city level of San Francisco. They actually lost more than $100,000 in the last year

and that it was awful. She didn't know what was going to happen. And then this came in at the best time, really.

So I'm happy about that. I do have plans, although I'm kind of in the middle of finishing a big project.

SMF: Is that the Conjuring Power one or is that a different—

Chapter 5: Conjuring Power: Roots and Visions of Queer and Trans Movements

TINA: It is, at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the Conjuring Power exhibition. And the long title is, Conjuring Power: Roots and Visions of Queer and Trans Movements. That is almost done getting organized as we record this. It opens March 13 and it will be up until August 23. So it's in Gallery 1 of Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. And we're gonna have lots of programs, panels, docent tours. June 3, we're gonna have a drag and musical night. It's a Thursday evening, and we have some great talent for that. And then opening night party Friday, March 13 with DJs Juanita MORE! and La Femme Papi They're awesome. Juanita is my comadre. I love her. And DJ La Femme Papi is a writer along with me that was published in the Still Here SF Anthology in 2019. So I'm eager to finish that as a project before I move on to more work.

Chapter 6: Tina’s next project about Teresita La Campesina

Basically what I want to do is a new movie using footage that I recorded in the 90s of Teresita La Campesina, who's one of my trans moms. And what I had done in the 90s was to release a movie that was a little over 20 minutes, under 30 minutes, that was called Wanted Alive, Teresita La Campesina. And it was exactly the title— I just wanted her to stay alive. She was living with HIV and this was sort of a spell, my spell, to try to just prolong her life, her presence on this earth, physically. She eventually passed. And what I realized a few years ago was that footage is great. I had the footage digitized finally. And the original movie, I'd shown it as part of the first Tranny Fest. This is— that word that's not used anymore, but that's the name of the film festival.

SMF: I feel like we still get to use that word.

TINA: We do. We do. Others cannot. So the original first Tranny Film— Tranny Fest Film Festival was at the Roxie Theater in like '97?

SMF: '97, I think. Yeah.

TINA: Yeah. And that was awesome. And literally what I did was to take an edit that I'd made at Artist Television Access on VHS and we showed it. So this was, you know, the 90s where you could kind of do that stuff. And it's a lost movie actually because I don't have that copy anymore. Actually, it's at— I only found this out last year, it's at the Hormel Center. Somehow it ended up— I think Frameline kept it and then somehow it ended up getting donated there. I got notified of it and asked them about it, and they said, "We can show it to you or we can digitize it. It may only have

one view on it because it's so old." Some of those tapes, they fall apart when they try to play them. So they gave me a choice and I said, "Okay, just digitize it" But also it's a remnant of what was needed in that moment. And it's not what I need now. Actually, what I need now and I think we need is to have other voices also talk about what did it mean for Teresita to be amongst us? What did it mean for us? Let's say, like we were talking about our first encounters with trans folks. And I think it's really powerful what Teresita— how she lived, how she spoke, how she sang, how she had sex, how she was a sex worker, she was an advocate for people with HIV and immigrant rights. And I want some other people to share, sort of amplify her own words and how she shows up in the video. So that's what I'll do with some of the funds.

Yeah, and then some of it is also with some extra space to— and money, I could buy a new computer and buy a few things that I thought, oh, I don't know that I need... you know, certain things— growing up poor, you kinda tell yourself, you know, you don't need the best things always. So yeah, I bought a new computer and a new screen and took a video editing class at BAVC. Life is good.

SMF: Yes, they have great classes there. Those are the things you should do with that. Like, that is gonna help you do your work. Right? That's so great that you treated yourself, but also, like, treated your art and treated your craft.

TINA: Thank you.

SMF: That's really important.

Chapter 7: Trans people have always been here and we have the tapes to prove it

LUNA: Yes. And thank you for sharing Teresita's story because I... I love seeing historical representations of trans people and there's just not enough, right? Like I can never tire of hearing people who have existed if it's from the 1920s or 40s or 60s, 90s whatever it is. Like, I think that their narratives obviously were probably purposely erased. Right? They were purposely destroyed and removed from history. But I think that it paints this picture, especially in this current political climate where everyone's acting like trans is this new thing and it's a trend and it's a political topic, but it's like, no, we've been here. We have the tapes to prove it. We have the stories, the histories, the oral storytelling that we have, right?

The fact that we have trans people who never met a trans person who still become trans anyway because it's not about influence, it's just about who you innately are. And I just super appreciate— I hope, to see the Teresita film because it'll be just incredible. Like, think now more than ever, like, I'm looking to history to learn and be inspired and to be rejuvenated with power. And it's like, how did our ancestors navigate their lives ten, twenty, thirty, forty years ago? Right? Like they also went through tough moments in history, but like they also came out and paved the road for us to have what we do today. So super, super excited to see that.

SMF: Thank you for saying that Luna. I do feel like same. Like I've been just remembering that people went through so much worse than what I myself in this

moment and going through. Maybe not what other people in this moment are going through, but the things that I'm kind of experiencing myself, but also just worried about. Like people have— we've been through this, our people have been through this, and they got us here.

TINA: Yes.

SMF: And I'm always reminded of 'They tried to bury us, but they didn't know we were seeds.' And hearing somebody talk about how our job right now is to be seeds. We may not see the outcome of it. We'll see some outcome, right. We're here. As long as we're here, we'll see outcome.

TINA: Yep.

SMF: But we may not see the things that we want to see, but others will because we're seeds. And so our job— we have to be seeds. We may only be seeds in some respect, but that is so necessary. And so I wanna be the best seed I can be. I think about that a lot when I'm thinking about history. And when I'm thinking about your work, Tina, I love that I really see your ancestral— at least part of it. I don't know your— like, I wanna hear more, but I am seeing the part of your ancestral practice that you're putting out there through your films. Like, that's such powerful ceremony. And, yes, just powerful ceremony that you're doing to preserve these stories and to keep them alive.

Chapter 8: Tina's Films and the Queer Ancestry Project

TINA: Thank you. I appreciate that. One of my favorite things to do is to share my stories through video and also oral history, to share them with the Queer Ancestry Project Emerging Artists, the artists that— younger people, transitional age youth, they're 18 to like 26, queer and trans, mostly trans, non-binary, mostly people of color, to share these stories. And it is an act of— it's a ceremonial act in some ways...

For me, it's sort of restarting a cycle that I see. Every year I participate in this and every year I learn from some younger artists where they're coming from, what they're dealing with. And then they learn from me what I've gone through, some of the stuff that I've gone through, and also to see where I'm at today.

I think that's also very important that young people can see that I am in a position of leadership as the Director of the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District since October 2020. I've been in a role where I create policies, I work with community groups and the city and arts, artists on making change. And also that if somebody wants to question my legitimacy or my authority, and it definitely been questioned, especially the first couple of years, I'm able to say well, the Cultural District was legislated into existence by the city of San Francisco, and literally our role is to counter gentrification and displacement and center queer and trans people, places, culture. And in the case of the Castro, it is to ensure that underrepresented queer and trans folks are centered in terms of racial, gender, and queer or class equity. So literally it is lesbians and queer women, transgender individuals, and LGBTQ people of color

that I center in our work. And if people are unhappy about that, that's probably a sign that I'm doing my job. [laughter] I think if—

LUNA: And you're doing it well.

TINA: Yeah. If everybody's happy, then probably I'm not doing my job. [disco music] ♪♪

Chapter 9: We're Still Here

TINA: I love sharing, who I am on top of what I've done and art. And as an example to say you might be in a position right now where you think, you know, what can I do or were there people before me? And I'm here to say not only were there people before me, we're still here and we're alive. And even though this is under the construct of ancestors, some of us are still here physically on this earth. And you can talk to us and learn from us. And maybe if you're interested, we can work together.

I'm actually mentoring one of the artists, Fabio, who was in last year's cohort. Fabio chose me as a mentor and told me I was a mentor, by the way. I did not— I didn't come up with that. But he wanted to learn about video. He loved the short that— some stuff I shared about Teresita. As a young trans man, person of trans experience, seeing Teresita on the screen and hearing her sing, what they shared afterward was very emotional to say that they didn't think they were ever gonna see this, that they were ever gonna experience it. And then all of a sudden, here I am showing this and I'm like, 'she's my mother and we are all part of a continuum.'

And he let me know that he wanted to get into some video editing. And actually, he participated in BAVC with me in hopes of working on the Teresita movie with me. And some of his art is featured in the Conjuring Power exhibition, and one of them is called 'Trans Tonantzin.' It's a print that is awesome. It's like the Virgin as a trans figure. And then there's another piece that's a key art piece for the show, and it's a print of Fabio in prayer, and it says, "My life is a prayer." And all of that tells me I am on the right track and that this continuum— this will continue beyond this moment and even my presence on this earth and that some of the people that need to get this message, not only have they gotten it, they're now integrating it into their soul, that they're not alone and we are fucking fabulous.

SMF: Mmm.

[disco music]

♪♪

Chapter 10: What kind of ancestor do you want to be

SMF: You know, we are thinking a lot about and talking frankly a lot about when we become ancestors. The whole Santes podcast started with the Santes project, which is a form where folks can fill out this form saying this is how I want to be regarded as an ancestor. This is what you put on my altar. This is how you call me. Here are the colors. Here's what not to do. Even if people want to say like these folks can call me,

these ones cannot. And so we want to give ourselves agency for when we become ancestors. And that's what this form is. And Luna and I at this moment are the holders of that information. If somebody in community dies and they filled out the form, that's when we'll share that information to say, 'hey, here's how this person wants to be remembered and interacted with.'
‘Interacted with’ is a big key because I do feel like we're really just like, 'I don't know' when we're talking to our ancestors, do you want to be bothered right now? Is this what you want? Or are you hearing me? Is there anything— do you want to help? Do you not want to support? And so would you mind talking about the kind of ancestor you would like to be? And it always tends to be an extension of who we are. But thinking of when we're ancestors, we no longer have these barriers. And so without these barriers, how do you envision yourself as an ancestor? What kind of ancestor do you wanna be?

TINA: I wanna be regarded as an entryway to possibility. That... let's say for me, what I learned from Rodrigo and many others, Virginia Benavides, Chili Felix/ Diane Felix, Ester Hernandez, Teresita La Campesina, and many, many others, Hank Tavera, was that we are many things. And all of it is needed because we need policymakers. We need, people in nonprofits. We need artists. We need reporters. We need fundraisers. We need activists. We need sex workers, all of it. We are all of it.

And I think what I want to be regarded as is an example of, yes, like you don't need to pin yourself down to one thing. Like I made movies, I produced opera, I did an opera with Carlo Lucero on Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz that was co-written by Alicia Gaspar de Alba. I never thought I would be an opera producer. I learned about opera. I volunteered with San Francisco Opera for like four or five years in their opera shop so I could get free tickets to see every show for five years. And ta-da! Now I know about opera. [laughter] And I've been a journalist. I've been on boards of directors for organizations. I speak truth to power. I am also power and I'm an Aries, I'm a fighter, but also I know how to choose my battles at this point. And I think what I want to be seen as is an example of how— get shit done, do it well, love people. There's no reason to be an asshole.

[laughter]

There's every reason to act with intentionality and humor and love. And life is short. So maybe do some good shit before you die.

[verbal appreciation from Luna and SMF]

Chapter 11: Canonizing Ourselves – “I believe we are many things”

SMF: Thank you. Yeah. I think we're taking back the kind of like— we're canonizing ourselves. Right? Like saints go beyond the Catholic church. They have been saint like figures or archetypes or entities, deities have existed for so long. And so this this feels like a way for us to canonize ourselves. Hence the name, Santes. So when you said that, that like an entryway, I was like the Saint of like Portals, is the first thing— like portals to possibilities is what came to mind there. I don't know how that lands with you, but—

TINA: Yeah, I like that. The only other thing that I will say is that sort of how you were referencing— we were talking about how, you know, time is a construct and for me also identity is a construct and that the idea that we are one thing, obviously, I believe we are many things. And I think I am interested in all of it. So I'm also a worker, I'm a villain, I'm a lover, I'm a fighter. The idea of just being a saint does not appeal to me.

SMF: Oh yeah, yeah.

TINA: It's really constricting. So for me, I would say, no, I am human.

SMF: Thank you for saying that.

TINA: Though I am human on this earth right now, I will remain— the energy that I have inside of me will continue just as I tapped into I am a part of a much bigger energy, and that will continue.

SMF: Thank you for saying that. Yeah, and to clarify, we— our saints are messy. Like, when we say saint, we're thinking patron saint in the sense of, like, this is the person that we pray to when we need this thing. Like, this is who we reach out to.

TINA: Ahh, yes. Yes.

SMF: Can we ask you for help with this? We'll put whiskey on the altar. We'll put whatever you want on— Like, you know, we have one person, they want, you know, like a brick of, oh gosh—

LUNA: It was a Colombian fresh cut cocaine? Was what that was? [laughter]

SMF: So please understand that when we say saint, we do not mean to make somebody saintly. Like, our saints are dirty and—

TINA: Good.

SMF: messy and mischievous. So that is definitely— maybe we need to just make that more clear.

TINA: I think it's fine. And I guess what I would add is that if somebody needs a spark of magic, here I am. What I've never been afraid of is really trying something new and looking at, what are the pieces that I need to get it done? What are the things that I need to do? And, let's see what happens! And so I think if I can help in the future after my physical being is gone, it would be if somebody needs inspiration, if they need a muse, or if they need somebody to help with one or two pieces that will help make the puzzle fit, I think I might be able to help.

SMF: I love that.

Chapter 12: An Offering to Tina

LUNA: So let's say, Tina, I'm on act three of this new play that I'm writing and I am stuck. I am just like staring at a wall for three days because I cannot for the life of me think about how I wanna end this project. So I go to an altar. I'm praying to you. I'm asking you for help for possibility, for the spark of magic. What is something I should put on the altar for you? What would reach you or speak to you or feel like a good offering to you?

TINA: I think playing a clip of Teresita singing is good. It's gonna bring her and me and Rodrigo and others to the space. And I think a little shot of vodka will not hurt. And [soft laughter] also some money because that's what's up.

SMF: Mm hmm...

TINA: And also something about deep love. So like a token that represents a love that's been in your life for a while, a long time, and it can be biological family or chosen family, but really family, something that represents that love, that will resonate with me. Yeah! And a little fire and a feather or two also. All of that is a part of me.

LUNA: That's powerful. That like, that in of itself sounds like just spell casting, bringing all those items into a space and really sitting with it with that intention. That's incredible. I might just do that now just for funsies. You know?

Chapter 13: Theresita La Campesina sings “Cucurrucucú Paloma”

TERESITA LA CAMPESINA (singing with a mariachi band):

♪ Cucurrucucú ♪

♪ Paloma ♪
♪ Cucurrucucú (Cucurrucucú) ♪
♪ no llores ♪

Chapter 14: Potluck For the Dead – In a Pinch

SMF: I used to do a potluck for the dead on Dia de los Muertos or around that time because I feel the veil is open during that period of time. I don't think it has to be one day. But I would have a potluck for the dead where everybody would come over with a meal or a dish that somebody in their life who was an ancestor either made, and or loved, whether or not they made it, they loved to eat it. And so, you know, everybody would come and we would bring our food, we would make a plate, and we would put things on the altar, and we'd tell stories about who brought the food, basically, before us. And then we would eat and tell more stories.

And so let's say we're having this for you. This is you know, Luna and I are going, and we wanna bring something honoring you that day. But all the stores are closed except for Cliff's Variety on Castro. [Tina chuckles] And we just we've been too busy. We haven't had a chance to go and pick up the things or make the things. So there's not even any— I don't know what's going on in San Francisco, not even the grocery

stores. Everything's closed except for Cliff's. I don't know why they're open, but they are. What do we pick up for you from Cliff's?

TINA: I like Cliff's. What comes to mind actually is not Cliff's. [SMF laughs]

TINA: It would be

SMF: So we'll break in...

TINA: It would be some tamales from Espiga De Oro on 24th Street. It's a restaurant that sells tamales, and it really does remind me of parties that Carlos Todd, who was with GALA, the Gay Latino Alliance, that was a peer of Rodrigo and Chili and Teresita and Ester, would have Dia de la Virgen parties on December 12, and there were always tamales because it was Christmas time, December. And so I would say maybe a real tamal or maybe an artistically depicted tamal. [laughter] So if you didn't have actual— but I would know the difference, I just want to say that for the record, like, a real— I eat real tamales. So I would expect real tamales. But in a pinch, I guess materials and things that would bring to life a plate, a meal with tamales.

SMF: I love that. Okay. So if we only have Cliff's, we'll just have to go in there and get real creative to conjure a tamale. We'll figure that out. But, in the more likely situation where 24th Street is bustling and the restaurants are open, we know to get you real tamales.

LUNA: Tasty.

TINA: Yes. [SMF laughs]

TINA: But from Cliff's, let's say if it is— what I recommend from Cliff's, and it's not something that I need necessarily, but I recommend, is they have some great makeup in a pinch if you need it, especially around Halloween. I don't go there for makeup, but if you need it in a pinch, you can. They do have different colors and it's functional. And also they have lots of appliques that you can sew and you can— or you can just place on an altar. And then they have some really good kind of containers or receptacles that can be used in ceremony.

SMF: Okay.

TINA: I find that to be really important. I also think the masks there are awesome and they're imaginative. And I think that sometimes can be useful when we need to get out of ourselves, of our mindset is sort of playing with who we look like or what we are.

SMF: See, and I picked Cliff's because you're the District Director of the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District.

TINA: Ahh. Yes.

SMF: We've done Home Depot. We've done Best Buy. It really just— Walgreens, I think we did once. I was just like, let's try Cliff's. I like that you just like, 'oh, no, I

know what's there. Yeah. Here are the things you could get me.' And Cliff's should just sponsor us now, basically.

LUNA: Yes, yes. [laughter]

SMF: From this episode alone.

TINA: Yes.

Chapter 15: A little history about the Castro District in San Francisco, plus upcoming events with Tina

SMF: So now we're gonna start to wrap up here, but we'd love to know if there's anything else that you would like to plug, if not that, like, where folks can find you, how people can follow you to know what's happening, be reminded of the projects you have coming up, including this one at Yerba Buena.

TINA: Yeah, thank you. Actually, one little thing I'll add about Cliff's is a little factoid that I learned recently is that it was the original site of the Castro Theatre. It was actually the first iteration of the Castro Theatre.

SMF: Wow!

TINA: And if you look at it, you can kind of see it. And I share that because, like, what we're talking about is how we change forms and we— things move and whatnot that even Cliff's itself is more than what it looks like.

SMF: Interesting. And such an interesting time to learn that because the Castro is also transforming right now. And, you know, a lot of us were not happy about that, but we'll see! We'll see. Right? It's about to open.

TINA: Oh, you're talking about the Castro Theater itself. What I'll share as an extra plug, I guess, is that the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District published a booklet on the history of the Castro that is very inclusive, acknowledging how the narrative of gay white men sort of being all of the Castro, that in reality, José Sarria lived as a child on Castro Street and that in the 50s and the 60s there were Black and Brown queers, men and women, who went and had parties and socialized. Some of that is documented in our booklet, and it's on sale now at Fabulosa. People can go to the Eureka Valley Library if you'd like to just have a look at it and not buy it. And I'm really proud of that. It was written by Jen Reck and Gerard Koskovich with the foreword by myself. I acted as executive editor and publisher. I learned how to publish a book. Never did that. And yeah, so I'm very happy about that.

We're gonna actually have a chat about it at the GLBT Historical Society in April. I think the date is almost set, but I hesitate at sharing it in case it's not completely set. But that's something I'm really excited about.

And then a programming for the Conjuring Power exhibition is going to include a Lesbian Visibility Week tour of the exhibition and a panel that's done in collaboration with the Curve Foundation. I'm excited about that. And a few more things that are

gonna pop up. So follow us on Instagram and Facebook if you're interested in that. That's the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District. And then I'm on Instagram as @TinaLatinaSF, and I share more of my personal art on my own Instagram.

LUNA: That's amazing Tina, you are bringing so much art culture, programming, party! to the Bay Area. Like, I know where I'm clocking into this year. I'm so excited. I can't wait to check out the exhibit and keep up with your projects. You're doing such amazing work and it was such a blessing and a pleasure to have you on our podcast.

TINA: Thank you so much. This is exciting and awesome, and I'm glad you both are doing this. Thank you.

SMF: Thank you so much. And, yeah, we'll be seeing you at Yerba Buena and at the GLBT Historical Society and walking down the street, maybe at Cliff's, who knows? [laughter]

TINA: Yes.

SMF: And thank you so much. We'll see you soon!

TINA: Take care.

Chapter 16: Theresita La Campesina sings Puñalada Trapera

TERESITA LA CAMPESINA (singing with a mariachi track):
♪ Me estoy muriendo ♪
♪ por tu culpa ♪
♪ por tu culpa ♪
♪ Como si al verme ♪
♪ te alegraras ♪
♪ de mi suerte ♪
♪ Hah Ah Ah ♪

[audience cheers and hollers]
[singing and cheering slowly fades]

Chapter 17: Outro with Luna and StormMiguel

LUNA: Wow! Tina really brought the ancestors with them on this episode.

SMF: Yes! Thank you, Tina for keeping San Francisco queer Latine history alive and sharing the stories of such iconic and beautiful ancestors.

LUNA: I can't wait to checkout Conjuring Power: Roots and Futures of Queer and Trans Movements at Yerba Buena this month. The exhibit opens on March 13 and will be available until August 23rd. So go check it out if you're going to be in San Francisco anytime soon.

SMF: Yes, and Luna, that means you're going to be in San Francisco, and the Bay Area, so please, y'all, come and say hi to us at Luna's book launch on Sunday, March 15th at Lake Merritt. It's starts at 3 'o clock, I believe. Is that right, Luna?

LUNA: Yes it is!

SMF: Okay, so go to our Instagram wall and look for the Hex book launch for details, and we would love to see y'all there.

LUNA: Yes, I would love that! And, if you feel compelled to share how you want to be remembered, please check out our SANTES form on our website at www.SantesProject.com

SMF: And when you're done filling out the form, let us know what you all think of this episode by commenting on our Instagram page @SantesProject. [solemn acoustic guitar]

LUNA: Thanks for listening! See you on the other side.

SMF: And this one too.

Chapter 18: Episode Credits

LUNA: Santes is hosted, produced, edited, promoted transcribed and captioned by Luna Merbruja and StormMiguel Florez. Theme music is by StormMiguel Florez.

SMF: Cucurrucucu Paloma and Puñalada Trapera performed by Teresita La Campesina, courtesy of Tina Valentin Aguirre. ♪♪

END