

DAY OF THE DEAD

**PRESENTED BY THE ARTS COUNCIL OF PRINCETON
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Face painting by
Latino Princetonians
Princeton University

November 3, 2018

A BRIEF ON DAY OF THE DEAD

“Day of the Dead is not the ‘Mexican Halloween’. While it has a deeper meaning, for those looking for a reference to compare and understand its cultural and social importance, you can think of *Day of the Dead* in the same way as the *Thanksgiving* celebration in the United States.

Day of the Dead is celebrated on November 1 and 2. During those days, we just not only remember the departed, but we also thank them for the wonderful memories they left us. During those days, we set an altar with mementos, favorite food and drinks of those who passed away, but pretty much remain alive in our hearts. To honor the dead we make parties in cemeteries, we bring mariachi music and food. It is a festive holiday, a holiday that unite the living and the dead, a holiday that celebrates life, family, friendship, community, all universal values that transcend one culture, which is why it was designated *Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* (UNESCO).

Day of the Dead, as it is currently known, is a syncretism between ancient Mexican mythology and European Catholic traditions. In ancient Mexican civilizations, it has been celebrated for at least 3,000 years starting with the first civilization in the American continent, the Olmecs, all the way to the Aztecs where the mixing with European traditions took place.

In Mexican mythology, dying was considered another part of our existence, we move to another realm and once a year we come back to earth, so mourning and sadness were considered insults to the dead. Celebrations lasted for a month and where presided by Queen *Mictecacíhuatl* , ‘Lady of the Dead’, better known nowadays as *La Catrina*. For a brief please see:

<http://www.princeton.edu/~otorres/DODBrief.pdf>”

Oscar Torres-Reyna

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Delivering to New York





Pictures provided by Lisa M. Linn De Barona