

A not-so-funny thing happened on our mission-driven endeavor to share the Arts through music & cultural history with the Inland Empire community over the past two years. A song and music video were created, sparking passionate interest at film festivals around the world.

In 2024, the UNIDOS Board of Directors agreed to sponsor the first **“Generaciones de Música”** at the *Zacatecas Restaurant* in Riverside. Board Secretary Alvarado took the lead in organizing the event. He recruited various musicians from SoCal, and they performed traditional corridos y boleros, Raza-driven oldies, and some original arrangements made by the band in an ‘unplugged’ familia-oriented setting. Before each song performance, a brief history of the song was shared with the audience. The musical group was named the Mensajes Ensemble (**MensajesE**). The event was a success, and UNIDOS sponsored another in 2025.



MensajesE is a collection of seasoned and youthful musicians, ranging in age from 76 years-young to 10 years-old. Their musical pedigree includes honing their instrumental chops with their own bands: Los Alacranes Mojados, La Rondalla Amerindá, The RugRats, The Wandering Dogs, La Rondalla de San Diego, and the Inland Empire's very own Joel Soto from *Saints of Sinners* fame.

The Backstory: In August of 2025, Mensajes Band Director RicoS wrote a song after watching multiple news stories and witnessing the inhumanity of man orchestrated by the federal law enforcement agency, ICE. What he observed ICE doing on the streets wasn't happening in a third-world country; it was happening in Los Angeles, California, and other cities across the United States.

He watched as unidentified masked gunmen, armed to the teeth, apprehended people without probable cause and denied due process – as a matter of policy – solely based on the color of their skin or the accent of their voice.

His background as a peace officer for over 30 years taught him about the freedoms guaranteed by the United States Constitution, including the right to face your accuser, to representation, and to a speedy trial. None of that was happening, and, what's worse, our leaders were ignoring our national commitment to the fundamental principle of "innocent until proven guilty." A crucial part of what makes a true democracy.

What angered him was that ICE was grabbing anyone they wanted, citizen or not. To vent his frustration, he wrote a song called "Who's To Blame." He shared the song with **MensajesE** to get feedback during their gig rehearsal in San Diego. **RicoS** chose not to perform the song at the UNIDOS event because he wasn't sure it was good enough. But a few weeks later, he watched a passionate presentation on Leadership given by *Luz Gallegos, Executive Director of TODEC*, at a UNIDOS-sponsored Leadership Program. He realized at that moment that the lyrics of his song were meant to be heard. But where? How? He decided to record the song with **MensajesE**.

Recording the Song: The business of recording music is not as simple as getting the band in a room and turning on a tape recorder. But that is how Raza did it back in the day. Pero, it's a new day. The sound and track beats must be clean. Although MensajesE never claimed to be professionals, they preferred to sing and play *con ganas* for Raza, ignoring the occasional chord, key, and/or voice hiccups. Live music was the only way for **MensajesE** to play!

So that's how they recorded it: the guitar licks for "Who's To Blame" were played by **RicoS** as he sang the rola. **Joel Soto**, a phenomenal lead guitarist, asked, "How do you want this track played?" **RicoS** replied, "I wrote it angry so just play what you're feeling." So, Joel improvised and, in just three takes, created a furious soundtrack that brought the rola (hit) to life!

JanoA, guitarist/singer, actor, and filmmaker, suggested making a music video for release. **RicoS** readily agreed, "Why not? Let's get the message out." **JanoA** volunteered to make the film and submit it for consideration at music festivals.

JanoA suggested having the younger musicians, **The RugRats** - who had never sung before - sing the chorus in harmony with the 'OG band' members. The **RugRat** voices brought heart & soul to the rola.

Life reminds us that timing is everything - the rough cut of the song was completed mere days before the recording studio went out of business. As if the studio had hung on just to complete our musical journey before closing its doors.

WHO'S TO BLAME

Saw them Rollin' Hard,
Just down the street,
Faces covered up, flak-jack, fatigues,
Waving guns around,
with No ID-yeah,
For Everyone, they meet,
Mama's running for her life,
Children screaming, Why, Why, Why?

Why Are We To Blame,
When Everybody Here's the Same,

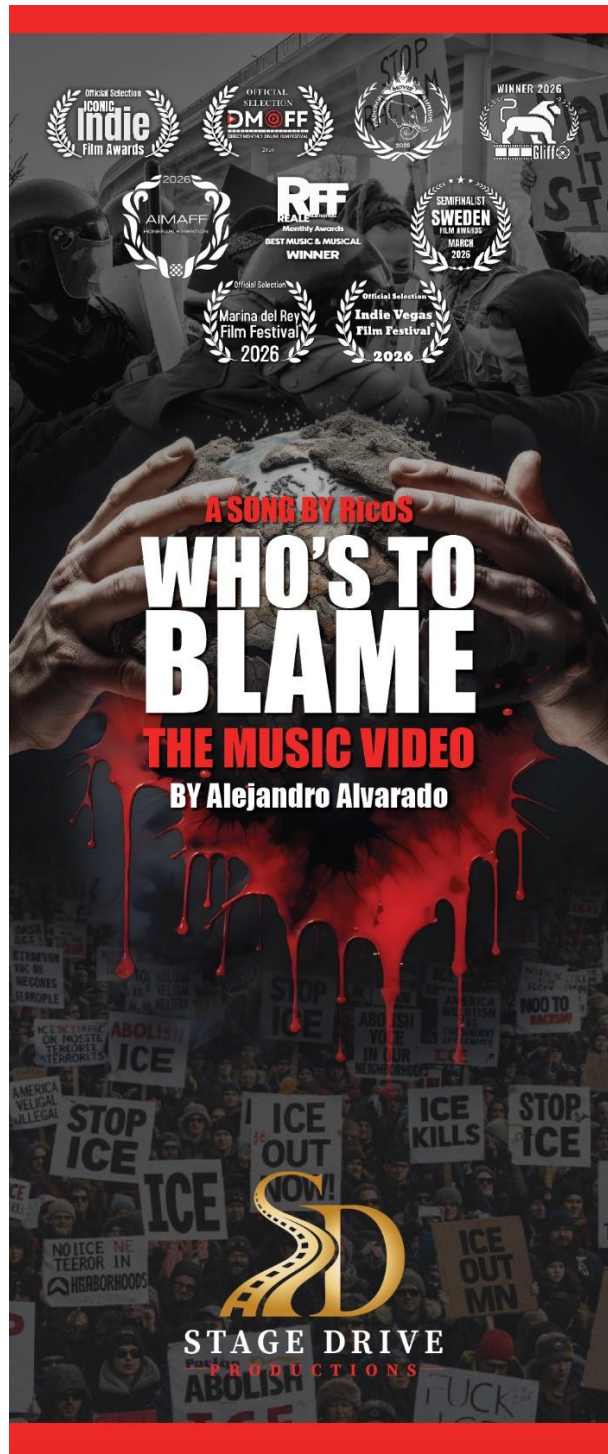
We've seen this all before,
Rounding up, citizens galore,
Ship out that Wetback Threat,
So today, there's No Regrets,
You Claim to Save the world, For every Boy & Girl,
But Us, You Deny,
Papa's running for his life,
Children screaming, Why, Why, Why?

CHORUS

Everyone's Got uh, Point of View,
Learned it all, from, watching the news,
But History, Repeats Itself, When We, Chose to Ignore,
FACTS don't mean too much, when you don't give a FUCK,
Cause It's, Them or Us!

So, Who's To Blame, in this Fantasy Charade,
When Everybody's Still the Same,
Who's To Blame, for Another Racist Game
We Know – That's Why We're To Blame
Why Are We, Why Are We, Why Are We ...To Blame?

Gente, MensajesE is proud to share that the *Who's To Blame* music video has been selected by eight different music festivals and has won Best Music Video in India's Golden Lion International Film Festival, the Free Speech Award at the Bangkok Movie Awards, semi-finalist at the Sweden Film Awards, and an honorable mention at the Athens International Film Festival in Greece. The video won Best Editing Music Video at the 2026 Indie Vegas Film Festival and has been selected for the Marina Del Mar Music Festival on June 24, 2026, for award consideration. **UNIDOS, Inc.**, provided the initial spark for what has been a meaningful non-violent protest against racism and inhumanity in our communities.



The music video will be released on **YouTube** for public viewing on June 25, 2026.
You can listen to the song on **Pandora** or **Spotify** too!

@Mensajes Ensemble

@_film_maker

@who's__to__blame__music__video