

**DOLISSA MEDINA AND ANANIAS P. SORIA**  
**VIEJITO/ENFERMITO/GRITO (OLD MAN/SICK MAN/SHOUT)**



In *Viejito/Enfermito/Grito*, artist Ananias P. Soria and filmmaker Dolissa Medina use movement, pantomime, and voiceover to convey Soria's journey with HIV while connecting with his ancestors. The video begins with a rendition of *La Danza de los Viejitos* (The Dance of the Old Men), a traditional Mexican dance. In this comedic dance, often performed by children or young individuals, dancers mimic old age, using canes and masks resembling *viejitos* (old men), occasionally coughing and falling over.

The artists use the dance to symbolize the impact of HIV on Soria's body, emphasizing how the virus prematurely ages individuals. Now in his fifties, Soria has been dealing with digestive issues and other medical conditions that are considered geriatric (related to old age) since he was diagnosed with HIV in his twenties. Many of these complications are related to HIV medication itself. Soria pantomimes the ritual of taking pills and the side effects of nausea and vomiting, repeating the words *defectivo* (defective) and *efectivo* (effective).

The final sequence of the video suggests how dance helps Soria process internal struggle and serve as a channel for spiritual growth. Evoking the *grito* (shout) named in the video's title, he becomes animated by house music and moves with a grounded grace, transforming the use for his cane.

## QUESTIONS

Ritual is depicted throughout the video in various forms, from cultural rituals like dance to the everyday ritual of medication. How did these rituals resonate with you, and did they evoke any personal reflections on your own experiences or rituals?

*Viejito/Enfermito/Grito* is rich in symbolism, featuring masks, pills, the Red Ribbon, U=U, and the rod of Asclepius (a snake wrapped around a cane, symbolizing medicine). Did you recognize or have curiosity about any of these symbols? How did these symbols contribute to the narrative, did they deepen your understanding of the artist's experience with HIV and connection with his cultural and medical context?

## RESOURCES

La Danza de los Viejitos originates from Michoacán, Mexico. The music used in the video was provided by the López family of Jacuaro, Michoacán in Mexico, who were instrumental in disseminating the Dance of the Viejitos from their native P'urhépecha culture to the rest of Mexico and the world. Learn more about La Danza de los Viejitos in these [two videos](#).

Ananias wears a shirt embroidered with symbols, including the letters U=U (Undetectable = Untransmittable), referring to the fact that people living with HIV with an undetectable viral load cannot transmit the virus. [Learn more about U=U here](#).

This video is just the first part of The Grito Viejito Project, an interdisciplinary artist collective using the Dance of the Old Men to stage dialogues around health, aging, and queer futures in Mexican-American communities. [Learn more and support here](#).

Related viewing: [Jhoel Zempoalteca and La Jerry, \*Lxs dxs bichudas\*, 2022](#), [Steed Taylor, \*I Am... a Long-Term AIDS Survivor\*, 2021](#), [David Weissman, \*Song From An Angel\*, 1988](#).

*Dolissa Medina is a filmmaker, writer, and organizer from the borderlands of South Texas.*

*Ananias P. Soria is a multidisciplinary artist interested in transformative energetic expression through movement, music and dance.*

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## **DAY WITH(OUT) ART**

In 1989, Visual AIDS presented the first Day Without Art, organizing museums nationwide to cover up their artwork, darken their galleries, or even close their doors as part of a day of action and mourning against the AIDS crisis. Since 2014, Visual AIDS has commissioned artists and filmmakers to create new short videos responding to the ongoing crisis. The 50+ videos that we have commissioned are available to view at [video.VisualAIDS.org](https://video.VisualAIDS.org).

## **VISUAL AIDS**

Visual AIDS utilizes art to fight AIDS by provoking dialogue, supporting HIV+ artists, and preserving a legacy, because AIDS is not over. [VisualAIDS.org](https://VisualAIDS.org)



**Visual**  

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**AIDS**

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**Day**

**With(out)**

**Art**



*Everyone I  
know is sick*