



Lucila Chavez, San Jose Chapter Lead

Chicks in Bowls

SJ Chapter

Skating has quite the quirky history. The first recorded invention of skates was credited to an 18th century instrument maker and inventor. Wanting to make a memorable entrance to a masquerade, he arrived wobbling on primitive metal-wheeled boots while playing a violin—then promptly crashed into an expensive mirror. Skates gained in popularity, and almost two centuries later, the New York Roller Skating Association (NYRSA) converted a hotel dining room into the very first public roller rink. Over the years, the world has seen roller ballets and roller ballroom dancing, roller discos and roller derby bouts. Carhop waitresses of the '50s wheeled milkshakes to parked convertibles. And German barmaids of the mid-1800s strapped on skates, too, traversing the length of sizable taverns to serve beers.

It should come as no surprise, then, that today's quad skaters continue to comprise a lively, colorful community. Take Chicks in Bowls (CIB), a worldwide collective of skaters (of all levels) with the mantra “shred 'til we're dead.” This community—founded by a roller derby girl who answers to the alter ego Lady Trample—is dedicated to encouraging and swapping tricks with other quad skaters at meet-ups and making skate parks more inviting for all. To date, CIB boasts over 300 chapters around the globe.

Our local CIB chapter, headed by Lucila Chavez, can be spotted at skate parks across San Jose. One of their hangouts, Lake Cunningham Action Sports Park, is California's largest skate park, with an array of bowl shapes, rails, and boxes, as well as the world's longest full pipe. However, Lucila and her crew are particularly fond of Plata Arroyo, a scrappy east side skate park they've adopted, with the intention of cleaning away its trash and advocating for upgrades. “It takes all hands to make it beautiful and welcoming for all,” Lucila remarks.

Plata Arroyo's graffitied bowls certainly differ from the pristine cement slopes at Cunningham, but there's personality in that paint. Words in complex fonts, cartoon characters, and other tags in bright hues match the splashes of turquoise, canary yellow, and hot pink on laces and helmets sported by CIB skaters.

Besides badass tricks, attire allows skaters another outlet for expression. Skaters have plenty of ways to express identity by person-

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—Lucila Chavez

alizing their looks—from Hello Kitty skates to heart toe stops, from stickers applied to helmets to pompoms, bows, and wings attached to laces.

Lucila expresses a preference for vintage dresses (with spandex) and bold red lipstick—along with her helmet, elbow pads, wrist guards, and knee-pads, of course. “I let [new skaters] know, ‘Hey, safety is sexy. Be sure you tie your shoes. Be sure you’re checking your roller skates. Make sure they spin. This is how you clean them.’”

CIB San Jose, like other Chicks in Bowls chapters, is not only a great support system for beginners, but also for two of the most underrepresented groups at skate parks: women and quad skaters. Lucila says the number of skateboarders and BMX riders catching air on the bowls greatly outweighs the number of quad skaters; it’s also common to see a single woman for every ten men. “It’s less intimidating for us to go in large numbers,” she notes.

“Especially if girls are on roller skates...they’re gonna get eyed.”

When the CIB San Jose chapter isn’t grinding along Plata Arroyo’s edges or kicking up into ho-hos (handstands) on its ramps, they join fellow skaters for San Jose Skate Night. Every first Saturday, streaks of light from participants’ LED wheels zip across streets and sidewalks like urban fireflies. They make quite the memorable sight as they cruise (and sometimes conga) around the city while blasting the Bee Gees and Rick James from a 15-inch speaker on wheels (playfully nicknamed the “music stroller”).

Next time you drive past a skatepark, remember our resident rollers—women who sail and spin across cement as gracefully as ice skaters, women who wear bruises—not with embarrassment, but with the pride of battle scars gained from courageous acts—women who use wheels as a way of welcoming others into community. 