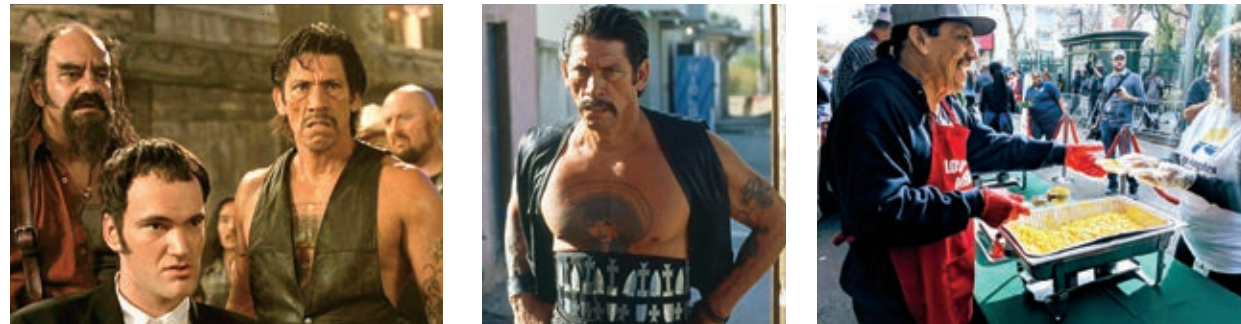




# More Than Just a **TOUGH** Guy



ACTOR DANNY TREJO'S LONG ROLE AS A COUNSELOR AND HIS WORK HELPING OTHERS EARNS HIM THE LA PRESS CLUB'S VISIONARY AWARD

**D**anny Trejo is a renaissance man. He's an iconic actor with hundreds of roles on his enviable Hollywood resume. He's a successful restaurateur with a growing taco and doughnut empire that shows no signs of cooling down. And even though he doesn't drink, he's got a beer out, too, a Mexican lager, of course. There's another side of Trejo, one that many people may not be aware of: He has a long history of working as a counselor and helping others. Trejo grew up on the streets of Los Angeles, and despite spending the latter part of his early adulthood incarcerated, he has worked hard to maintain a drug-free and

positive lifestyle. He has more than 50 years of sobriety, and ever since he was released from Soledad Prison, he has been involved in programs aimed at helping those who, like him, battled or are currently battling drug and alcohol addictions.

Trejo is being honored tonight with the Los Angeles Press Club's Visionary Award, which was created in 2012 to honor an individual in the entertainment industry who uses a high-profile status to make the world a better place and to spread information about issues of freedom and importance.

It's been a long road for the 75-year-old Trejo, who as an actor is known for playing tough-guy roles such as a knife-throwing assassin in *Desperado* and a former Mexican Federale named Machete in the *Machete* and *Spy Kids* films.

Trejo was born in Echo Park in 1944. Influenced by a young uncle, he was off to a life of crime at an early age and did time in juvenile camps before eventually landing in Soledad and San Quentin state prisons for drugs and other crimes.

After being in and out of prison for about a decade, he completed a 12-step program that forever changed his life, as he began counseling others about the dangers of drugs.

That led to a call in 1985 to the set of the



film *Runaway Train* to counsel one of the actors. There, his tough-guy appearance was noticed by the director, who wanted to put him in the film as an extra. But thanks to the boxing he had done while in prison, Trejo got a meatier role and was cast as a boxer, squaring off in the ring against the film's star, Eric Roberts.

Page 22, top, from left: On the set of *Desperado*, and as the assassin; helping serve food for L.A. Mission. A young cowboy; with parents, growing up in Echo Park.

Above: Playing the lead in *Machete*.

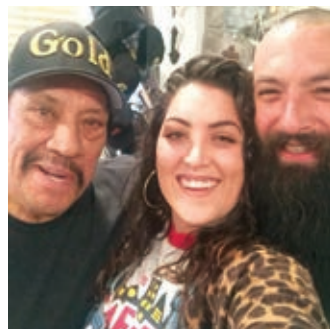
Right: Hugging his mother, Alice; as a young boxer, he won lightweight and welterweight titles in San Quentin.





Clockwise from above: Visiting with Rep. Maxine Waters and other members of Congress; displaying the food offerings at Trejo's Tacos and Trejo's Cantinas; Danny with his rescue dogs; with his kids Danny Boy, Gilbert and Danielle.

Below: The kids grow up...



That led to a career with seemingly countless roles in film and TV. His work ranges from *Con Air* and the *From Dusk to Dawn* film series to small-screen appearances in "Sons of Anarchy," "Breaking Bad," "King of the Hill" and much more.

Trejo has other passions, which have led to business ventures. He has a love of food that came from his mother, a great cook who always dreamed of opening her own restaurant.

In 2012, Trejo was starring in a movie when producer Ash Shah noticed the actor's affinity for food.

"He noticed I liked eating good food. I don't eat fast food and junk. And jokingly, or I don't know if he was joking or not, he said 'Danny why don't you open a restaurant?'" Trejo said.

It took a few years, but in 2016 the first Trejo's Tacos opened along a busy stretch of La Brea Avenue. There are now four Trejo's Tacos locations, three Trejo's Cantinas, and one Trejo's Coffee & Donuts in the Los Angeles area. Additionally, thanks to a partnership

with Live Nation, Trejo's Tacos are at 24 local concert venues where his food is sold during approximately 500 shows per year. The taco shops have also had outposts at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival and Stagecoach Country.

Since Trejo likes healthy food, his chain is billed as healthier Mexican food with items such as jackfruit and cauliflower tacos, although there are still carnitas, barbacoa and Trejo's favorite, carne asada, on the menu.

There's another taco that he loves, too, but admitting it could ruin his tough-guy cred.

"Don't tell anyone I love this, but give me a cauliflower taco anytime," he laughed.

When not on a set or in one of his restaurants, Trejo might be found with one of his five rescue dogs. He has a long history as an animal advocate, and last year used an Instagram post—with a shot of himself posing, shirtless and crouching next to a pitbull—to help the country stop euthanizing dogs and cats by 2025.

In fact, Trejo appears as a celebrity supporter on the website of Best Friends—he is shown with his adopted dogs Cash and Penny Lane—a nonprofit that seeks to make animal shelters no-kill facilities. Tonight, Trejo will be introduced by U.S. Congressman Tony Cardenas, another noted animal welfare advocate.

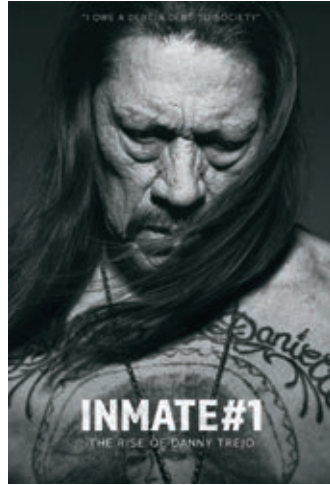
Restaurants and animal advocacy are not the only things outside of acting that commands his attention. Just like the famous tattoo of a woman in a sombrero that's inked on

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A poster for bio-documentary set for release in 2020.

Right: One of the rarer cars in Trejo's car collection is the 1965 Buick Riviera with the clamshell headlights.

Portions of a *Los Angeles Daily News* article by Richard Guzman, published June 27, 2019, were used for this story.

his chest, Trejo wants to leave his permanent mark on the world of music by becoming the Mexican Berry Gordy.

"I'm just so passionate about music, all the way back to the '50s," Trejo said this summer as he sat in his Sherman Oaks music studio a few days after the launch of his new record label called Trejo's Music.

"Everything good that has happened to me has happened from helping people, and I started this record label to help people," he said, explaining that one of his main goals is to support new artists.

Trejo started the record label with rapper and singer Baby Bash and producer Edward "E-Dub" Rios, who all want to turn Trejo's Music into the Chicano Motown.

The first album under the label, "Danny Trejo Presents Chicano Soul Shop Volume 1," features Trejo on the cover in a white tank top looking as tough as ever as he stands in front of a lowrider car. The album features music that encompasses a mix of genres, including soul, hip-hop, R&B and rock, with established artists such as Baby Bash, Frankie J, Chiquis Rivera and rock fusion band Puro



Bandido. And in keeping with the goal of exposing new talent, there are up-and-coming artists including Joey Quiñones, Trish Toledo and Tarah New.

It's a busy time for the devoted father of three, but Trejo doesn't look to be slowing down. In fact, people might be even more focused on him in the coming months. That's because Trejo's colorful life and prolific career are chronicled in the new bio-documentary *Inmate #1*. It will be available early 2020.

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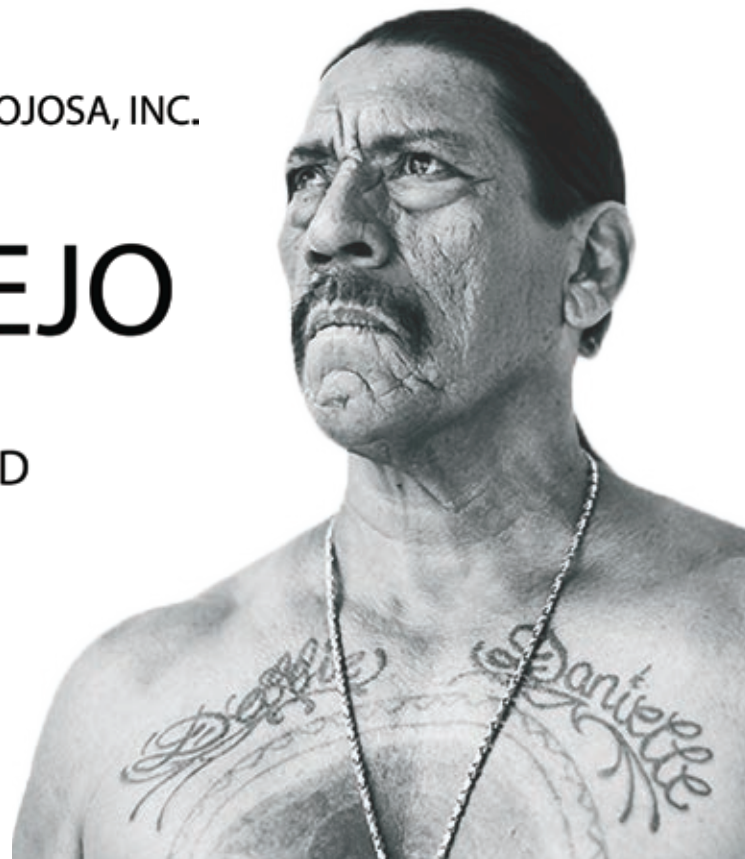
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**DANNY TREJO**

on receiving

**THE VISIONARY AWARD**

for Humanitarian Work



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 An Angel To Our Service Men & Women  
 Offering Her Extraordinary Talent to  
 Help Us Bring HOPE To Those In Need  
 And  
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 With Gratitude,

