

La Voz de Esperanza

June 2003 • vol 16 issue 5



Solidarity

todos por la paz y la justicia

Inside: women of Juárez, an exclusive analysis of Isreal, a letter from Julio Noboa, a challenge to today's activists, words to recent grads, poetry, literature, upcoming events and more...

La VOZ de Esperanza

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Editor

Gloria A. Ramirez

Layout/Design

H. Esperanza Garza

Contributors

Marco O. Iñiguez Alba, Andy Clarno,
Bárbara Renaud González,
Dolores Zapata Murff,
Rosa Reyes,

La Voz Volunteer Collective

Francisco Bustamante,
Sean Danweber, Brad Davis,
José Rodríguez, Christina Valero,
ArtEscuela Interns, MujerARTES &
Fuerza Unida Mujeres

Esperanza Director

Graciela I. Sánchez

Esperanza Staff

Pat Benitez, Elizandro Carrington,
Viola Cásarez, Verónica Castillo,
Vicki Grise, Herminia Maldonado,
Petra Mata, Irma Mayorga,
Marissa Ramirez, Cindy Rodríguez,
René Saenz, María Salazar,
Inez Valdéz, Christina Valero

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David Zamora Casas,
Anel Flores, Amy Kastely,
Michael Marinez, Marcos Márquez,
Dolores Zapata Murff, Kamala Platt,
Gloria A. Ramirez & Rudy Rosales

Opinions expressed in La Voz are not necessarily those of the Esperanza. We advocate for a variety of social, economic & environmental justice issues.

Inquiries, articles, and letters should be addressed to:

La Voz de Esperanza,
922 San Pedro,
San Antonio, TX 78212
lavoz@esperanzacenter.org

Policy Statements:

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 Letters with intent to slander individuals or groups will not be published.

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922 San Pedro, San Antonio, TX 78212
(on the corner of Evergreen Street)
210-228-0201 • fax 210-228-0000
www.esperanzacenter.org

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I Wish You Could Hear Me

I wish you could have heard me when I was young...

I wish you could hear me now that I am old...

I wish you could have heard me when I saw the first "No Niggers, No Mexicans, No Dogs" sign...

I wish you could have heard me during the Civil Rights Marches...

I wish you could have heard me during the Vietnam Conflict...

I wish you could have heard me during the Women's Lib Movement...

I wish you could have heard me during my Peace Corps years...

I wish you could have heard me singing for women's rights, for children, for the elderly, and for gay rights...

I wish you could have heard me when I was young...

I wish you could hear me now that I am old...

And when I thought that we were all done with THE CAUSE and there were only a few...others...me... keeping watch over you...

There you were...

Safe...

Then...

Now, it's YOUR turn...

I wish you could have heard me when I was young...

I wish you could hear me now that I am old...

I hope you learned what to do about YOUR CAUSE...

I hope you can do half for me of what I did for you...

I hope that 40 years from now you are as loyal to your beliefs as I have been to mine...

I hope you know that there has always been SOME CAUSE...yours is not the first...

And when THIS CAUSE OF YOURS gets old...it will... they all do...

And you have lost interest...you might...many did...

I will not let you...

If I do...

I wish you could have heard me when I was young...

I wish you could hear me now that I am old...

Tjenbe Wed, Rosa Reyes
21 February 2003

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, speciesism 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.



Summer Fun(d)raising

By Dolores Zapata Murff

It's SUMMER TIME! SUMMER TIME! Wonder what the latest craze is this summer? Have you heard about the Home Parties that people are hosting? Perhaps you have been invited to one. Or have heard of one and wondered what it is all about. We will just say that Graciela Sanchez was the first person to throw a Party this summer to celebrate her birthday and instead of gifts she asked for donations for the Esperanza Center. I heard it was a great success. I was unable to attend because of a prior out of town commitment. It was held at Graciela and Amy's home.

The next party was hosted by Alicia de Gaspar de Alba in honor of Gloria Ramirez's birthday. Now that one, I did attend and had a blast. We danced and danced and danced, we were also treated to an hour of Mariachi's. It was a great ole bar-b-que complete with a huge bowl of guacamole and bar b qued chicken and all the fixin's that go with a great tejano/mexicano chanclaso....and who could resist the huge bottle of Hornitos Tequila to really get us in the mood. Guests were asked to not bring gifts, instead to donate money to the publication, La Voz de Esperanza.

Then boardmembers of Esperanza, Anel Flores and Dee Murff, not to be out done have decided to host their own party on June 6, 2003. Again, we request donations anywhere from \$10.00 - \$100.00 or more. We will have music, poetry, performers, dancing, an art raffle and lots of tacos. Where else can you go, get food and drink and entertainment for a donation to a good cause? The place is 150 El Monte. RSVP @ 930-3723.

Let's keep the parties going all summer so we can have fun and raise funds for the Esperanza. All you have to do is plan a party to celebrate an event or just because you want to have one, and ask for donations for the Esperanza. Your donation of course is tax deductible.

So it is Summertime Summertime...let's have some fun and RAISE SOME FUNDS!!!!



Conditions are welcome in the following amounts: \$10, \$20, \$50 - All Serving Poetry and TACOS!

Editor's note:

As the political climate gets more repressive and the economy gets scarier the chances of finding monies for non-profits gets slimmer. The work of connecting issues locally and globally in order to facilitate peace and justice in communities seems an insurmountable task, but we continue our work at the Esperanza.

What keeps us going is the wonderful community support we have received these 16 years which has resulted in the purchasing and remodeling of a new building, installation of an elevator, and the continuation of projects, programs and actions related to many peace and justice issues.

Now we find it necessary to get creative about fundraising. I encourage everyone to consider hosting a house party (accompanying article) for the Esperanza so we can continue to thrive.

In this issue of La Voz, Barbara Renaud González reminds UTSA grads about the real education we must set about acquiring as gente de esperanza y corazón, people of hope and heart. Marco O. Iñiguez Alba pays tribute to the women of Juarez murdered by corporate greed and corruption. Franco Mondini Ruiz takes a bold and creative stroke this Pride month exposing his realities as a gay Latino growing up in South Texas and Rosa Reyes challenges folks to think beyond single issues and recognize that our struggles are everyone's struggles. Julio Noboa speaks out with Voz and continues his writings in another publication after being censored. Como siempre tratamos de dar voz a todos que escriben del corazón y con esperanza, giving voice to those that speak from the heart with hope.

The Education of the Heart

Speech delivered UTSA's Despedida Graduation Ceremony
by Bárbara Renaud González

Gracias for inviting me, I think.

You see, I am rather *avergonzada* to be here today. *No lo merezco*. I have never been to a college graduation in my life, and I have sworn to my friends that I would never ever attend one. They're so boring! And here I am. Humbled and now *la virgin* is testing me, by giving me a chance to say what I always knew should be said and that I could say better!

As the first college grad in my family my parents were on their way to the bank to borrow money to come to my graduation at Pan American. My mother had two jobs then, she was a restaurant cook in Beeville and a nurse's aide at night. My father worked for an oil field company in Corpus and as the oldest of eight we seemed to always be in debt. My parents were already planning on borrowing money to buy my five brothers their first matching shirts and ties and couldn't confess to them that I also needed about \$11.00 for my cap and gown rental on top of that. It didn't seem fair to me, so I fasttalked my parents out of it. Told them it didn't matter, that it was a waste of time, but of course I wanted to celebrate some way. I know now that I wanted something exactly like this *despedida*.

Want to talk to you about what I've learned since the many college graduations, my own and others, I've protested. *Quiero compartir* the education that really matters, the one with no ceremony or paper or commencement. It's the education that is hardest of all, and the most expensive, but it's the only one that really matters and unfortunately, we learn too little about on a college campus. And I think it's the one we really want the one we are seeking and I hope that what we've found here is a way to that other one.

I'm talking about love. Especially on this day, Mother's Day, the woman in whose arms we first learned the meaning of that word. It is through the quality of her love that we learn how to love: her; another being; ourselves, others; and finally the rest of the world. Without this complete education, we go through life searching and searching, you see people piling on degrees or medals or prizes or lovers or food or fancy cars or jewelry, all in the hope of getting love in return. This need for love is what makes us human. It propels us forward, pushing us sometimes to great accomplishments and forcing others or seducing others to pay attention to us. To reward us for all that we have done. And then we want those people to love us for exactly who we are.

It is from this *corazón*, I think, that we can create and shape our future. And therefore the world's. It is from this ripened and

fruitful *corazon* that we can find the truth that will give us the courage and resilience to change the world that we now have. A world of wars and physical materiality that is an illusion of success, of progress, of development, but that has nothing to do with love.

I know that as students in Mexican-American studies you have learned about Aztlan, our geographical and spiritual homeland. Since the sixties, the birth of the Chicano movement, we have invoked the ancestors who walked to Tenochtitlan, present-day Mexico City through Texas and the Southwest in claiming our right to America, to being here on this land, to demanding respect for our people and our language and culture.

We come from people who were educated in ways that many MBA,s and MSWs and MDs and Ph.Ds hunger for but few attain. It is an education that seems simple but in this post-modern era is almost impossible. Our indigenous ancestors shared everything they had because they loved each other. This generosity included, the greatest mother, mother earth herself.

And in a world so uneducated in loving our ecology and the spirit, our ancestral love of earth and each other can save us and the planet.

Remember the battle over the Edwards Aquifer last year? And how over a hundred thousand signatures were collected in the summer's *comalazo* protesting a golf course development over the aquifer?

It was called progress, wasn't it? And the development is beginning, despite the protests from so many citizens, why? Because Lumbermen's, the developer, convinced COPS, a critical sector of our community, that good jobs were at stake, which outmaneuvered the constitutional right of citizens to vote. What's a good job to COPS? Jobs that require a long commute north, to support a golf resort built over one of the world's most productive aquifers, and the city's only source of drinking water.

You wouldn't know it from the reportage coming from the San Antonio Express-News, which is a big-business paper, but water is predicted to be as precious as diamonds in the next twenty years, which means that we are risking a diamondfield that could bring real prosperity to this area, and water to the world, and instead we are giving it away to some very rich people who may pollute it if they don't sell it back to us in bottles and at prices that could very well keep your children and grandchildren thirsty and in debt

for many generations to come.

Texas is the most polluted state in the country. The Gulf Coast, one of the ten dirtiest waters in the nation - The Rio Grande is a Rio Feo, nothing like its majestic past, when ferries would travel it from New Orleans. Most of us have allergies and sinus problems, why? Because of the poverty of the air. I don't have a car, so I walk from Hildebrand and Fredericksburg to downtown. Walking gives me a whole different experience of the world. For one, I know the moon's cycle, and it makes me happy.

But the walking also depresses me, it,s like witnessing closeup how we're doomed in the way that we have abandoned and shut up our *viejitos*, I walk past history every day, and it's amazing to me that we say we respect our grandmothers but not the neighborhoods that they knew. And the trees? Even on some of the most elegant neighborhoods, like Mary Louise, or my own, Club, you would be surprised how many yards don't have shade. Why should they? People take their cars three blocks to the grocery store, we now have only one kind of grocery store, which are covered in concrete to accommodate the cars.

What we eat from these stores is another subject entirely. Dr. Roberto Jimenez, who is Professor José Jimenez, brother and a health care leader in Bexar County, says that our diabetes rate is four times higher than whites. He told me in a panic that physicians are seeing diabetes in children at a previously unheard of six years old! They are literally overwhelmed at the economic and health consequences for our society. It's like knowing that we're going to be attacked by terrorists and not doing anything. And we're the terrorists and the terrorized at the same time.

And yet we celebrated the Toyota's plant coming to San Antonio, *verdad?* That's a sign of progress, right? What kind of progress?

According to the EPA, the average fuel economy of our cars and trucks fell to its lowest level in two decades. A finite resource according to many experts, Iraq has one of the world's most productive oilfields in the world, and we are not the only customers but one of many- see the connection to the war?

Cars and light trucks, SUV, pickups, isn't that why the Toyota plant is coming here? - Together they account for 40% of the nation's oil consumption and a fifth of the carbon dioxide emissions, which many scientists see as the leading contributor to global warming. Which causes allergies. Our dependence on cars means we can live in suburbs without old trees and long commutes which burns up more gasoline and prevents us from walking which is the difference between obesity and our health and the health of our cities.

You call this an educated society?

At the downtown Y the other day I asked Cristina, a UTSA student

who graduates this summer what she really wanted to hear someone talk about. Her answer was a question that surprised me.

What is truth?

I had several sleepless nights thinking of her question and realized this is why I had gotten my second chance to go to a graduation. Ok, ok! So you want the truth, Cristina?

You want me to talk about the fiction of your beautiful education? Your shiny paper identity? That is something we cling to in a culture that won't respect us for who we are? You want to let you believe, as I did for way too long after I received my degrees, that I was actually worth something because I had spent a few years in a classroom?

The truth is that there are few lies as big as the one that you are a better person because of your college degree. If that was the case, we wouldn't have death row or the homeless or abandon our mothers and fathers into nursing homes. Or go to war. I've seen many friends who are worse off, not financially, but emotionally with their college degrees hanging on the living room wall.

That's because learning about love is an education of the heart and there are no classrooms for that. It's a university of one. A college education means that you have absorbed some facts, data, statistics, mastered some new words, formulas.

It prepares us to live in a world where competition and material gain rule.

But a college education cannot prepare us for the internal world where the heart and the spirit rule. That's a world that our ancestors knew very well and that is the education I think Cristina really wants, though I can't promise any material wealth or visible rewards.

The only degree we earn from this lifelong journey is a glimpse into love as the truth we are seeking. Because few of us get that degree though we get another chance every day that we are alive on this earth.

What I am learning is that love is freedom. The act of loving frees us from judging ourselves and everyone else, opening us to the possibility of forgiving every single person who has hurt us, for the daily insults and pretensions and the long day's journey into night childhood nightmares. Truth, we are worth being loved because we are each uniquely beautiful and special but so is everyone else. So loving teaches us that every time we call someone a name on the freeway, *negro* to the person living on the other side of town, *joto* to a man who walks funny or *esa gente baja* who don't have as much "education" as you, we lose a chance at learning what we are here on earth for.

And so we become a little less human.

These are some of the truths that our ancestors understood, and unfortunately, they are not the truths that we invest so much time with in school. But if you have hunger and ambition, as I did, to learn something about yourself because you are in this essential program, then I trust that you are seeking something far more important than a piece of paper.



What I'm trying to tell you is that you have inherited the potential to rescue the world. It is in our memories, in the bones of our faces, in our diabetic genes and in the compassion our mothers and fathers have taught us who have suffered so much to get you to this place. They wanted you to get an education because they didn't want you to suffer the way they have - but what I want you to know is that now I want you to suffer. I hope you really suffer.

Suffering, you see, can be very good for you. Because in suffering there is a chance you will become compassionate about the rest of the world that is truly suffering. And from that common ground, you may learn what love is about, from the people who ride the bus with me in San Antonio to the people of Palestine and Afghanistan and Iraq because now you might get a blink, a sour taste, of what they go through every day.

So they are human after all. So they do have dreams just like you and me. And we depend on the same round rock of earth, don't we?

You, the children of Aztlan, have to suffer, because your life will be much more intricate and vexing than even mine has been, in order to create a consciousness, a *conciencia* for the world.

My mother, before she died, wanted me to cross new borders with the valor that she crossed from Mexico to the United States, alone, when she wasn't even eighteen yet. But she couldn't foresee how many more borders I had to cross and when she would complain I had to remind her that she was the one who raised me to cross every border I saw. What I have realized is that I am my mother's daughter but never will I be her. I am a Chicana and for me that means I am a citizen of the world as well.

My hope is that the education you're celebrating today will take you to the one that really matters. Because the one you've finished sometimes gets in the way of finding your heart. But you, no matter the scientific or artistic or political achievements, they won't help you and they won't save the rest of us if you don't also learn to love yourself and everyone on this planet with every cell and ounce and drop of your being.

You want the truth, Cristina? Love is what really matters, and without it, your degree won't mean anything. Don't be afraid to find it. Tell the truth. Honor what you know in your heart to be true. What your mother taught you. Don't compromise. Every time you tell the truth, you will find that you love yourself a little more and that you have just rescued the world a little bit. Love yourself and others the way our *madres* love us: without measure, forgiving and helping and without any boundaries.

I didn't have children but you are also mine. When I write, I give birth over and over. And I try to find love in the ink and in the flesh of the page. As I am your mother, I give you all the love I have, and pray that you will love more than I have in my past and that you will love each other and the world so much that one day we will have clean water and fresh air and trees on every block and safe and healthy children and most of all, peace. Love this Mother Earth!



I believe in you. And I love you.

Que la Virgen los bendiga. Feliz día de las madres. Gracias.

Editor's note: Christina Valero, esperanza intern and new graduate of UTSA, above left. Above right is Diana Vásquez, a young woman who was a kindergarten student of mine some years ago. She invited me to the UTSA despedida and confessed to me that she had chosen to go into communications at UTSA because of her initial experience in kindergarten where I cast a shy little girl in the bilingual production of *La Gallinita Roja*. This was one of the highlights of my career as a bilingual early childhood teacher.

an excerpt from Carla Trujillo's What Night Brings

When night comes, that's when everything is best. Right before I go to sleep, I turn into Supergirl. Don't be surprised. It feels good to be her. When I'm Supergirl I can fly over people's heads, and San Lorenzo, where I live. On TV, George Reeves plays Superman, but he's a fake because he's soft and doughy. Plus, if you look at him sideways, you'll swear his head looks like a ham. I'd make a better Superman because I'm stronger and smarter. They ought to put *me* on that show. Girls could be on it. They could make me Superman's sister.

I watch lots of *Superman* but I've only seen one girl: Lois Lane. On top of that she's old and white. If you look at her face hard, though, you can see she might be part Mexican like Rita Hayworth. My dad said Rita Hayworth was really Margarita Carmen Cansino. She changed her name so she could make it in Hollywood. Movie stars are always changing their names, which means they can't sound real, and for sure not Mexican.

After my dad told me about Rita Hayworth, I spent the next week thinking of a Hollywood name for myself and nothing I came up with sounded good: Mary Cross, Marci Christa, or maybe Margi Cress. But those names were stupid, so I told my mom and Tia Leti I was dyeing my hair blonde and calling myself Linda Ledoux, since I like both names. Boy, did they laugh. Tía Leti, who has a really big butt (one of the few my dad doesn't look at), was sitting next to my mom and laughed so hard she peed in her pants. The spot went right through her dress onto the couch. They were laughing so much they didn't care.

I didn't think it was *that* funny. When Mom could finally talk, she said, "Ay, no. You look too much like one of the Indians from the *Texas Rangers*. Y, también, being



named *Linda* means you have to be pretty."

Tia Leti said I was "too goddamn dark to be running around with blonde hair," which made them laugh again.

I held my arm up to the light and looked at it. Who needs blonde hair anyway when it's easier being Supergirl? Every night I dreamed I saved beautiful girls. Usually, a mean man was hurting the girl. I'd beat the man up, then carry her away. She would be so happy I saved her, she'd want to marry me. I'd say yes and the dream would end with me kissing her neck and feeling her chiches.



Editor's note: Thank you to Curbstone Press for the use of the excerpt above from Carla Trujillo's book, *What Night Brings*. A significant contribution to the literature of Latinas and specifically to Latina lesbians. It takes courage to write our stories and this new publication breaks new ground as reviewer Josie Mendez-Negrete stated in her recent review in the local newspaper. The event is one not to be missed.



a reading by
Carla Trujillo
award winning author of
What Night Brings
Thursday, June 19 at 7 pm
Koehler Auditorium
318 West Houston Street
Free Admission
For more information call 299-4300
or visit www.thealameda.org

The Alameda and Museo
Americano present
Cine y Más: A New
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Estudio del cuerpo violado

Since I can remember, my mother taught my four brothers and me to pray for the souls of the earth as an act of social responsibility. The prayers were like concentric circles beginning with family, then neighbors, and finally larger territories. Because of this incipient childhood tenet, this International Women's Day, I remember the continued murders of working class women in Juarez, numbering anywhere from 300-500 deaths and disappearances. I remember the many voices struggling to be heard. For my mother and the women of Juarez.

Marco O. Iñiguez Alba
International Women's Day, March 8, 2003

A quién le corresponde la custodia de las historias de la tierra?

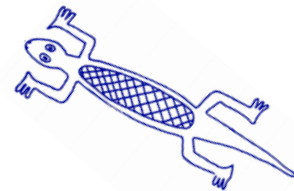
con/solación
de que no quedarán en olvido

Entre el mundo del fierro frío
Entre las aperturas de sangre

Retablo con caras de desaparecidas
Retablo con partes mutiladas

Brota la madre del maíz
frondoso cuerpo
nueva luz de semilla
de colores

Carne desmembrada
vuelve a reconstituirse
en flor y canto del rito antiguo



Historias de la tierra

de cuerpos violados
quemados
lacerados
hechos sufrir
cosas
inimaginables

Carne ancestral
fuerza telúrica
vuelve a nacer
en semillas
Semillas de rebeldía

Cronistas para estos tiempos
fríos,
metálicos
de hemorragias de cuerpos
enteros
de ilusiones
de cenizas de camisas
y zapatos

la mata nace de la semilla

testigo de la tierra
la mata nace de la semilla

fe en las historias
la mata nace de la semilla

huellas calcinadas
la mata nace de la semilla

en las grietas del vientre de la tierra

Se las lleva la madre tierra

La virgen de guadalupe
sí se aparece

PARA LLEVARSE A SUS HIJAS



carne desmembrada vuelve a reconstituirse
carne desmembrada vuelve a reconstituirse

la fuerza telúrica no olvida

cronistas para estos tiempos fríos,
metálicos, de hemorragias
de cuerpos enteros
de ilusiones
de pies descalzos

animas del recuerdo
matas de la tierra
mujeres en luto
vestidas en rebeldía
aseguran que no quedaran en olvido
las hijas de la tierra.



THE MAQUILADORA MURDERS, OR, WHO IS KILLING THE WOMEN OF JUÁREZ?

On Days of the Dead, 2003, the Chicano Studies Research Center at UCLA, in co-sponsorship with Amnesty International, will be hosting an international conference on the unsolved, ten-year crime wave of kidnappings and murders of over 300 young, indigenous women in Cd. Juárez, across the border from El Paso, Texas.

The conference will take place from October 31-November 2, 2003, to mark a decade since the murders started, and will bring together scholars, journalists, artists, activists, writers, and policy specialists from the U.S., Mexico, and Europe, as well as families of the victims in a series of roundtable discussions and presentations.



The purpose of the conference is to facilitate more scholarly inquiry into the crimes, but also to examine the social, political, economic, and cultural infrastructure in which those crimes continue unabated. The press has described these crimes as "Jack-the-Ripper style serial killings." The bodies were immolated, mutilated, dismembered, or beaten beyond recognition. At least ninety of those murdered women were also raped. In February 2003, four new bodies were discovered, one a six-year-old girl with multiple stab wounds and her eyes removed.

The conference will include a screening of Lourdes Portillo's award-winning documentary, "Senorita Extraviada," a keynote speech delivered by Eve Ensler, founder and artistic director of V-Day, celebrity appearances, literary presentations, a silent auction, and a multi-media student exhibition of written, aural, and visual materials collected in a year-long undergraduate research internship. Starting this summer, a conference web site will provide information on the conference and a chronology of actions being taken around the world to end the crimes, as well as an updated comprehensive bibliography of related online and print documents.

A community altar featuring a "Tree of Death" by Veronica Castillo and other ceramic pieces created by the Mujer Artes cooperative in response to the murders will be unveiled and on display at the UCLA Fowler Museum during the conference.

The Esperanza Peace and Justice Center has been involved in consciousness-raising about this deadly violence against women in Juárez for ?? years, and will be co-sponsoring the conference. At present we are seeking donations to help the women at Mujer Artes attend the conference in Los Angeles. [leave out this last line if you think it's too tacky] For more information, contact the conference organizer, Professor Alicia Gaspar de Alba, 310-206-5270, or send an email to maquiladora_murders@yahoo.com.

[Next month, La Voz will publish a special section on the Juárez crimes, including an excerpt from Alicia Gaspar de Alba's unpublished novel, The Factory, or something to that effect...]

Israeli Apartheid

by Andy Clarno

More and more people around the world are beginning to recognize Israel as an apartheid state, much like the former South Africa. Both states were created through the ethnic cleansing of the local population and the full-scale theft of land by colonizing settlers, both states have attempted to enforce racial separation and dependency, and both states depend on racial categories to define legal rights and to maintain the power of the white settler minority.

The State of Israel is officially a Jewish State, a state for the Jewish people. This race-based definition divides Jews from non-Jews and privileges the Jewish people. It is the basis of Israeli apartheid. On top of this, the Israeli apartheid system depends upon a series of divisions within the Palestinian community. The Palestinians in the diaspora are completely cut off from those in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and from those inside Israel. Israel has divided the Palestinian land in the West Bank into 64 separate cantons that bear a striking resemblance to the South African 'Bantustans' and Native American 'reservations.' It is building an enormous 'Apartheid Wall' to surround and isolate Palestinian communities.

While the struggle against the occupation is the most immediate concern, the fundamental struggle for the Palestinians inside Israel and the refugees in the diaspora is against the racist definition of Israel as a Jewish state. In principle, there is nothing wrong with the establishment of a Jewish State. However, in practice, the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine was made possible through the expulsion of nearly one million Palestinians in 1948 and the continued discrimination against Palestinians living inside Israel today.

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the Zionist movement faced the dilemma of how to create a Jewish State on land that was populated by Palestinian Arabs. For most Zionist leaders – from Hertzl to Ben Gurion – the solution was simple: one way or another, the Palestinians must be 'transferred' or 'expelled' from their land. In 1948, the Zionist militias carried out this solution by perpetrating a series of massacres and attacks on Arab cities and villages. Nearly one million Palestinians fled their lands and became refugees. It was these mass expulsions that provided the demographic basis for the creation of a Jewish State. From its establishment, Israel was officially declared a state for the Jewish people. Three laws were soon passed to ensure a Jewish majority. The deceptively named 'Law of Return' allows any Jewish person anywhere in the world the right to 'return' to live in Israel. The Citizenship Law states that Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people and therefore anyone in the world who is Jewish can become a citizen. Finally, through the Absentee Property Law, the State took possession of all lands and properties 'left behind' by people who fled their homes, thus providing legal cover to the dispossession of the Palestinian refugees.

Fifty-four years later, most of these refugees are still living in appalling conditions in the refugee camps in Syria, Lebanon,

Jordan, and the Occupied Territories. Today there are nearly 5 million Palestinian refugees. According to countless UN resolutions, these refugees have the right to return to their homes and villages inside Israel and to receive compensation for lost property. But the Israeli government adamantly refuses to even consider allowing the refugees to return. Not surprisingly, they base this refusal on the fact that Israel is a Jewish State. According to this logic, the return of the refugees would undermine the Jewish character of the State. So the 'Jewish character' of the state of Israel, which was made possible by the expulsion of the Palestinians, now prevents their return.

Over the last year, I spent time speaking to countless refugees living in Lebanon and Syria. All of the people that I talked to made it very clear that they regard Palestine as their homeland and that, more than anything else, they want to return to their homes in Palestine. They do not want to displace or expel the Jewish people from the land, they want to live together with them. You can ask any child in the refugee camps in Syria or Lebanon where he or she is from, and every time the response will be 'Palestine.' They will even tell you what village they come from and point to it on a map. These children are the third and fourth generations to be born in the refugee camps outside of Palestine. When I left Syria last August on my way to Palestine, many of my friends asked me to send them a handful of dirt from their homeland. Another friend told me to bend down and kiss the ground as soon as I crossed the river from Jordan into the West Bank. Most of these people have never even seen Palestine, and yet it is still their home.

The desire to fight, to struggle for the right to return to their homeland is strong in the refugee camps of the diaspora. In Syria and Lebanon, the refugees are organizing committees to defend the right of return. They fear that the US and Israel might pressure the Palestinian Authority to give up the right of return in exchange for the creation of a miniature Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. They are organizing to make sure this does not happen.

Even the children want to take part in the struggle to return to Palestine. They see images of Muhammad Al-Durra and the hundreds of other Palestinian children who have been killed during the intifada (uprising). They identify with these children and are often traumatized. But they also want to fight. A friend of mine in Syria told me about a six year-old boy from the refugee camp in Hama. Hama is about two hundred kilometers north of Damascus – maybe three hundred kilometers from the border with Israel. One day last spring, this boy went missing. For three days, his family and neighbors searched for him. They looked everywhere – in the camp, in town, in the fields. But he was nowhere to be found. Eventually, they came across him on the road to Damascus. They asked what he was doing, and he told them that he was going back to Palestine to join the intifada.

I heard another story in a refugee camp in Lebanon. One of the orphanages in this camp receives most of its funding from the Australian government. A high-ranking Australian diplomat in Lebanon would visit the orphanage from time to time to see the children. During 2001, he was transferred to a position at the Australian embassy in Israel. During his last few days in the country, he went back to the camp to visit the children one last time. While

he was there, the children came up to him and asked if they could give him something to take with him to Palestine. He said, 'of course.' So they rushed into the building. He waited outside, thinking they would bring him a khaffieh (headscarf) or something like that. When they came back out, they had a rock that they had all signed. They said: "Will you take this with you to Palestine and throw it at the Israeli soldiers for us, because we can't go there to do it ourselves."

While the refugees in the diaspora are deprived of a role in the struggle, the refugees in the Occupied Territories are leading the intifada. The most intense fighting has taken place in the refugee camps – Khan Younis, Rafah, Dheisheh, Jenin, Balata, Aida, Amari. The refugees are fighting not only to liberate the Occupied Territories, but also to return to their homes. Like the refugees in the diaspora, they remember their homes and villages inside Israel and they insist that they will return.

The Palestinians that did not flee their homes in 1948 became citizens of Israel. They face serious discrimination because they are non-Jews living in a Jewish State. Only 7% of the land inside Israel is legally available for over one million Palestinian Israelis to live on or to own. Palestinians inside Israel face severe discrimination in employment, education, housing, health, public funding, and social security. In 1992 the Israeli Knesset passed a law requiring all political parties to recognize Israel as a Jewish State. They must acknowledge "the existence of the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people." This means that parties calling for full and complete equality between Jews and Arabs in a secular state for all can be declared illegal and disqualified from participation in the elections.

In 1997, three friends of mine moved into an apartment on the wrong side of the street. They were female college students, Palestinian Israelis from a village in northern Israel attending the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Because of discriminatory housing practices, it is virtually impossible to obtain a permit to build a house in Arab East Jerusalem. As a result, rents in East Jerusalem have skyrocketed. These women couldn't afford an apartment on the Arab side of town. So, because they are Israeli citizens, they decided to rent an apartment just across the line that divides Arab East Jerusalem from Jewish West Jerusalem. It was a terrible decision. At first, they were simply harassed by the local children who called them names. Later, these children chased them and threw rocks at them. Then, the harassment became more dangerous. They began receiving death threats. Someone spray-painted Nazi symbols on their

mailbox and 'Go back to Jordan' in the stairwell leading up to their apartment. Then, one evening, a firebomb exploded outside their door. Luckily none of them was hurt. But it happened again. And again. Three times their house was bombed – because they were Arabs living in a Jewish neighborhood.

The most recent manifestation of this insistence on the Jewishness of the state can be seen in calls for the expulsion of the remaining Palestinians out of Israel and the Occupied Territories. Last March, a poll showed that 46 percent of Israel's Jewish citizens support 'transferring' Palestinians out of the Occupied Territories, and 31 percent favor 'transferring' Palestinians living inside Israel out of the country. More and more mainstream politicians are openly calling for these mass transfers. The fact that these calls for ethnic cleansing are an acceptable part of public discourse is frightening evidence of fanaticism that is developing among Israeli Zionists.

Over the last few years, Palestinians are increasingly using the concept of apartheid to make sense of their situation and to re-establish links between their various struggles. It also provides a way of helping people in the West to understand what is happening in Palestine. Too often people in the US and Europe understand this conflict as a nationalist struggle between two equal opponents. The Israeli establishment prefers that we see the conflict as part of an international war against terrorism. All of this obscures the colonial nature of the situation and the racist nature of the Israeli state. But people all over the world know what apartheid is. They know it is an unjust and oppressive system of racial discrimination and exploitation. By describing Israel as an apartheid state, activists around the world are helping to build a broader and more powerful movement of solidarity and support for the Palestinian people. The emerging divestment campaign in the United States, the 'right of return' movement, boycotts of Israeli products around the world, and the growing movement of international activists carrying out non-violent direct actions in the West Bank against the Israeli occupation – all of these solidarity campaigns are using the framework of apartheid to make sense of the racist system against which they are struggling. They are providing support and strength to the Palestinian people – strength that they need right now in order to continue their struggle against the powerful and brutal Israeli apartheid system.

Andy, originally from the Austin area, is currently graduate student of Sociology at the University of Michigan. He recently returned to the US after a year and a half in Palestine, Syria and South Africa.



Irma Mayorga, Esperanza staff member recently received the Eugene O'Neill Playwrite Award for her play, Cascarones. She is the first Chicana to receive this prestigious award. ¡Felicidades! Y adelante con más éxitos.

El Jardin (The Garden)

The El Jardin. It was the oldest gay bar in Texas, and had the exhausted clientele to prove it. They had to close it a couple of years ago because the San Antonio Conservation Society purchased the building — they're gonna "save" it. I can't blame them — it's a beauty. Thirty-Six inch thick cut limestone walls and everything. Probably dates back to the mid 1800's or even earlier.

But it's hard to tell. That's because a lot of buildings in the old part of San Antonio are like Russian nesting dolls. A 1960's-era golden aluminum-sided building contains a 1920's Americana store front, which in turn, is built around an 1880's German limestone livery stable which houses two rooms of an 1830's Mexican adobe casita, which has one wall possessing remnants of a 1790's era stick and mud jacál which is built upon a river stone Papaya Indian burial mound which was erected over the debris of someone's prehistoric lunch of pecans and cactus flowers.

The well-intentioned ladies will restore the building to what they perceive as its most important historical pinnacle; when it was the thriving business of an industrious German peach grower in the 1870's, or something like that. *Der Yawn*. They will excitedly refresh its colors to juniper berry blue with cranapple red trim; "authentic" historic colors (in Cape Cod). And the El Jardin will be buried under the building's newest layer, masked as an early 21st Century, Martha Stewart, "it's a good thing", over-restored, Disneyland, "Ye Old German Towne" of a building. *There!*

Why can't they just restore it to what I truly feel is its greatest historic apex — when it was the only place in town where you could score a dime bag *and* listen to Edith Piaf on the jukebox.



Pass the Butter

Is it the Navajo or the Hopi that revere gay tribe members? I read somewhere that they would give little children a doll and a bow and arrow. If the girl went for the bow and arrow, she was allowed to do manfolk activities, like be a warrior. If a boy went for the doll, he got to do woman's work like grind corn, do beadwork and all that kind of fun fabulous stuff. I think there's some truth to that. At least as far as I'm concerned.

When I was ten years old and in the Webelos, there was a competition amongst all the troops. We were all given our own plastic bag full of nuts, bolts, string, wire, hardware, material scraps, etc. Each scout was to build his own object from the materials.

When my parents came to the competition ceremony held in Saxon Hall of the Methodist Church, I think they finally realized I really was different from the other braves. For on all the tables were laid out elaborate mechanizations of drawbridges, cranes, submarines and rockets.

And then there was my entry. A "historical vignette", with no moving parts. It was composed of an assemblage made up of spools, popsicle sticks, and oasis — that green smushy stuff they stick flowers in. And there, sweetly beaming up at my speechless parents, a teeny-tiny, bonneted, pioneer woman — happily churning butter in her cardboard cabin.



Editor's note: Franco Mondini Ruiz, a native of San Antonio, is currently living and working as a visual artist based in New York City. He has currently completed a manuscript tentatively entitled, *Historia de un Amor*, which examines his identity as a gay, Mexican-American growing up in the suburbs of South Texas. This TexMex storybook melds his lifestory with personal cultural and artistic expressions which culminated in an exhibition for the Whitney Biennial 2000.



Mayday, 2003

To My Friends and Allies in Solidarity:

It is with deep appreciation and a sense of urgency that I salute you today in your efforts to respond in a concerted way to the termination of my column with the San Antonio Express-News.

I know that this struggle to protect our freedom of speech transcends the particulars of my specific case, yet every voice silenced, every right violated, every injustice perpetrated affects us all in more ways than we could calculate.

After reflecting profoundly on the implications of my column's termination, I'm convinced that it is best understood in several contexts, all interrelated with the increased repression, bigotry, and jingoism that has infested our body politic since 9/11, and distorted every justifiable response to those tragic yet highly symbolic events.

In the widest national context, my column's termination is symptomatic of what happened to numerous respected journalists and commentators who dare challenge the logic, morality or necessity of our latest imperialist war against Iraq. For example, MSNBC cancelled Phil Donahue, according to an internal memo, because he would present a "difficult public face for NBC in a time of war.... He seems to delight in presenting guests who are anti-war, anti-Bush and skeptical of the administration's motives."

In a more local context, my column's termination is in keeping with a long established tradition in the San Antonio Express-News; namely a pattern of excluding, marginalizing, and censoring progressive voices. While the number of national and local right-wing and conservative columnists proliferate in this only paper in town, we can no longer read columns by Molly Ivins, Barbara Renaud Gonzalez, Fernando Piñon, nor Rodriguez and Gonzalez' Column of the Americas. Numerous other progressive journalists, commentators, and academics like Robert Jensen, Edward Said, and Howard Zinn have for years been systematically denied to Express-News readers.

Finally, in both local and national contexts, there is the disproportionate media and political power of the Israeli lobby and Zionist ideologues who, target, harass, and attack journalists, elected officials, and public figures who dare critique the terror of occupation perpetrated by the state of Israel against Palestinians.

There are numerous examples of pro-Zionist penetration and distortion of our public institutions, one of the latest being a bill proposed by conservative Senator Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania. This so-called "ideological diversity" legislation would cut federal funding to colleges and universities who permit professors, students and student organizations to openly criticize Israel. Such expressions Santorum and his fellow Senators consider to be acts of "anti-Semitism"

Having myself been charged with being "anti-Semitic" by some in the Jewish American community, I know the twisted logic whereby the anti-Semitic label is tacked on so strategically to those who advocate for the human rights of Palestinians, a Semitic peoples themselves.

To struggle against national and local forces of fallacy, repression, conformity, and bigotry is nothing new for our progressive community in San Antonio. I am confident that together we will find creative and effective ways of responding to these difficult challenges.

May your work today, and in the near future yield tangible results and may our collective efforts attract even more advocates and activists to our struggle for free expression, social justice and authentic peace.

Siempre en la Lucha,

Julio Noboa Polanco

Notas y Mas



Soñar es Luchar
 Imágenes de Domi
 has been extended to June 16.



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