

# La Voz de Esperanza

September 2002 • vol 15 issue 7



## In this issue:

- *Ecos desde un vientre de barro*: an exhibit at the Esperanza paying tribute to 5 generations of artesanía in clay by the Alfonso Castillo Orta family of Izúcar de Matamoros, Puebla in Mexico.
- Teaching and Historical Trauma in Chicana/o History by Yolanda Chávez Leyva and poetry by Letras Sin Fronteras
- ArtEscuela, Somos Esperanza by the ArtEscuela summer interns
- Citlali, la Chicana superhero
- Quince años de Esperanza: Recuerdos y más in this issue of Voz



# La VOZ de Esperanza

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We ask that articles be visionary, progressive, instructive, & thoughtful. Submissions must be literate & critical; not sexist, racist, homophobic, violent, or oppressive. Articles may be edited for length. All letters in response to Esperanza activities or articles in La Voz will be considered for publication. Letters with intent to slander individuals or groups will not be published.

a publication of  
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Esperanza is funded in part by the Americans for the Arts Foundation/Animating Democracy, Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation, Funding Exchange, Gill Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Open Society Foundation's Southern Initiative, Public Welfare Foundation, Alice Kleberg Reynolds Meyer Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Southern Funding Collaborative, Surdna Foundation, Texas Commission on the Arts, and la buena gente de nuestra comunidad.

Cover photo: Artescuola interns Claudia Ahumada, Mika De Leon, Alonzo Avila, (pictured at bottom) Valerie De Leon, Spiral (top)

# Quince años de Esperanza

There is an image that first comes to mind and that is the dedication of the Esperanza when it was first created. I remember that in the Esperanza's first building there was a plazita with a fountain. The place looked very Mexican. It was like walking into a little pueblito. I was invited as a representative of the City. .... The Esperanza was new, hopeful, young and visionary. That was important because City Hall was a good place to see what a city is really like. As an advocate for marginalized people, it was sometimes hard to see that my dreams could come true: dreams of equality and justice. It was important and affirming for me to go to a place where those same values were elevated and celebrated. It was very special. –María Antonietta Berriozábal (El Grito)

We are dancing in a circle. It is October, 1993, a good few years before the false millennium, and the party, Raising Hope, Raising the Dead, is held in the upstairs room of an old Westside building, El Salón Téa. ... thinking that if all Esperanza came to reality, then this is how the world could be in the not-too-distant future, us dancing among families, lovers, friends in circles and across lines with the only regard or acknowledgement being smiles and gritos in celebration of a pure togetherness. –Paul Bonin-Rodríguez (El Grito, 2000)

Support of the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered community was part of the reason for the Esperanza's eviction from the North Flores location. We had been one of the first organizations in the country to publicly organize a queer art show. Our last show (in 1994) at the old North Flores location came to be one of the most debated and discussed shows ever, to this day. Some of the work was taken out of context and used against us by the Christian right as well as conservative gay white men which ultimately affected our funding and support base... –Martha Prentiss (El Grito, 2000)

When Esperanza's first building was lost, there was only one way to go. The building died yet the spirit called for a home of its own. Support to the Esperanza today is to support the force it represents in the development of our population: still segregated, still too many poor, still few accumulating wealth off the sweat and artistry of the backs and hands and dreams of the destitute and working classes. The Esperanza still is the only organization of its kind which asks bothersome questions for those forces who are not interested in social change. We no longer need to ask for permission. –Susan M. Guerra (El Grito, 2000)

In the spring of 1996, the Ku Klux Klan came to San Antonio. The media had been reporting on other Klan rallies around the state along with the violence and arrests that always accompany such events. In our community, the mayor's office, the local chapter of the NAACP and a few local pastors were advising that we stay home and ignore the Klan. Passivity in the presence of racism has never been the Esperanza way. Our response was to take the lead in organizing an incredible coalition of activists from the African American, the Latino, the Gay and Lesbian, the Legal and the Arts communities... As a result of our efforts, no arrests or acts of violence occurred that day and the connections made through the coalition have endured over the years. –Jan Olsen (El Grito, 2000)

Almost died at the Esperanza. Before Cuando Calienta el Sol and after Guantanamo at Graciela's parent's fiftieth wedding anniversary. Right by the women's bathroom

**VOZ VISION STATEMENT:** *La Voz de Esperanza* speaks for many individual, progressive voices who are gente-based, multi-visioned and *milagro-bound*. We are diverse survivors of materialism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, classism, violence, earth-damage, specisism and cultural and political oppression. We are recapturing the powers of alliance, activism and healthy conflict in order to achieve interdependent economic/spiritual healing and *fuerza*. *La Voz* is a resource for peace, justice, and human rights, providing a forum for criticism, information, education, humor and other creative works. *La Voz* provokes bold actions in response to local and global problems, with the knowledge that the many risks we take for the earth, our body, and the dignity of all people will result in profound change for the seven generations to come.

with a plastic glass of chardonnay in my hand. It was a carrot. After dancing salsa with John all night who is seventy plus, but dances like he's twenty, I went to see what chisme David Zamora Casas had to tell me. Something about his next victim in the game of love, I think. The punchline came, whispered and obscene, while I was swallowing the pinche piece of carrot, and the next thing you know I couldn't breathe. ...David saved my life. I could have died at the Esperanza. But come to think of it, I have died there already, many times. ... each time I get another chance to live without fear. –Bárbara Renaud González (2000)

Para mi, Esperanza has for years been my personal answer to the Alamo and all it represents—no small accomplishment! Instead of war and destruction, Esperanza has stood for the creative spirit and liberating art. Instead of supposedly heroic men who were in fact building imperialism, its walls have sheltered brave women building a home for hope. Instead of a shrine to racism, Esperanza has celebrated La Raza and all the razas struggling for justice. –Elizabeth “Betita” Martínez (2000)

I am grateful for the Esperanza nudging me to do things I had been too afraid to do. At the outbreak of the war in Bosnia, I was silent about my own friend who I had lost contact with. Thanks to the Esperanza I was invited to make a speech about Bosnia for International Women's Day, and I moved from a place of powerlessness to a place of action. My speech was immediately reprinted by The New York Times, featured on NPR radio, and picked up on the wire, finally by the San Antonio Express News. If things have improved here in Macondo, it's thanks to many fearless community groups and fearless individuals. I am particularly indebted to the Esperanza for standing on the frontline regardless of the criticism that

often entails. –Sandra Cisneros (1997, Diez Años)

Maybe our homes reflect the world we want to live in. Beautiful, colorful, warm, open, comfortable. Like our home at the Esperanza. We are building the Esperanza for those who are coming after us. Preparing their new home. What will it look like when we are gone? What happens when we are the ancestors? When we have crossed over, six generations from now...what will we say to the living? –Dennis Poplin (2000)

At the Center the phones rang off the hook, as people called to wish us well. Supporters flocked to offer their good wishes; the air hung thick in expectation of the judgment. The Judge's chambers spilled over with supporters, detractors, and media jockeys ready to tell the story. Reverently, those in attendance honored the tone set by Judge García during the hearing. People reminded each other that he was not one to accept chatter. An individual reminded someone to take off their shades because “he had previously asked someone to take their dark glasses off” in respect for the court. Reminding us that he was making a non-partisan and potentially unpopular decision, he asked Dr. Antonia Castañeda to put away a yard sign reading, ¡todos somos esperanza! Judge García stated that the sign was too political, clarifying that he was not running for office. Shortly past 10:00 a.m., it came. Without fanfare, and in a very judicious manner, Judge García rendered his decision. –Dr. Josie Méndez-Negrete (La Voz, 2001)

Editor's note: Of course, Esperanza won the lawsuit against the City of San Antonio in 2001 with the Judge ruling in favor of Esperanza in 3 of 4 counts. Since then, we have more memories to share and write about. We will celebrate Quince Años on Saturday, October 26, so send your recuerdos in, now!

**Whomever you are, wherever you are,  
you have been part of Esperanza for all or part of our 15 years.  
We need your stories, recuerdos, photos, video and creative works\*  
related to la historia de Esperanza.**

**Names, dates, places, faces, events, images...  
all will be part of a commemorative publication of  
Todos Somos Esperanza, Los primeros quince años.**

**Bring or send your contributions to the Esperanza this month!**

**\*Copies will be made on site**

**922 San Pedro, San Antonio, Tx 78212 or email lavoz@esperanzacenter.org**



# Ecós desde un vientre de barro

Entrevistas con la familia Castillo y Marco Iñiguez Alba

Izúcar de Matamoros lies one hour outside of the famed city of Puebla in central Mexico where *mole*, Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, the smoldering volcano Popocatepetl, and the famous Cinco de Mayo battle against the French contribute to it's incredible rich legendary history. Unbeknownst to many of its inhabitants, in dusty Izúcar resides one of Mexico's living artistic treasures - la familia Castillo - renowned ceramicists, and namely Don Alfonso Castillo Orta, nationally recognized as a "maestro de maestros" and whose ceramic works of art form part of valuable international collections in Munich, London, Vienna, Chicago, and the Spanish Royal Palace of King Juan Carlos. In 1996 Don Alfonso received Mexico's most prestigious national prize, el Premio Nacional de Ciencias y Artes.

During the economic recessions of the 70s in Mexico Don Alfonso, as many others in Izúcar, was forced to abandon his daily life as a dairy farmer. Under these disillusioning circumstances he and his wife Doña Soledad Marta Hernández Báez, an artisan like himself and his most enthusiastic collaborator, decided to dedicate themselves entirely to the family craft - *artesanía de cerámica policromada*. The choice to continue the family legacy was clear, yet daunting for the growing family with children to feed.

As third generation ceramic artisans, they broke from family traditions fettered on ritual-religious oriented polychromatic pieces and experimented, "always looking for new themes and refusing to generate what the other brothers and sister-in-law were producing," claims Doña Soledad. Don Alfonso's siblings Heriberto, Agustín, and Isabel also have talleres and their own rich stories to tell. The breakthrough in the family trajectory came when Don Alfonso and Doña

Soledad rediscovered and re-appropriated natural colors and tints, reclaiming ancestral prehispanic traditions and followed in the footsteps of grandfather Simón Orta, who at the turn of the 20th century used natural materials available to him in el campo. Don Alfonso and Doña Soledad's ceramic compositions became more complex and elaborate pieces, which advanced them to new levels of artistic creation, in turn, opening up new spaces to sell their art pieces. The ancient árbol de la vida served as canvas for new narrative representations of life, history and tradition. In fact, la familia Castillo-Orta has as much claim to the familial origins of the tree of life as any other family in Izúcar, known as the probable birthplace of the árbol de vida. More recently, the Castillo-Orta familia has become widely known for their clay pieces depicting intricately and delicately painted scenes with calaveras and calacas for Días de los muertos.

Recognition and praise came each season the Castillo-Orta family taller entered a piece in local, state, national and international competitions. And as Alfonso and Soledad's five children - Veronica, Alfonso II, Marta Angelica, Marco Antonio, and Patricia - matured they too have become artistic forces continuing with the rich family legacy. Their children, Alfonsina and Alfonso III, the eldest of the fifth generation, already participate

in the taller's everyday activities - watching, listening and playing with clay as their parents did when they were children, making *bolitas*-clay balls, *floreccitas*-flowers, and *pajaritos*-birds. Alfonsina at the tender age of 4 years old has expressed to her mother the desire to grow up to paint her own large pieces, not just make and paint "bolitas."

Below are two excerpts from a series of interviews I conducted in March 2002 in Izúcar de Matamoros, Puebla, with principal members of the Castillo Orta-Hernández taller. Additional interviews with historians, sociologists, museum/gallery directors, and other clan members with independent *talleres* will be compiled into a forthcoming book honoring the familia Castillo Orta's contributions to

Mexican art y la artesanía cerámica policromada. The following excerpts are taken from doña Soledad Marta Hernández Báez and don Alfonso Castillo Orta's interviews.

Don Alfonso Castillo Orta [interview by Marco Iñiguez, translation into English by Virginia Grise]

"I remember that when I was about eight years old I went to the fields with all of my family. When we returned we dedicated ourselves to make candelabras or whatever else was planned for that day. I remember that we, me and my brothers, had to make the arcs and other figures, and since I was one of the youngest I made small hanging figures for decoration - fruit, birds. Later when I was about twelve I learned to paint a little bit at a time. I would help my parents. My parents dedicated themselves more to the artesanía. They sold their work in Mexico and abroad. Eventually, they sold their land and the animals on it and gave themselves fully to the artesanía. Everybody in the family worked and gave themselves fully." - Don Alfonso Castillo Orta

Doña Soledad Marta Hernández Báez [interviewed by Marco Iñiguez]

¿De dónde viene su espíritu de artista?

Cuando me casé estaba yo en cero, no sabía nada de la artesanía. Al casarme empecé a pintar florecitas y cosas sencillas. Cuando mi esposo a los cuatro o cinco meses le dije -¿sabes que? Yo voy a pintar una pieza, yo solita. Ya me choqué de pintar puras flores, hojas, pajaritos, y cosas sencillas. Ya voy a pintar una pieza yo sola.

Él me dijo -¡no, no, no! sigue como éstas porque todavía no eres buena para hacer las líneas, las rayitas, y todo. Le dije que no. -Yo sí, ya puedo.

Como él no me dejaba, me voy con la hermana de él. Una hermana que también pintaba, Gloria Castillo. Le digo -Oye, Gloria, ¿me das chanza de pintar una pieza? Me dice -¿De veras quieres pintar una? -Sí- le dije -ya quiero demostrarle a mi marido que sí puedo. -Sale- dice -píntate allí la que gustes.

Me acuerdo muy bien que era un sahumerio que la familia estaba pintando, mi suegra y su hija. Me dieron una pieza de 27cm, un sahumerio o incensario. Lo pintó de la orilla hasta al final, todo. Voy con mi esposo, y le digo -oyes

'mano ven, mira esta pieza. -¿Y qué? dice. -Ah, está bonita. ¿Quién la pintó? Luego ya le digo -no, la pinté yo. -¿De veras, tú la pintaste? me dice él. Sí, eran como a los cuatro meses de que me había casado. Y dice -aah pues, ya puedes. Entonces ya pinta tu sola.

Y desde entonces yo empecé a pintar yo solita. Cuando cumplí seis meses de casada yo ya podía pintar las piezas yo sola. A mi nunca me gustó guisar, ni me gustaron los quehaceres de la casa. Me dije, pues con esto que aprendí..., ya me conseguí [alguien que] me ayudaba en la casa y yo me ponía a ayudarle a mi marido a trabajar el barro desde muy temprano hasta las 10, 11 de la noche. A veces hasta las 5, las 6 o las 4 de la mañana, según. Así ya me fui todo el tiempo.

Don Alfonso Castillo Orta [document source: Alfonso Castillo Orta, Premio Nacional de Artes y Tradiciones Populares]

Mi abuelo me contó lo que significa el "árbol de vida;" decía que en una comunidad indígena, cuando celebraban una boda, a los recién casados se les entregaba un árbol de

madera y se les preguntaba qué esperaban de su matrimonio y cuántos hijos deseaban concebir; a los siete años, si habían convivido bien y cumplían lo prometido, se celebraba una fiesta en la que la pareja entregaba el árbol de Madera para ser quemado; el más anciano les regalaba un árbol de barro policromado adornado con muñequitos y productos del campo, que representaba a los hijos que habían concebido. Este árbol, que es el principio de la vida, era el testimonio de que ya estaban preparados para su vida futura.



Editor's note: A great honor has been bestowed on the Esperanza Center and community who will host an exhibit, *Ecós desde un vientre de barro*, as a tribute or homenaje to Don Alfonso Castillo Orta and Doña Soledad Marta Hernández Báez and their family. Five generations of the Castillo family, including Verónica Castillo who has worked closely with the Esperanza's Mujerartes project, will be present for the exhibit to talk about the process, the history, and the significance of their work in clay. Join us on Saturday, September 28th, at 6 pm at the Esperanza Center for the opening of this extraordinary exhibit. The exhibit will run through November 15, 2002, at the Esperanza galería. (See back page for announcement.)



# ArtEscuela, Somos Esperanza

In the past year, San Antonio city politics has read like a script of a well written telenovela - drama, scandal, deceit and power. All the statistics prove that San Antonio truly is a colonial city - 5 military bases, the 2nd highest policy brutality rate in the nation, 22,000 homeless people. All the while, our city "leaders" offer corporate giveaways for land owners offering low wage jobs, endanger our only source of water and tear down landmarks of our people's history.



This summer the Esperanza offered 5 internships to the students of Artescuela, a summer school for activists. Claudia Ahumada, Mika De León, Valerie De León, Spiral and Alonzo Avila underwent an eight-week intensive leadership training, including workshops in history, culture, facilitation, art, fundraising, media, dismantling oppression, and public speaking. They set up for Esperanza events, attended Arte es Vida meetings, participated in the PGA struggle and organized a video archive. Valerie and Mika created a workshop on art and politics that they later presented at a Youth Action conference in Denver, and all of the interns went to Kingsville, Texas, to participate in the Xochiquetzal Borderlands Art Project with Chicana artist Santa Barraza. In addition, students participated in the protests against the killings in Juárez, Mexico. Valerie's video-taped reaction to *Señorita Extraviada* by Lourdes Portillo aired nationally in August and will air locally on public access television (KLRN) September 13 at 10pm after the film.

Through the internship, we hoped to provide a framework so that jóvenes can begin to understand, name and fight against all forms of oppression. We hope the interns will help develop youth centered programs at the Esperanza and help in the outreach, planning and facilitation of Artescuela. If we really want to have a say in defining the future of San Antonio, if we really want the city to belong to the people who live here, we are going to have to fight for it. What follows in this article are their own words reflecting what they've learned. -Virginia Grise, ArtEscuela Coordinator

## Quienes somos?

Quien es nuestra gente? Nuestro pueblo? Que es nuestra historia? Que es ser buena gente? Are your people the ones caminando en la calle, esperando que el bus llegue? Es tu pueblo aquel que está dividido en partes? Es tu historia aquella que comenta acerca de como vivía cierto grupo de gente antes que llegaron los Europeos?

## Shame.

Nowadays, some people are ashamed to speak Spanish in public - el mismo español que hablaban antes de aprender el ingles... I remember being embarrassed of my Spanish, afraid of being made fun of because of the way I speak. I even got into trouble for speaking the language I grew up with - like the time in 4th grade when I got sent to the



principal's office for refusing to call my hermanas "sisters." Y ahora every time I roll my R's I find the beauty in my culture.

## Speaking with a voice of power.

I'm proud that I speak Spanish, proud of quien soy. Soy una Chicana, often questioned because I don't eat Mexican food. Sharing a bed with five family members, wearing hand me down clothing, Sunday Bar-B-Ques, 'prendiendo velas y rezando a Dios y a la Virgen María por el mundo - siendo Chicana es siempre siendo buena gente. Standing up for my barrio, where I still walk the streets bare footed to the corner to get Chinese candy and sal con limón.

## Breaking barriers.

Picking myself up after the many times I've been pushed down, sometimes feeling like one of those blow up punching bags. Una vez Vicki nos dijo, "Don't let anyone tell you 'you can't,'" after a little incident we had at the airport on our trip to Chicago for the Women Against



ArtEscuela is Esperanza's year-round cultural arts/social justice program for youth 14 to 22. Fall session begins SEPTEMBER 13, 2002 and continues every Saturday 11am-3pm. Call 228-0201 to register.



Violence Conference. When we got in line to board the plane, the ticket man told us that we couldn't get on the plane because we were late. Everyone just looked at each other like, "Well

what do we do now?" Our tickets were nonrefundable. Vicki looked at us with a very determined look and told us that we could make it. "Get your stuff and run!" Going through security, it seemed like hours. We finally got through and we got on the plane. Out of breath, Vicki shared her words of wisdom with us, "Don't let anyone tell you 'you can't.'"

## Learning about what is going on in my surroundings.

I have learned about certain "systems" (like racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia) and that we must not be a part of these systems if we want to make this world a better place. We should always treat each other with respect. A few weeks ago, I was completely oblivious about urban sprawl and in fact I never bothered to know. I took an economic tour with María Berriozábal. The more north we went, the more we discovered a new city growing from above and 17 white men who control everything. The most growth you see in the West, East or South side is either a military base or a new company



offering low wage jobs, no signs of opportunities. The fire in me burned with anger. Why?

## Finding out all the más shady things in San Anto the city never mentions.

We came together to protect our water from the PGA Village to ensure better health in our communities for years to come. The PGA issue stirred up so much controversy. So many people had faith in Mayor Ed Garza. I can't believe he is trying to go forward with the building of the PGA resort over our sole source of water despite all of our work. Everyday we were out in the hot sun collecting signatures, speaking at city council, going to press conferences, going to court hearings and waiting for the latest "new deal." We helped make change

together through the Esperanza. We fought. For now the deal is stopped (on hold at least).

I was glad to support justified causes but sometimes even if we pushed and pushed, we were not always successful. La Gloria, a historical landmark on my city's west side, was torn down. The people were affected by the loss and now many people in our community are taking action by trying to recall Councilman David García. Sometimes I feel like the city is trying to hide us, trying to hide my people. I think it is important to be aware of local issues because everyday is a struggle and if we don't fight for justice who will fight for us?

## Arte es Vida.

We had a taste of freedom during our week-long trip to Kingsville. It was great to study under the Chicana artist Santa Barraza and her two assistants Brenda Canizales and Janie. Together they taught me techniques on how to create great art and how to use art instruments to create some of the best art I've done in a long time.



Before we could have our time away from home though we had to plan out how to get some monies. We took time out to learn how to do press releases, public speaking, and we did a fund-raising workshop. We got together at our board member's house, Dee Murff, to make decisions, watch movies and eat food. We gave each other good ideas, planned well and did a First Friday sale of food, aguas and buttons we designed. It was a big success. We made the money we needed.

Waking up like zombies the next morning after the First Friday fundraiser we went to the Arte es Vida meeting. That Saturday morning we exchanged stories from the elders as well as the youth - finding a connection from the past as well as the present and soon to be future, hearing the struggles of mis gentes, cries of happiness, sorrow and esperanza.

Socializing at the many events the Esperanza has to offer, we had the opportunity to meet as well as contribute our time in setting up events for such artists as Lourdes Pérez and Liliana Wilson Grez. I was happy knowing that I helped my people, people of my skin to send an artistic message to my community. I have met so many wonderful people through the internship that

continued on page 13

# CITLALI

LA CHICANA SUPER HERO

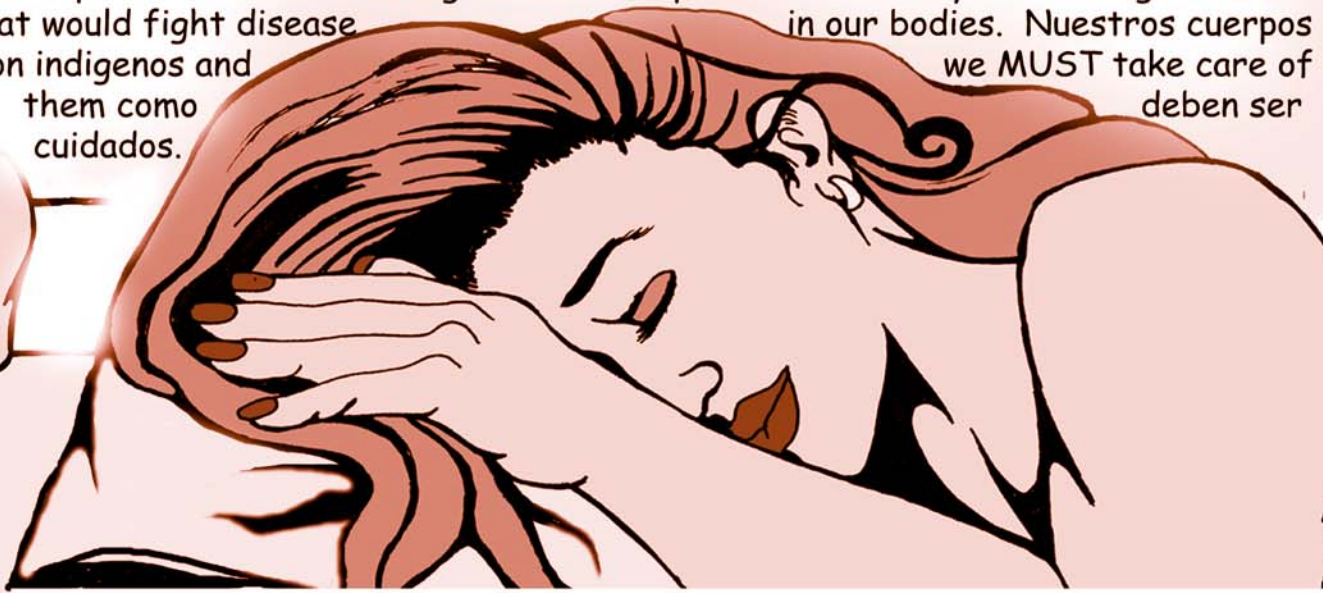


con/safos grafiks  
deborah kuetzpalin vasquez

Andale Machi, comete el cornbread porque es el guerrero principal.

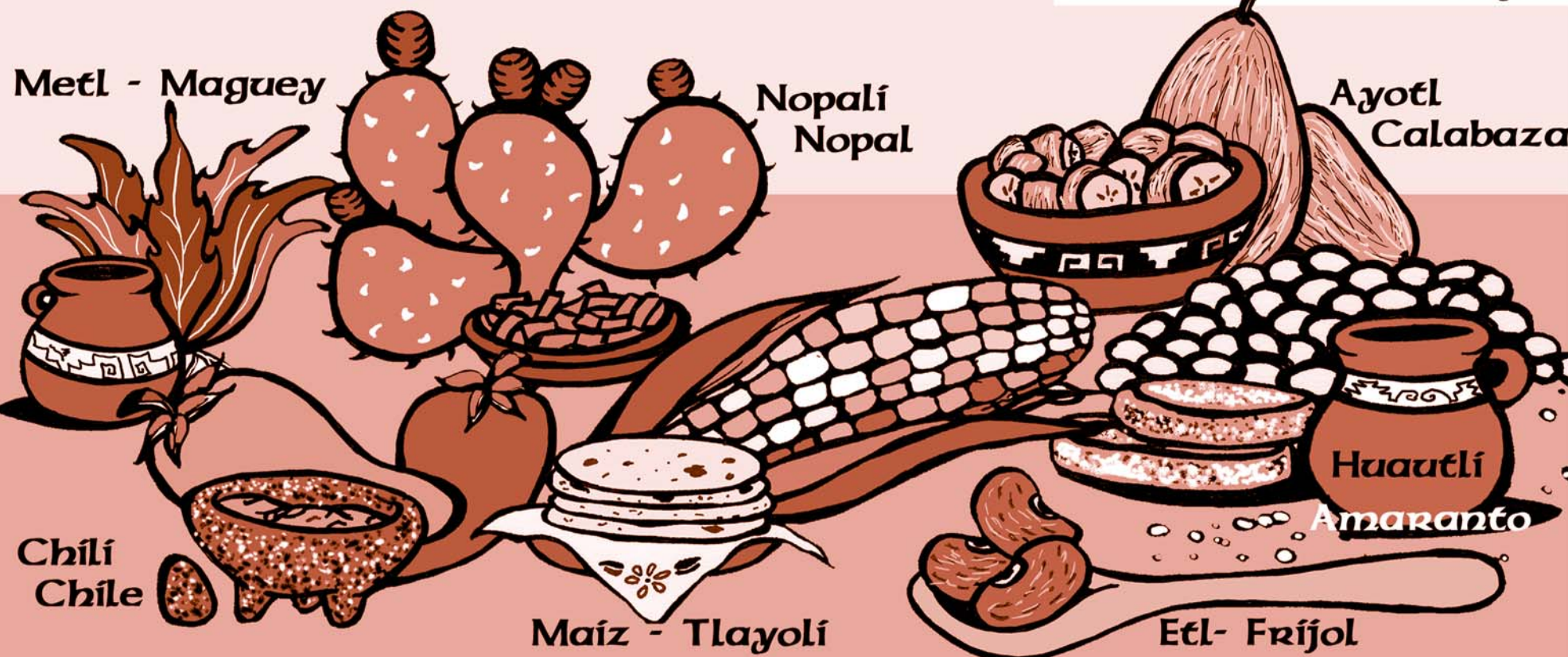


A veces we don't stop to think about lo que comemos y de donde viene. But our antepasados will come to us in our sueños y nos aconsejan. My jefita comes to me in my dreams y me recuerda lo que es importante en esta vida. Comiendo vegetables was always gacho to me. My jefita would sit with me y me hablaba de lo que necesitaban nuestros cuerpos indigenos. Su abuelita Ama Chena decía que we needed some vegetables mas que otras and they were the guerreros that would fight disease in our bodies. Nuestros cuerpos son indigenos and we MUST take care of them como cuidados. deben ser



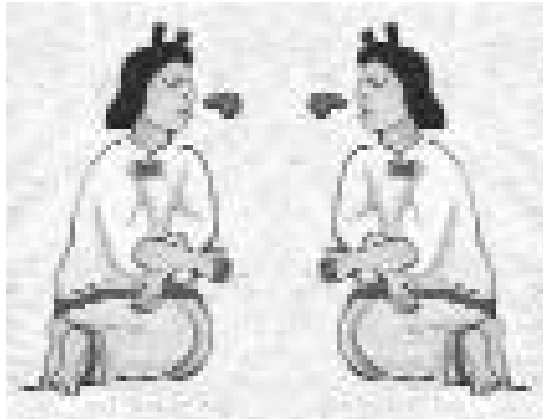
Es bueno de vez en cuando dejar la lucha or los lujos y concentrarse en la madre tierra. Our hands shouldn't be so fine that we can't run them through the soil or our feet so protected that we never feel the earth beneath us. Grow your food sin toda esa medicina mi gente, no se lleva mucho. Or let's buy from raza that grow their own. Let's connect back to who we are mi gente... de todo corazón

## LOS SIETE GUERREROS de la Alimentación Anahuaca



# The revisioning of history es una gran limpieza: Teaching and Historical Trauma in Chicana/o History

by Yolanda Chávez Leyva, Ph.D.



I begin this essay with a poem by Leslie Marmon Silko because her words encapsulate my message.<sup>1</sup> History is powerful, but a history that is confused, forgotten, or taken away hurts us, leaves us vulnerable, and keeps us living in the trauma of our past. The trauma of our past, historical trauma, is an historical event or process that shocks us out of our state of balance, as individuals or communities, often leaving us with long lasting emotional, physical, and mental effects. Historical trauma, like a physical trauma, wounds us.<sup>2</sup> However, just as history can be the weapon that wounds us, it can also be the medicine that heals us.

Intergenerational historical trauma, like history itself, is passed down from generation to generation. Its effects are felt over time, although not always understood explicitly by those experiencing/re-experiencing the trauma. Clinical studies have demonstrated that future generations do not have to remember an historic trauma consciously in order to be affected by it. Psychologists Bonnie Duran, Eduardo Duran, and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart point to studies of Jewish Holocaust survivors and their descendants to confirm this.<sup>3</sup> According to Brave Heart, Duran, and Duran, intergenerational trauma occurs “in reaction to multigenerational, collective, historical and cumulative psychic wounding over time—over the lifespan and across generations...”<sup>4</sup> Such insights from scholars, rooted in the fields of psychology and social work, have much to teach those of us who practice and teach history.

In the past twelve years that I have taught in university

*I will tell you something about stories  
[he said]  
They aren't just entertainment.  
Don't be fooled.  
They are all we have, you see,  
all we have to fight off illness and death.*

*You don't have anything  
if you don't have the stories.  
Their evil is mighty  
but it can't stand up to our stories.  
So they try to destroy the stories  
let the stories be confused or forgotten.  
They would like that.  
They would be happy  
Because we would be defenseless then.*

— From *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko

classrooms, I have learned that healing is a crucial and legitimate pedagogical function. Moreover, I have realized that the Chicana/o history classroom has the enormous potential to create a place where our students can confront historical trauma in a productive way.

At the 2002 Gender on the Borderlands Conference, Dr. Inés Hernández Ávila of the Native American Studies Program at U.C. Davis gave a moving plenary presentation pointing to the force of history. In fact, her comments provided the title for this presentation when she told the audience, “The revisioning of history es una gran limpieza.” I was elated to hear her words because they reinforced what I have come to believe with increasing commitment over the past decade of teaching. Histories, especially histories framed in a postcolonial context, have tremendous powers to heal.<sup>5</sup> In traditional Mexicana/Chicana healing practices, a *limpia* is a cleansing where body, mind, and spirit are brought into balance, as the negative is removed and replaced with that which is healthy.

In this essay, I call for a community wide dialogue that explores historical trauma and the relationship between history and healing within Chicana/o history. I know, from my experiences as a student and teacher, that the relationship is strong, although often unacknowledged, especially within the discipline of history itself. In calling for a deeper examination into historical trauma and its consequences, I am not advocating a history of victimhood, however. The Chicana/o community has a

history of creative resistance and resilience to oppression, as do other communities of color in the United States. It is essential that in exploring historical trauma, we strike a balance between understanding how history has injured our communities and the ways in which our communities have struggled to survive. We must understand both.

Although historical trauma is evident in the classroom, it is the community outside of the academy that has more readily recognized the connections between history and healing. In recent years, for example, communities of color have begun finding ways to reclaim and use history in order to restore our humanity and to recover from the devastation of our traumatic past. Activists, artists, healers and others have incorporated traditional healing ceremonies to heal from the wounds of the past.

Articles in the American Indian media regularly reference historical trauma and community ceremonies intended to deal with its aftereffects. Remembrance of ancestors is an essential ingredient of community healing. For example, the Santee people of Nebraska have conducted ceremonies remembering 37 Santee who were hanged in 1862 during land disputes with white settlers.<sup>6</sup> The Lakota have also remembered their ancestors through memorial rides. The 1992 film, “Wiping the Tears of Seven Generations,” tells the story of a 1990 Washigila or traditional Lakota wiping away the tears ceremony. Three hundred Lakota rode 250 miles in sub-zero degree weather in December of 1990, commemorating the loss of their ancestors during the Massacre of Wounded Knee a hundred years earlier. It was the beginning of moving their community out of mourning into healing.<sup>7</sup>

Since the 1970s, Native American psychologists and social workers have joined with traditional elders and healers to employ time-honored healing modalities and ceremonies, including sweat lodges and vision quests, in addressing historical trauma and its devastating after effects.<sup>8</sup> Ceremonies such as the Wiping of the Tears ceremony and the 1991 traditional burial of 31 Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux whose remains had been held by the Smithsonian for over a century have helped heal the wounds of history.<sup>9</sup>

The African American community, too, has recognized the connections between historical trauma and contemporary healing. A 2001 PBS documentary, “Freedman’s Cemetery Memorial: A Place of Healing,” document records the healing ceremony that accompanied the opening of the Freeman’s Cemetery Memorial in Dallas. The cemetery, burial ground for former slaves and their descendants, was in danger of destruction until the community came together to demand that their ancestors and the history represented by the cemetery be respected. The documentary depicts a moving healing ceremony, which draws in part from

traditional African ceremonies, in which the African American community comes together to remember and honor its dead.<sup>10</sup>

In her study of historical trauma among the Lakota, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart concludes that education about traumatic events leads to an increased awareness of the effects of the traumas. Furthermore, sharing these effects “with others of a similar background and within a traditional Lakota context leads to a cathartic sense of relief.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, we can only heal from the pain of history if we have the historical knowledge to recognize that historical events have wounded us.

## The remembrance of history

In the modern period, the production and teaching of history have been integral to the creation and maintenance of modern nation states. Although historians sought to employ standards of objectivity into the discipline, the writing of history worked to justify unequal power relations as well as the economic exploitation of peoples of color. As the profession of historian increasingly sought “objectivity,” official or academic histories clouded or even made invisible the histories and experiences of marginalized groups. The remembrance of our histories, almost non-existent in the classroom until the 1960s, became the domain of the home as parents and grandparents shared their memories.<sup>12</sup>

While history, as an academic discipline, has its roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cultures worldwide, and across time, have recognized the importance and power of history. The necessity of passing down history from generation to generation is recognized almost globally. In some cultures, there are individuals who are charged with remembering the group’s history, developing the ability to recite hundreds of years of history by memory.

Cultures honor those who remember the histories. Fernando Alvarado Tezozómoc, an indigenous Mexican historian born at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, wrote in eloquent terms of the histories left by “our great-grandfathers, our great-grandmothers.” He chronicled the importance of history in this way, “Their renown, their history, their memory/ Thus in the future/ Never will it perish, never will it be forgotten/ Always will we treasure it/ We, their children, their grandchildren/Brothers, great-grandchildren/Great-great-grandchildren, descendants/ We who carry their blood and their color/ We will tell it, we will pass it on.”<sup>13</sup> Remembrance of history is fundamental to human societies.

This essay constitutes a portion of a larger project in progress, titled *Heart Knowledge: History, Memory and Trauma in Chicana/o History*, that explores community memory, intergenerational trauma, healing, and pedagogy. The author invites comments, stories, or responses. Please email Yolanda Leyva at

yleyya@utep.edu or write to her at The Department of History, University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, Texas 79968.

<sup>1</sup> Although Silko uses the word "stories," I take it to mean "histories" as well. Although western scholars differentiated between the two words in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as they began to professionalize the field, there is a much longer history of the two concepts overlapping. In Spanish, the word for history (historia) is the same as the word for story (historia), reflecting this interconnection.

<sup>2</sup> In recent years, the subject of historical trauma (sometimes labeled intergenerational or postcolonial trauma) has been the subject of study by scholars, particularly in psychology and literature. Historical trauma first became widely acknowledged with the work on the Nazi Holocaust survivors and their children.

<sup>3</sup> Bonnie Duran, Eduardo Duran, and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, "Native Americans and the Trauma of History," in *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*, ed. by Russell Thornton (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 62.

<sup>4</sup> Duran, Duran, Brave Heart, 64.  
<sup>5</sup> By postcolonial I mean a history that arises not only in response to colonialism, but in resistance to it. Postcolonial histories center the colonized rather than the colonizer. These histories are fully self-aware of the political/power implications explicit in the production, teaching, and remembrance of history.

<sup>6</sup> Jodi Rave Lee, "Past Pain Surfaces in Present" *Montana Forum*, November 27, 2001, accessed at <http://www.montanaforum.com/rednews/2001/11/17/buid/tribal/suice4.php:nnn=3>

<sup>7</sup> See also, Robert Desjarlait, "Into the Crucible: Sexual and Physical Abuse in Indian Country," *The Circle Native American News and Arts*, vol. 22, issue 9 (September 2001)

<sup>8</sup> See "Wiping the Tears of Seven Generations," directed by Gary Rhine and Fidel Moreno, Kifaru Productions, 1992. Also, Maria Brave Heart-Jordan, "The return to the sacred path: Healing from historical trauma and historical unresolved grief among the Lakota," (Ph.D. diss., Smith College, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> See Ruth Sanchez-Way and Sandie Johnson, "Cultural Practices in American Indian Prevention Programs," in *Juvenile Justice Journal*, vol. VII, no. 2, for a survey of such practices in substance abuse programs.

<sup>10</sup> Maria Braveheart-Jordan and Lemyra DeBruyn, "So She May Walk in Balance: Integrating the Impact of Historical Trauma in the Treatment of Native American Indian Women," in *Racism in the Lives of Women: Testimony, Theory, and Guides to Antiracist Practice* (New York: The Haworth Press, 1995), ed. by Jeanne Adleman and Gloria M. Enguidanos, 364.

<sup>11</sup> "Freedman's Cemetery Memorial: A Place of Healing," directed by Joe Norman, KERA Productions, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Duran, Duran, and Brave Heart, 72.  
<sup>13</sup> See Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) for a history of the professionalization of history.

<sup>14</sup> Fernando Alvarado Tezozómoc, *Crónica Mexicáyotl*, quoted in Miguel Leon-Portilla, *Pre-Columbian Literatures of México* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1975), 117.

# GROWING UP ON THE BORDER

BY LETRAS SIN FRONTERAS

GROWING UP ON THE BORDER  
TUGS AT MY SKIN, STRETCHING THE WORN SCARS  
IMPRISONED BORDERLESS WITH FEET SOAKED IN A BLOOD WOUND, DIVIDING  
WALKING BETWEEN THE WORLDS OF THE DEAD AND THE LIVING  
I HAVE SEEN TWO COUNTRIES UNITE AND FIGHT  
THE CONSTANT DIVIDER BETWEEN US(A) AND THEM  
WE ON THE BORDER ALWAYS PAYING FOR THE PAST, AND ALWAYS FIGHTING  
FOR THE FUTURE  
I HEAR THE CRIES OF THOSE WHOM HISTORY HAS WOUNDED  
Y VEO EL SUFRIMIENTO EN LOS OJOS DE LOS RECIÉN LLEGADOS  
WHILE THE RIVER FLOWS WITH THE BLOOD AND TEARS  
OF THE CONQUERED AND THE CONQUEROR

GROWING UP ON THE BORDER  
CAN BE CRUEL AND SAD  
CONFUSING, EXCITING, OPPRESSIVE  
I WAS MADE FUN OF POR NO HABLAR EL ESPAÑOL NI EL INGLÉS BIEN  
BUT MY WORDS FLOW WITH THE SMOOTHNESS OF RIVER STONES  
SPANISH ENGLISH CALÓ-  
SHADES OF SKIN PRESUMING AND ASSUMING  
ALL I KNOW IS THAT I AM MY TONGUE, LANGUAGES WOVEN INTO HISTORICAL  
TAPESTRIES  
MY MOTHER LANGUAGE IDENTIFIES MY BEING

GROWING UP ON THE BORDER I REMEMBER  
THE SOFT GLOW OF THE THUNDERBIRD EMERGING FROM THE  
MOUNTAIN, THE RED CLAY, THE SUN BAKING NOPAL  
THE EXPRESSIVE RED AND ORANGES OF THE WESTERN SUNSETS  
THE BEAUTIFUL SOUNDS OF LAUGHTER, GRITOS, CARCAJADAS  
THE SMELLS AND AROMAS OF BURNING MESQUITE, CARNE ASADA Y CERVEZA  
THE DESERT AFTER A SUMMER RAINFALL-CLEAN, COOL, REFRESHING  
THE STRONG WINDS BLOWING SAND IN MY EYES  
THE FRESH, SOFT GRASS BETWEEN MY TOES,  
LYING UNDERNEATH A BLANKET OF STARS

GROWING UP ON THE BORDER IS  
LIKE MOVING BETWEEN WORLDS, CROSSING LINES  
NOTHING IS WHAT IT APPEARS TO BE  
IN SOME WAYS BLIND TO THE WORLD OUTSIDE,  
IN OTHERS, UNDERSTANDING ALL TOO WELL  
TO THE NORTH SIDE OF THE BRIDGE I AM TOO "MEXICAN,"  
AND TO THE SOUTH SIDE, I AM NEVER ENOUGH  
NEVER BELONGING TO A "MEXICAN" OR "AMERICAN" CULTURE  
ALWAYS THE SAME YET ALWAYS DIFFERENT  
LIKE A SCHIZOPHRENIC STRUGGLING BETWEEN TWO IMAGES OF SELF  
WHO AM I, WHERE DO I FIT?  
ALWAYS EXPLAINING, DEFENDING AND JUSTIFYING MY ROOTS TO BOTH LANDS  
I FIT EVERYWHERE, I AM FLEXIBLE

GROWING UP ON THE BORDER I REMEMBER  
HOT BRIGHT SUNNY DAYS, LATE NIGHTS, COOL BREEZE, PEOPLE EVERYWHERE  
I CAN STILL HEAR THE VOICES OF THE LONG PAST WITH EVERY BLOWING WIND  
GOING TO VISIT MY ABUELOS AND PLAYING IN THEIR YARD WITH MY PRIMOS  
LOS CARIÑOS Y LAS CARICIAS DE NUESTRAS MADRECITAS  
THE CLEAN, CRISP SMELL OF JABÓN ZOTE WITH THE MORNING SUN AS ABUELITA  
AND I HANG THE SAVANAS  
THE WHISPER OF BISABUELA, LIKE WIND, CARESSING THE TIPS OF MY HAIR  
THE WARMTH OF THE SUN'S RAYS HEALING THE WOUNDS OF THE SOUL  
THE RIVER WATER WASHING AWAY THE PAIN OF HISTORY  
THE PARCHED LAND REMINDING US OF THE STRUGGLES  
THAT CONSTRUCT THE VERY CORE OF OUR SOULS

LETRAS SIN FRONTERAS IS A QUEER CHICAN@ COLLECTIVE WRITING GROUP BASED IN EL PASO, TEJAS. WE BELIEVE IN WRITING AS A WAY TO HEAL FROM THE EVERYDAY OPPRESSIVE FORCES THAT AFFLICT THE QUEER CHICAN@ COMMUNITY. THROUGH LETRAS SIN FRONTERAS WE ARE CREATING AND CLAIMING OUR SPACES. TO CONTACT US, EMAIL LETRAS\_SINFRONTERAS@HOTMAIL.COM

*continued from page 7*

have helped me to become a better artist and have helped me to see the world in a better perspective.

**Connecting from all parts of the city.**

As interns we bonded as a group as well as a family. Eight weeks spent together laughing about things as well as letting out anger, after a bad day from work/classes. We learned each other's weaknesses as well as strengths.



Thanks to this strong group and all the people who made this possible. Together we can make a change. Together

we can make our voices heard. I was glad to be involved these past eight weeks. I have spent time with the best

people that the world has to offer. I have become a more confident person, more understanding of others, as well as myself. Meeting new people, artists and everlasting friends, which is rare because life ain't always candy canes, hugs and kisses...

I heart you all, the 2002 Interns c/s, Alonzo, La Ghetto Writer Valerie, Claudia, La Artista Spiral and Mika

PS - Special thanks to all our facilitators and people that helped us along the way. You know who you are.

Congratulations to *¡La Bárbara!*

Bárbara Renaud Gonzáles, San Antonio journalist and writer, is a recipient of the Alfredo Cisneros Del Moral Foundation Writing Fellowship. Bárbara is currently completing her first novel, *Golondrina, Why Did You Leave Me? -A Texas Story*. An internationally recognized journalist whose columns appear locally in the San Antonio Express-News on occasion, Bárbara is a frequent contributor to La Voz.

*¡Te aventaste!*

Dr. Arturo Madrid

esteemed elder and professor at Trinity University in San Antonio, was honored with the 2002 Thomas Rivera Lifetime Achievement Award. The award recognizes those who have made significant contributions to the Latino community. Dr. Madrid is the founding president of the National Chicano Council for Higher Education. Lo felicitamos con gran cariño y respeto.

*¡Felicidades!*

*¡Felicidades, Josie!*

Written by our very own boardmember,

Dr. Josie Méndez-Negrete, *Las Hijas de Juan, Daughters Betrayed*

promises to be a nationwide blockbuster. Dr. Méndez-Negrete's first book is being published by Chusma Publications and will be out soon. Plan to attend a reading of *Hijas* at the Esperanza on October 12th. Ask your local bookstores to stock it! Californians are already lining up to buy it!

The American Indian Resource Center presents  
**Indigenous Writer's Conference,**  
**Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers Gathering**

*"Indigenous Women as Peacekeepers in 500 Years of Systemic Violence"*



**September 26, 2002**  
**3:00 pm - 10:30 pm**  
**St. Mary's Learning & Leadership Development Center**  
**3141 Culebra Road**

**Free Day Care ❖ Food ❖ Door Prizes**  
**Limited Seating - Pre-Register at (210) 436-7633 by September 20th**  
**Co-Sponsored by the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center**

**This conference is part of the AIRC's 3rd Annual Fall Festival, which also includes the Health Fair, and Traditional Powwow.**

# Notas Y Más

Brief notes to inform *La Voz* readers about events, issues and happenings in the community. Send announcements for *Notas y Más* to: [lavor@esperanzacenter.org](mailto:lavor@esperanzacenter.org) or by snail mail to: 922 San Pedro, San Antonio, TX 78212. The deadline is the 12th of each month.

**Our Lady of the Lake University** presents *Humanity Hears its Own Voice - the 2002 Poets at the Lake Poetry Festival* from September 11-15. All events are free and open to the public. Contact Yvette Benavides at 434-6711 ext. 277 for a complete program of events.

**Our Lady of the Lake University** also offers the **InSpire Writers Institute** beginning in mid-September with classes on Starting Your Screenplay from Scratch and Technical Writing as an Art Form. Classes will be for writers of all levels of creative development. Students and teachers qualify for a 20% discount. Call 431-3975 or visit [www.ollusa.edu](http://www.ollusa.edu) for course offerings and descriptions.

**The Mexican American Studies Student Organization, MASSO**, will host the **Latino Heritage Week Literacy March** on September 21<sup>st</sup> as part of the **Latino Heritage Week** for the UTSA downtown campus. Latino Heritage Week will start September 23<sup>rd</sup> through September 27<sup>th</sup>.

The march will be open to students and community and will start at 10 am in front of the Bazan Library proceeding on Buena Vista to the Bill Miller Plaza at the downtown campus. Contact: [masotx@hotmail.com](mailto:masotx@hotmail.com)

Save the date! The **San Antonio Stonewall Democrats** invite you to **OutVote 2002** with special guest Vermont Governor Howard Dean on Saturday, September 28, 2002 at the Historic Menger Hotel. Contact: [Luis Mercado @ 732-4850](mailto:Luis.Mercado@732-4850)

**La Pluma, El Corazón**  
*Writing from truth, passion and love*  
Creative writing for San Antonio's Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Questioning community. Co-facilitated by Anel Flores and Jesús Alonzo on Tuesdays beginning September 17 through November 19, 2002, from 7 pm to 9 pm at the Esperanza Center. To sign up contact René at the Esperanza, 228-0201 or email [esperanza@esperanzacenter.org](mailto:esperanza@esperanzacenter.org)

Mark your calendar!

*the Esperanza's Celebration of Quince Años will take place Saturday, October 26, 2002. Ceremony, piñata, baile y más . . . Everyone's invited!*

## When I Dream Dreams

A short documentary exploring the impact of Texas' historical English-only law on students in the state's schools.

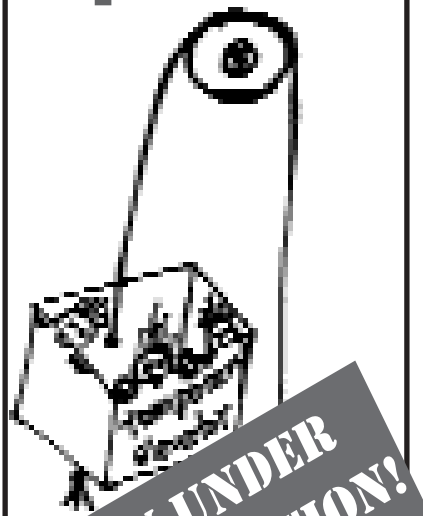
8 pm Friday September 6, 2002  
Esperanza Center, \$5 suggested donation



*"The rule at my school was one stroke -- a stroke was a hit with the paddle -- a stroke for every word of Spanish."*

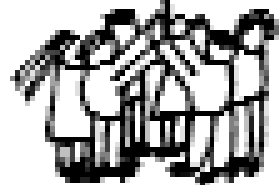
Panel discussion will follow, featuring poet Carmen Tafolla, State Board of Education vice chair Joe Bernal, professor Ernesto Bernal, retired teacher Arcadia Lopez, Trinity University professor Arturo Madrid, and UTSA professor Josephine Méndez-Negrete.

## Give the Esperanza



**NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION!**

**a Lift!**



## donate to our elevator campaign

call 228-0201 or send a donation to  
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**Do you work for a public school, the City of San Antonio, Bexar County, the State of Texas, or the Federal Government?**

The Esperanza is part of  
**Another Way Texas Shares.**  
Sign-up to donate monthly to the Esperanza directly from your paycheck at work through the

**State Employee Charitable Campaign**

**Bexar County Government Local Charitable Campaign**

**City of San Antonio Local Charitable Campaign**

and the

**Combined School District Charitable Campaign**

**Esperanza Peace & Justice Center Code #8035**

or call us to sign-up with our electronic direct deposit program!

## Community Meetings

**Society of Friends** Sundays at 10 am at Friends Meeting House, 7052 N. Vandiver, call 945-8456.

**ELLAS, Latina Lesbian organization.** Call for meetings and information, 210-473-0217.

**San Antonio Lambda Students (SALSA)** Last Wednesday of each month, 7 pm at the Main Library, 6th floor. Call 732-4300.

**San Antonio NOW** First Monday of each month at the Resource Ctr, 121 W. Woodlawn. Call Maggie Cronan, 673-8600.

**Voice for Animals** First Tuesday of each month at 7 pm, Brook Hollow Library, 530 Heimer, call 737-3138.

**Parents/Friends of Lesbians/Gays (PFLAG)** First Thursday of each month at 7 pm at the Resource Ctr, 121 W. Woodlawn, call 351-0395.

**Amnesty International #127** Fourth Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm at Ashbury United Methodist, call 681-8370.

**DIGNITY S.A.** holds mass every Sunday at 5:15 pm at St. Ann's Convent, call 735-7191.

**Xicana Xicano Education Project** Wednesdays at 6 pm at the Bazan Public Library, 2200 W. Commerce St. Call 437-5196.

The **peaceCENTER** Tuesdays from 7 - 9 pm for discussion & exploration of nonviolent peacemaking, 1443 S. St. Mary. Call 224-HOPE or <http://www.salsa.net/peace>

**Proyecto Hospitalidad Liturgy** Thursdays at 7 pm at 325 Courtland, call 736-3579.

The **Anti-War Coalition** First Mondays of each month at 6pm at the Esperanza, 922 San Pedro. Call 228-0201.

**Habitat for Humanity** holds Volunteer Orientation on first Tuesdays of each month at 1st Presbyterian Church, 404 N. Alamo, at 6 pm.

A Multicultural Worship Service is held Sundays at 11 am at **Spirit of Life Lutheran Church**, call Rev. Jennifer Kivikko at 826-8771.

**Circle of the Re-Formed Congregation of the Goddess** Third Thursday of each month, 7 pm at the Esperanza, 922 San Pedro. Call 822-9105.

**Fuerza Unida** Third Tuesday of the month at 710 New Laredo Hwy., 7 pm. Call 927-229.

**Bexar County Green Party** First Sunday of each month at 2 pm at the VIA Transit Center, 1021 San Pedro, across from Esperanza Center.

## Todos somos esperanza . . .

I would like to donate \$ \_\_\_\_/month by automatic bank withdrawal. Contact me to sign up.

I pledge to send \$ \_\_\_\_ each  
\_\_\_\_ month  
\_\_\_\_ quarter  
\_\_\_\_ six-months  
through the mail.

Enclosed is a donation of  
\_\_\_\_ \$1000  
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\_\_\_\_ \$100  
\_\_\_\_ \$50  
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\_\_\_\_ \$15 La Voz subscription  
\_\_\_\_ \$ 10  
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I would like to volunteer!

Make checks payable to the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center. Send to 922 San Pedro, SA TX 78212. Donations to the Esperanza are tax deductible.

*eco desde un vientre de barro*



Join us for a rare  
opportunity to honor  
Mexican &  
international  
treasures  
Alfonso Castillo Orta,  
su esposa  
Martha Hernández de Báez  
y la familia Castillo.  
5 generations of tradition,  
historia, costumbre,  
working with clay.

*Saturday  
September 28*

*Plática with artists 6 - 6:30 pm  
Opening Reception 7 - 9 pm*

*The exhibit will run through November 25, 2002.  
Esperanza Peace & Justice Center ♦ 922 San Pedro Avenue  
call 228-0201 para más información*

**Arte es Vida is community coming together to share our history through stories.  
Arte es Vida Meetings are at 816 South Colorado off of Guadalupe Street, Every  
First Saturday of the Month: September 7, October 5, November 2, December 1.**

**Join us at the MujerArtes Cafecito for cafe, pan dulce y arte. MujerArtes work will be available  
for purchase Monthly Every First Sunday at 1412 El Paso, 8am-12noon.  
Fall Dates are September 8, October 6, November 3, December 2. Call 223-2585.**

*La Voz de Esperanza*  
ESPERANZA peace & justice center  
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