



## ACTIVITY FOR “ICE EL HIELO” BY LA SANTA CECILIA

### STEP 1: CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BEFORE WATCHING THE VIDEO

1. How can popular or commercial art play a role in civic consciousness, activism, or social change? Can you identify one body of work that you feel has accomplished this?
2. How does activist art differ from propaganda? What do you believe are the essential differences between the two?

### STEP 2: READ THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Los Angeles-based Latin Alternative band La Santa Cecilia released their song “Ice El Hielo” in April of 2013. The group’s typical good-time, danceable, tropical influences took a back seat on this pro-migrant activist ballad that features bilingual word play in its title. ICE, the acronym for US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, are translated to “Hielo” in Spanish, or “water frozen solid.” This intentional mistranslation was meant to symbolize the fear of deportation that undocumented immigrants face on a daily basis.

The song was released during the Obama administration, and became a rallying cry for a Latino migrant community that watched the President align with their goals rhetorically, but carry out record numbers of immigration raids, earning him the title “Deporter-in-Chief.”<sup>1</sup> The video was sponsored by the National Day Laborer Organizing network as part of the #Not1More movement, which demanded an immediate stop to the deportation raids, accusing legislators of xenophobic and discriminatory behavior.<sup>2</sup>

The song was released at a time when undocumented immigration had risen to the forefront in national politics, with states like Arizona, Alabama, and Georgia enacting restrictive immigration laws.<sup>3</sup> Figures like Maricopa County, Arizona’s Sheriff Joe Arpaio, accused and later convicted of racial profiling in his crackdown against undocumented immigrants,<sup>4</sup> captured the national limelight, giving rise to opposition voices in mainstream media and beyond, including this song.

The band’s own *requinto* and accordion player, Pepe Carlos, made his undocumented status public at the time of the music video’s release, stating he did it to “come out and not be scared anymore.”<sup>5</sup>

## References

1. <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2014/02/08/barack-obama-deporter-in-chief>
2. <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/an-atlanta-campaign-deman b 10576018.html>
3. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/two-sides-arizonas-sb1070-n19271>
4. <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/24/arpaio-racial-profiling n 3333907.html>
5. <https://www.ocweekly.com/latin-grammy-nominated-and-sin-papeles-the-story-of-la-santa-cecillas-pepe-carlos-6581455/>

### STEP 3: WATCH THE VIDEO / READ THE LYRICS

**Video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0lNJviuYUEQ>

**Lyrics:** <https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/La-Santa-Cecilia/Ice-el-Hielo-Full-Version/translation/english>

### STEP 4: ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AFTER VIEWING THE VIDEO

1. This song and video were released at a time when the national debate over undocumented immigration had reached a flashpoint. How do the dramatized vignettes of the video contribute to this debate? Where do they fall on the political spectrum? Are they accessible to the opposition or aimed at a friendly audience? How can you tell?
2. This song makes a personal and emotional plea in favor of migrants instead of a policy-based, political one. Why do you think La Santa Cecilia took this approach? In your opinion, how effective was their attempt? How does this music video illustrate the ways in which the personal and political are intertwined?