

Selena Quintanilla, the Queen of Tejano. In her brief 23 years, she accomplished more than most do in their entire life-- an 8 week stay on the Billboard charts, Grammy-award winner for best Mexican American album in 1984, and not only went double and quadruple platinum, but was the first female Tejano artist to earn a gold record. This girl rocked the world. When she was tragically killed, 30,000 fans passed her casket, mourning the loss of the icon that gave Mexican-Americans a voice and representation in the dominantly white music world. To this day she is still celebrated-- her iconic glittered bustiers are seen throughout the pop world. Selena was recently immortalized on the Hollywood Walk of fame, and a recent Mac makeup line was the number one selling celebrity line in all of makeup history. She was commemorated in the 1997 movie, "Selena," starring Jennifer Lopez in the role that would make her the woman she is today. The talented musician, college educated business woman and lover of life is the ultimate example of a Chicana feminist.

Selena was born the youngest of three children to Marcela and Abraham Quintanilla on April 16, 1971 in Lake Jackson, a Texas city tucked along the Gulf of Mexico near the Padre and Mustang Islands.

Somewhere around the age of 8 she began singing in Selena y los Dinos, a family band her father, an avid musician, created for his children. Abraham, nicknamed AB played bass guitar and sister Suzette was on drums. Los Dinos got their start playing local quinceaneras and fairs. The band was good for their young ages-- always in time and on key, it was easy to see the group was destined for success.

In 1980 Abraham and Marcela opened PapaGayos, a Mexican restaurant, hoping to earn a bit more cash. While the parents attended to the restaurant, Los Dinos played for customers.

Selena once said in an interview that it was hard for her father to find events for them to play as

a Tejano group with a woman lead, so they decided to make their own. The restaurant was the family's second home, and Los Dinos grew used to not having a normal childhood performing regularly every night, and always on the road looking for the next big gig. It must've been lonely for the bubbly, social Selena, but it made her accustomed to life on the road.

A year later the Quintanillas lost everything. PapaGayos, the families only source of income, went bankrupt, forcing them to move in with family in the nearby town of Corpus Christi. For awhile, Selena y Los Dinos was the main supplier for the family. Abraham, a determined and proud Latino father, did not give up on the dream of Los Dinos finding success.

The economic and social stresses motivated the group to work harder, longer hours, taking events wherever they could -- bars, bar mitzvahs, weddings, street fairs, all around Texas. This continued for years

The Quintanillas struck luck-- a local recording studio signed a contract, recording the album "Mis Primeras Grabaciones". The group bounced from studio to studio until 1987, when they were signed for a year long contract with GP productions, releasing the album "Alpha," increasing sales and success of the band through word of mouth. The same year "Munequito De Trapo" was released, helping Selena to win "Female Vocalist of the Year," an award she would go on to win eight times.

Riding off their recent success, Los Dinos released "And the Winner is..." "Preciosa," and "Dulce Amor," albums that would launch Selena's career to stardom.

Jose Behar, the head of the newly opened Latin division of EMI Records, attended the Tejano Music Awards, where he saw Selena quote blow up end quote the crowd with pure excitement.

Her smile radiated, and her heart and soul shined through her singing. Behar knew Selena was the next big thing, and signed her as a solo artist.

Chris Perez was born on August 14, 1969 to Gilbert Perez and Carmen Medina. Perez started out with the french horn in middle school, eventually teaching himself electric guitar despite his mother's disapproval of the rock and roll stereotypes.

She had a point. Perez disliked Tejano music, finding solace and inspiration in the often violent music of Van Halen, Motley Crue, Def Leppard, Kiss, the Scorpions, Ozzy Osbourne, Ricky Martin, and Carlos Santana. When he was 17, he joined his cousin Shelly Lares' band as guitarist after he'd almost ran away to Los Angeles with a local rock band. In "To Selena, With Love," he said he only joined the group because it paid more than his current job, working at a library. He eventually became the group's music director, co-writing three songs for the debut album in 1988.

After a leave from the Los Dinos' lead guitarist, A.B. sought out a replacement. He had heard good things about Perez from Tejano groups -- talented, a great songwriter and musician. After watching Perez work with Shelly, he invited him to watch a Selena Y Los Dinos concert, later asking if he would like to join the band. he accepted. Perez thought Selena Y Los Dinos was different from other Tejano groups, more "Hip and sophisticated" and admired the creative work of AB.

AB may have been sold, but his father was a whole other story. Abraham admired his talent, but was extremely against to his rock and roll, counter-culture ideals, accusing him of potentially corrupting the band and Selena's sweetheart image. AB pleaded with his father, saying Perez would clean up his act and start getting comfortable with Tejano music.

AB and Perez quickly grew close, but so did he and Selena.

They were doomed from the beginning -- a forbidden romance, passion from the sensuous music constantly flowing, and close quarters.

Chris tried to fight it. He was hired with the promise to stay out of trouble, and he knew this was the ultimate sin. He had a girlfriend back home he knew would be devastated. Yet the connection still grew, making it almost unbearable for the two. Finally, at a pizza hut (how romantic,) they admitted their love for one another.

They dated in secret for nearly 6 months, afraid that Abraham would find out any day. Selena didn't care. She was wildly in love with Chris, and Chris in love with Selena. Eventually he did find out, by how it is unclear, either by seeing them or hearing from a band member, and he fired Chris on the spot.

Selena was a wreck. Lovesick and overcome by grief of the relationship, she called Chris everyday while he was back home, living with his father. One day she couldn't take it anymore, and showed up at his home, begging him to marry her. So they eloped.

Abraham was happy with the decision, quote 'only wanting the best for his daughter' endquote, and welcomed him back into the Quintanilla family and band. Married to her husband and free

to be on her own, Selena flourished. She opened new boutiques 'Selena etc.' in two locations, and had plans to open a third, designing accessible latin clothing for women. She bloomed into the sensuous, vivacious, and spirited woman we still remember her today, fully accepting her curvaceous body and sexuality with tight body suits, custom bustiers, and high heels. She gave young Mexican-American and Mexican women a role model to look up to, one that wasn't bogged down by stereotypes and roles, and reminded older women of their womanhood and youth, helping them to find a new spark for life through music they could listen to everyday.

On March 31, 1995 Selena was asked to come to a motel to meet with Yolanda Saldivar, a woman who had been running her boutiques and was caught embezzling nearly 60,000\$, for missing tax documents. She went first with Chris during the day, scared of what was to come. Yolanda apologized, said she forgot the documents, and wanted to meet with just Selena later that evening. Chris begged her not to go, but Selena was convinced she would be ok -- Yolanda was an old friend, someone that she had known and trusted for years. She was shot and killed at the age of 23, rocking not just the Latino community but others for years and still to this day. Selena proved to be the ultimate Chicana icon, a woman in charge, holding her own and more in a white, male dominated industry. The Quintanillas showed the struggles of a bicultural family, not being Mexican enough for the Mexicans and not being American enough for the Americans. Selena was not raised with Spanish, learning it at the age of 16 to connect with Latin audiences and widen her Tejano appeal. She released both Spanish and English albums, identifying herself as not one or the other. She didn't let the male-dominated Tejano music scene scare her away from an early age, later saying quote "ha--wrong!" to all the men at the time who doubted Los Dinos. As she matured, she developed her own identity in the Tejano music culture, crafting her own signature sound, influenced by all she experienced in Texas and around the world.

Against her strict Latino father's orders, she wore whatever she wanted, embracing herself as a woman and breaking free from traditional domestic roles that were expected of Mexican-American women. She commanded the stage, the band, and most importantly, the audience with her authority and confidence, expressing feelings many women were afraid to admit privately, let alone to 60,000 people.

Selena was Selena, a woman who guided and shaped the lives of Chicanx. A legend, a tradition passed from generation to generation of women.

WHY SELENA IS CHICANA FEMINISM

- Didn't speak Spanish, grew up Mexican-American. Cross culture of Tejano and Chicanx culture. Stayed put in her market. Learned how to speak Spanish.
- Broke free from 'home life' from a young age, embraced performance.
- Freedom in expression, freedom in clothes--wore whatever she wanted, despite dad. Embraced body and sexuality.
- Girl power, woman in charge.
 - STAGE PRESENCE!!
- Made Tejano music mainstream, yet also crafted her own sound within the culture.
- Pulled out of school in 8th grade, yet got high school diploma, later studying business admin in college.
- Left a lasting legacy for Mexican-Americans. Huge inspiration for POC, showing them they didn't have to fit traditional molds to find success.
- Held her own in male dominated industry.
- business owner! Owned two boutiques and designed clothing