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The correlation between Chicano theater and Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed

"The theater is a weapon, and it is the people who should wield it" are words that come from the Brazilian Dramatist's, Augusto Boal, commentary, *The Theater of the Oppressed*. What Boal is referring to is that the theater should be political and used to promote social change by allowing the spectator to not only act out roles on stage, but to carry those rehearsed actions into the world, outside of the theater. The theater created by Mexican-Americans in the Southwest United States in the Mid-1960's, referred to as Chicano theater, exemplifies Boal's method of theater, containing a similar purpose (political activism) as well as many theatrical elements: audience participation, improvisation, what Boal calls "nationalizing texts," investigation of events used as basis for plays, and variations of Boal's Joker method. The information in this investigation comes from various sources including plays, historical texts, literary criticism, journal articles, and films. To talk specifically of theater, the focus is on three authors and their works: Augusto Boal, and two of his theoretical texts; the Chicano Playwright, Luis Valdez and his *Teatro Campesino*; and the troupe, *Teatro de la Esperanza*. The purpose of this investigation is to chart the similarities between *Theater of the Oppressed* and Chicano theater, as well as to discuss the historical and political backgrounds and symbols and themes presented in various plays by Chicano authors.