

La Voz de



Esperanza

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La VOZ de Esperanza

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 Letters with intent to slander individuals or groups will not be published.

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Two summers ago, I had the occasion to attend a conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico with Dr. Josie Méndez-Negrete and Dr. Keta Miranda. We drove through the night arriving in time for breakfast and the opening plenary on Water. On the way back to San Antonio, the next afternoon, we passed the El Paso/Cuidad Juárez area off of highway I-10W and stared at the smoke seeping from the maquiladoras across the border surrounded by hills of colored makeshift cardboard and tin shacks. We all got quiet and Josie suggested we say a blessing to the women of Juárez who had died at the hands of murderers. We called upon la madre tierra to protect the young women workers and to swallow up the evil perpetrators. Josie and Keta wept silently as we stopped by the side of the highway. I could only hold my silent rage and fear within.

Since 1993, more than 300 young women and girls have been systematically killed in Ciudad Juárez and surrounding areas, with one of the most recent discoveries being the body of a 6 year old girl found in February of 2003. All were tortured or mutilated in one form or another. Theories abound as to who is responsible and why these crimes are being committed. In the ten years that have passed since these brutal murders began, artists, activists and scholars have joined forces to form organizations, host conferences, produce documentaries, write articles or books, march, protest and do whatever we can to draw attention to this situation, but the crimes continue unabated. Why?

The answer lies in questioning our own comfortable lives, perhaps too painful to face in our silent complicity. By joining hands together and working in whatever form we can, perhaps we can heal the broken circle of these women's lives. The piece work of women's bodies that the maquiladoras have scattered throughout the desert must be reclaimed and made whole again through whatever means necessary. As Rosa Reyes so eloquently states in her corrido:

*Pero no nos ganaran en esta causa
Escritoras contaran de Nuestra historia
Toda Hembra insistirá por las Fronteras
Las Cantantes cantaran Nuestras canciones
Al que incumba americano o mexicano
Las Mujeres de Juárez
Han Hablado*

This issue of La Voz is dedicated to the memory of las mujeres de Juárez with a special pull-out section beginning on page 7 that includes an exclusive excerpt from a new novel, a prose poetry piece, a corrido, and photos and essays on the women of Juárez. As a tribute, MujerArtes, will unveil an altar and installation on July 26th at the Esperanza. It will travel to Los Angeles for an international conference sponsored by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center on October 31st to November 2nd. Please join us on Saturday July 26th for this exhibit and plática at the Esperanza. -QEPD

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.

Canícula de literati en San Antonio

A New York reading by writers such as Julia Alvarez, Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, Martín Espada, Sandra María Esteves, Rosario Ferré, Cristina García, John Phillip Santos, and Tino Villanueva was always cause for celebration. They were advertised alongside the dozens of other readings and book-signings that are, in any given week, a lively indicator of New York's exceptionally rich literary life. But to me and others like me—Chicanas and Chicanos "in exile", together with other Latinas and Latinos routinely overlooked by publishing's establishment—they represented something impossible to capture in a three-line blurb or calendar listing. These readings also functioned as a kind of literary adhesive to a relatively small, fragmented community. The readings always brought together those of us who shared an appetite for a direct connection to poets and writers whose culturally grounded work we closely, immediately identified with.

There was an unspoken understanding that we who comprised this small, but fiercely devoted audience had a responsibility to support these writers whenever they read in New York. Regardless of the venue—neighborhood megastore, small independent bookshop, or major concert hall—word spread quickly and passionately among us. "Sandra is in town." "Martín is reading down en Loisaida [the Lower East Side]." Who needed surnames when talking about familia? They were our writers, and their readings were opportunities to celebrate their work and their success, while dispelling the myth that Latinos don't buy books.

So it was with immense joy and anticipation that I received various announcements for the amazing concentration of local readings, workshops, and book-signings by some of Latina/o literature's preeminent names scheduled around this year's canícula. While the East Coast lies fallow, where literary readings are concerned, San Antonio will welcome a roster of poets and writers—our poets and writers—in numbers and stature that I can't imagine being presented anywhere in the country in such a compressed span of time. Among those scheduled to read from their work are Juan Bruce-Novoa, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Norma Cantú, Martín Espada, Sandra María Esteves, Cristina García, Josie Méndez-Negrete, Loida Maritza Pérez, Cecile Pineda, Dolores Prida, Ito Romo, John Phillip Santos, Gary Soto, Carmen Tafolla, Carla Trujillo, Helena María Viamontes, as well as scholars Roberta Fernández, Nicolás Kanellos, Tomás Ybarra-Frausto y muchos mas. Add to this spectacular list the Latino Leadership Institute organized by the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture in July, and it's apparent to even the casual observer that San Antonio will be a vital epicenter of Latino cultural activity this summer. [Full disclosure: I am a member of this year's Institute faculty.] Embarrassment of riquezas, indeed.

And yet, there has been little, if any, acknowledgement of this amazing phenomenon and its significance to our community in the local press. This in a city that spends considerable sums on promoting cultural tourism. (Although I argue that what actually gets promoted is a touristic culture—but that's another essay.)

More to the point, the organizations bringing these writers to us should capitalize on the critical mass they've had a hand in creating. At a time when resources are ebbing to dangerously low levels, it would have behooved these cash-strapped agencies to develop a master calendar and other cross-promotional mechanisms.

That kind of unity would also demonstrate to the city's shortsighted powers that be that nuestra solidaridad cannot be rent by the divisive tactics currently being passed off as a "united arts fund." (That's yet another column.)

Let's welcome the poets and writers who will visit our city in the coming weeks with all the warmth and enthusiasm befitting a family gathering.

For further information on various readings, please contact:

Derrumbando Fronteras/Breaking Boundaries, UTSA/NEH Summer Institute, 210.458.5575 ftrevino@utsa.edu	Latina Letters Conference, July 17-19, St. Mary's University, 210.271.3151, milligan@wingspress.com
Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social, MALCS, August 10-13, ncantu@utsa.edu	Gemini Ink Summer Festival 210.734.9673

And of course keep reading La Voz and contact the Esperanza for more information on upcoming events.



Pablo Miguel Martínez is a local writer and cultural worker.

Noche de Macondo

*Están invitadas to hear...
writers, famosas y maconas,*

**from the Macondo Workshop
reading to la buena gente
de San Antonio
at the Esperanza
on August 8, 2003
beginning at 9:30 p.m.**

Wine, sangria, botanas y más.

**Esperanza
Peace & Justice Center
922 San Pedro
For more information call 210-228-0201**

an excerpt from
an excerpt from

Cascarones

A play by Irma Mayorga
A play by Irma Mayorga

PLACE: The action of the play takes place in several locales: 1) in and around the Grand Canyon; 2) the kitchen and yard where the CÁ CERES family lives, in San Antonio's mexicano West Side—the side of town where most working class Tejanos have lived, labored, died and are buried.

TIME: The play moves between the far past and its present, 1992. History is never gone from the Cáceres house, indeed, from this city itself. It surrounds everything and is, therefore, placed between and among their everyday lives.

Middle of Act II

Setting: The kitchen of MARY MARGARET CÁ CERES' home.

Characters: MARY MARGARET CÁ CERES, 18, obsessed with maps

DEBRA, also 18,

MARY MARGARET's cousin, 7 months pregnant by her boyfriend BOBBY

[Lights rise on DEBRA. MARY MARGARET enters with grocery bags. DEBRA works on a piñata at the kitchen table.]

MARY MARGARET: I'm back, I'm home.

DEBRA: [no response, glues her piñata.]

MARY MARGARET: Debra?

DEBRA: Yeah.

MARY MARGARET: I couldn't find those chips you like. The shelves were getting bare, you know, with the 4th of July and all. Here [she tosses a bag of chips at Debra.] I brought you these instead.

DEBRA: I hate these. I don't have cravings for the Lays. I wanted the Ruffles not the Lays. You like the Lays. The

Lays always break in the dip. You can't dip the Lays.

MARY MARGARET: Debra, what are you doing? You know Frankie wanted a star for his birthday piñata.

DEBRA: I know.

MARY MARGARET: Then what is that?

DEBRA: Claro que sí. I got the star right here. [DEBRA pulls out a star and smashes it onto the tabletop.]

MARY MARGARET: Then, what's this for?

DEBRA: Can't you tell? It's a mighty tiger.

MARY MARGARET: A tiger?

DEBRA: Yes, a tiger.

MARY MARGARET: If you've made the star then why you makin' a tiger. . .? A white and black tiger?

DEBRA: I ran out of orange tissue paper because I used all the orange tissue paper for the star. But I figured it didn't really matter. What really matters? So, I just used the white that was left over, lots of white tissue paper.

MARY MARGARET: A white tiger? We don't need two piñatas. . .

DEBRA: Because of this! [DEBRA grabs a CD and tosses it to MARY MARGARET]

MARY MARGARET: Los Tigres del Norte?

DEBRA: From Bobby!

MARY MARGARET: From Bobby, why?

DEBRA: It was my anniversary gift for our five-year anniversary. Mi novio gave me tigers.

MARY MARGARET: He gave you a CD, so. . .

DEBRA: So, I HATE Los Tigres del Norte.

MARY MARGARET: But you play them all the time.

DEBRA: I play them because they remind me of Bobby. . . not because I like them. [pause] Five years, five years with him. Since high school. And he gives me a CD of his favorite music! It didn't even have the plastic wrap on it which means that tonto probably taped it before he even gave it to me. Five years and he gives me a used CD.

MARY MARGARET: Oh.

DEBRA: And this. . . [DEBRA holds up a hunting knife high over her head.]

MARY MARGARET: What is that? Is that a knife?

DEBRA: A hunting knife!! A hunting knife!! Don't you know what a hunting knife looks like?

MARY MARGARET: He gave you a knife?

DEBRA: Yes, don't all boyfriends give hunting knives as gifts to the mothers of their future children? Ahhhhhhhh. . . [DEBRA plunges the knife into the tiger piñata]

MARY MARGARET: What are you doing?

DEBRA: This morning I started getting mad. But I thought, no. It doesn't matter. It's gotta be Ok. And I was making the star for little Frankie and I thought, I've made piñatas for so many people, you know. Birthdays, Los Three Kings, barbecues, whatever. But no one has ever made a piñata for me. Mine were always store bought. I mean, why are we making little Frankie a star? Because he wanted an orange star, not a blue one that was at the mercado. For my birthdays I always got the stupid bulls. I hate the bull piñatas, why would I want a bull piñata? And I was sitting here feeling so alone on my fifth anniversary. I decided to make my own pinche piñata. And it came to me, a tiger, my breakable Bobby.

But first, I am going to cut out the heart of my future husband, mi amor, the man who is screwing me over! Then, I'm going to slit the neck and finally, I'm going to cut off its huevos.

MARY MARGARET: I know, this is terrible. Its bad. Thoughtless.

DEBRA: Thoughtless? Leaving the toilet seat up is thoughtless. Keeping his dirty underwear in the backseat of his truck is thoughtless.

Cabrón! He ruins my life. He puts his stupid seed in me when he says [muy cholo style] "ooooh, mamaciita, no more condoms, let's not use one this once. Pos, it doesn't feel real esa." Y I get pregnant. [pause] All I want is something nice for our anniversary. Tu sabes, a little something for the baby. What do I need with a damn hunting knife? [DEBRA picks up the rope and begins unfurling it.]

MARY MARGARET: What are you doing?

DEBRA: [climbing on top of her chair] I told you I made myself a piñata, now I'm going to crack its stupid head open.

MARY MARGARET: In here?

DEBRA: I'm going to have my own little party—an anniversary party. You're invited. Here, have some chips. Just you and me.

MARY MARGARET: Get down! You'll fall and hurt the baby.

DEBRA: Then get up here and hang this for me.

MARY MARGARET: I don't think we should do this.

DEBRA: Shit Mary Margaret. You're always tellin' me to do stuff for myself. Now, when I wanna, you won't even help me. What's wrong with this?

MARY MARGARET: Here, give me the damn thing. [MARY MARGARET hangs up the piñata. DEBRA ties a dish cloth around her own head. She stands ready, blindfolded] Now hand me the stick. Ok, you pull the rope.

MARY MARGARET: No wait. Just a minute. [MARY MARGARET runs and puts the Tigres Del Norte CD in a boom box, hits "play" and turns the volume up.] Now. Try to hit it!

DEBRA: This is for the CD! [She takes a swipe, she misses] And this is for taking me to a crappy Taco Cabana for our anniversary dinner. . . [she misses] And this is for thinking only of himself. . . [she hits the piñata] And this is for making me have a big pansa in July. . . [she hits it again] And, and, for making a mess of everything. . . everything. . . [DEBRA crumples, music fades out] I don't wanna have the baby. *We're gonna have a kid.* I don't know how he does it, pos I don't think he knows what's coming.

MARY MARGARET: I don't know how to. . . make it better.

DEBRA: You think I'm stupid. That I really fucked up. Well, so what?

MARY MARGARET: No, I don't think you fucked up. I don't. . .

DEBRA: I chose diapers and spit up.

MARY MARGARET: You want to know a secret. . . sometimes, I'm. . . jealous.

DEBRA: You're jealous?

MARY MARGARET: That first night you moved in, when Bobby dropped you off. He kissed you by the door. I was here in the kitchen. You guys were moving against the screen, wanting something from each other so badly—

thinking you're not sure where it is, but maybe you're gonna find it, in each other.

DEBRA: Jealous, huh?

MARY MARGARET: It's not Bobby. It's the idea of a Bobby. Someone that lets you surrender. Something needing you that badly.

DEBRA: You never gonna have that with those maps of yours, girl.

MARY MARGARET: I don't know, something in them needs me. It's a mess inside them.

DEBRA: See, that's the problem. Who's gonna want a girl that goes around sayin there's shit in maps? The world's out here, and it ain flat.

MARY MARGARET: They're not flat. There's all kinds of trouble under them.

DEBRA: There's whole worlds of trouble out here too.

MARY MARGARET: At work, the voices, always asking, wantin to know where to go [Mary Margaret works at VIA, San Antonio's city bus system.] Everybody's always lost. So I think, I think, if I can solve the trouble with the maps then maybe it can help the trouble out here.

DEBRA: They ain never gonna tell you anythin, you know? [pause]

MARY MARGARET: You didn't finish.

DEBRA: I'm done. Tha's enough. [pause] . . . You hit it. You hit my tiger piñata.

MARY MARGARET: Me? No. It'll make a mess. I can't.

DEBRA: No, no, no. Come on. . .

MARY MARGARET: I can't. . .

DEBRA: Come on. Put this on. [DEBRA ties dishcloth around MARY MARGARET's head.]

MARY MARGARET: No, no Debra.

DEBRA: I'll pull the rope.

MARY MARGARET: I feel stupid.

DEBRA: [enticingly] Think of your mother, think of your

job. Cabróna, think of Bobby if it helps.

MARY MARGARET: Bobby? [MARY MARGARET swings feebly]

DEBRA: No, come on, really try. What gets you mad?

[simultaneously]

MARY MARGARET:

DEBRA:

Alright, alright.

[she takes a swipe]

This is for bus routes that go nowhere.

[she hits it, contact]

And missed connections late at night.

[she hits it]

And for old cars

[she hits it again]

And for not enough money

and for when people lose their way

[She begins swinging wildly]

[The sound of roaring water. MARY MARGARET cracks open the piñata. Water comes gushing out.]

[DEBRA exits. MARY MARGARET wanders. She removes the blindfold. Sound of cicadas buzzing in the heat.]

Hit it Mary Margaret. Go girl. ¡Andale!

[she pulls the rope]

Go on! Hit it Mary Margaret. Com'on. . .

Go Mary Margaret. Get that tiger.

[she pulls the rope]

Get that tiger. Almost. Good. Good.

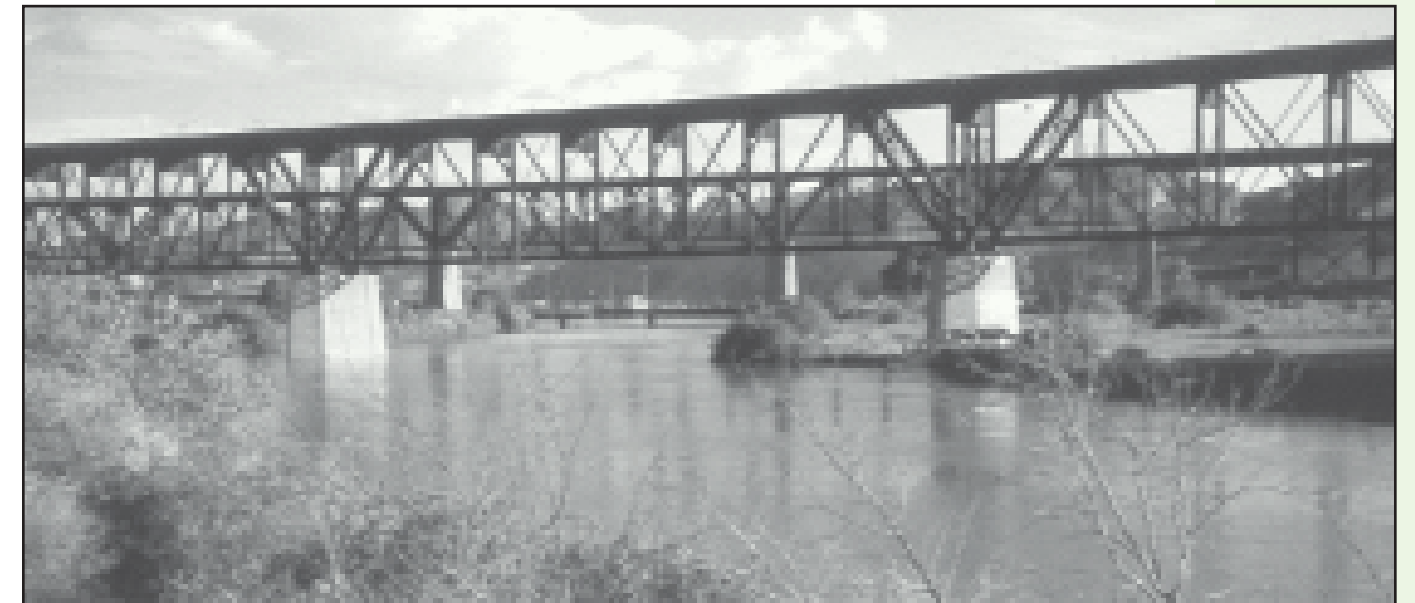
[she pulls the rope]

Again, try harder!

“MAQUI-LOCAS”

excerpt from the novel *The Factory, Or, Desert Blood*

by Alicia Gaspar de Alba



As a native of the El Paso/Juarez border, I have been researching the Juarez crimes since 1998, and recently completed a mystery novel on the subject titled “The Factory/Desert Blood.” Because of the lack of awareness there is on the U.S. side of the border regarding these heinous crimes of over 320 young, poor, brown women (most of them maquiladora workers), I chose to write a novel in English on the subject rather than an academic book in an effort to reach and inform the broadest public possible of this deadly crime wave that has been ravaging the lives of women and girls in Juarez since 1993. In this novel, the protagonist/sleuth is one of those uninformed natives of El Paso who becomes personally impacted by the crimes (as we will see in this scene), and motivated to learn as much as she can about them to help resolve the mystery of the silence that surrounds the murders.

Background: June, 1998. The main character, Ivon “Pancho” Villa and her lover, Brigit, want to adopt a baby. Ivon’s cousin, Ximena, is a social worker in El Paso who works with teenage mothers and runaways, and she has contacts with pregnant maquiladora workers who want to put their babies up for adoption. One of those workers is Cecilia, a fifteen-year-old worker at the Phillips plant. Ximena has arranged for Ivon to adopt Cecilia’s baby. In the following scene from the novel, Ximena and her friend Father Francis are taking Ivon to meet Cecilia. Although she is a native of El Paso, Ivon does not know anything about the maquiladora murders. By June 1998, there were 137 dead women.

The priest’s car swerved into a tiny washboard lane under a sign that read Agua Para Puerto Anapra.

“So what am I supposed to say to this girl?” Ivon turned to look at her cousin.

“Don’t say a thing,” Father Francis said. “Shimeyna will go in first and talk to the girl and her family, and if they agree to everything, I’ll take you in to meet them. Whatever you do, do

not tell them you’re a... you’re a ... you’re not ...”

“Cat got your tongue, Frank? He means don’t go saying you’re a dyke, or they’ll never agree to let you adopt the baby,” Ximena clarified. “They’ll think you’re a pervert or something.”

“They give a shit about that? They’re living in Hell’s Kitchen, here, and they give a shit what I do in my private life?”

“It’s not a matter of privacy,” said Father Francis, “it’s a matter of religion. These people are very religious, very traditional. Poverty only strengthens family values, it doesn’t take them away.”

Ivon bit her tongue and stared out the window.

“Okay, so I’ll go in and talk to them,” Ximena continued, “feel them out, massage their guilt and all that stuff. They’re very humble people, but they’ve got their pride, you know, and this is still their decision. I don’t think they’re going

to change their minds at this point, but it's a formality that they meet you and approve of you. You have to give the money to Frank beforehand, though. He's the one who'll take care of the money matters after you and I walk out of the house."

"Over here's where they found some of the bodies," Father Francis announced as they passed a section of trash-covered dunes. "Lomas de Poleo, Pollen Hills, they call it. A couple of little boys found a human skull buried in the trash they were sorting. Police found the bodies of twelve women here, and the remains of several others."

"Jesus, what a place to live," said Ivon.

"It's not like they have a lot of choice," said Father Francis. "They're squatters. Puerto de Anapra is one of the biggest colonias here."

The irony stung Ivon like a rock on the cheek. Water for Puerto de Anapra, the sign back there had said. A port without water. Not even the Rio Grande came to this godforsaken place. The sudden piercing shriek of a train whistle gave her goose bumps. On the horizon to the right, the Santa Fe rail lumbered across the desert. Just north of the border highway, beyond the tracks, she could see the white buildings and gleaming parking lots of Sunland Park Mall. Below that, the twin smokestacks of the ASARCO refinery.

The bumpy drive, the heat and the dust were all giving her a headache.

"Here we are," said Father Francis, pulling up in front of a flat-roofed plywood and tarpaper shack. There were people milling all over the place, men in cowboy hats, women in black shawls draped over their heads, battered pickups and cars with mismatched doors clustered in the chamiza on either side of the house.

"What's going on? They having a fiesta or something?" said Father Francis.

"It's ten in the morning, Frank," said Ximena, heaving herself out of the car. "Something's weird. I'll be right back." She slammed the door.

Ivon watched her meander through the crowd, shake hands with some of the men, exchange kisses with some of the women. Someone said something in her ear, and Ivon saw Ximena's shoulders go up as if the hackles had just risen on her back. Ximena turned toward the car and for a split second, Ivon saw fear in her fearless cousin's face, then she turned back and ducked into the shack.

"You can give me the money, now," said Father Francis. "Don't let anyone see what you're doing."

"Is this how you make ends meet, Father?" Ivon said,

pulling out her wallet. "I mean this isn't something you do through your church, right, this is your own racket."

"Ximena and I are just trying to help these young women. They can't afford another mouth to feed, they make three dollars a day in those American factories, and their food coupons don't last the week. They have to work eleven hours just to buy a box of diapers, and four hours to buy a gallon of milk. Children are running around addicted to gasoline and paint by the age of five; that is, if they don't get run over by a bus or mauled by a wild dog or if they simply die from dysentery or malnutrition. We're just trying to help clean things up around here."

Ivon counted out ten one-hundred dollar bills. Father Francis watched her.

"You get two-fifty of this, right? What's Ximena's cut?" She handed him the money, and he slipped it into his shirt pocket. For the first time, she noticed the scabs and scratches on the back of his hand, the calloused knuckles and nail-bitten fingers.



"I take three-fifty, actually. Two-fifty for Contra el Silencio, one-hundred for the birth certificate. Ximena doesn't take anything. Angel service, she calls it."

They were quiet for a moment and Ivon had that nauseous feeling in her gut again. All those people turning to look at the car were making her nervous, but it was the animosity she was suddenly feeling from this priest that she couldn't tolerate.

"Look," she said, turning to face Father Francis and looked him squarely in the eye, "I don't know why there's this friction going on right now between us, and I'm sorry I'm asking really dumb questions, okay, but I haven't lived here since 1989, so I really need to be brought up to speed on what's going on. Can you like not give me a hard time, please? This adoption thing is very scary for me."

Father Francis raised both hands, as if to surrender an argument she didn't even know they were having. "Ximena's

right. I always get panicky when we do these things and I can be an asshole when I panic. Sorry." He pounded his chest once. "Mea culpa."

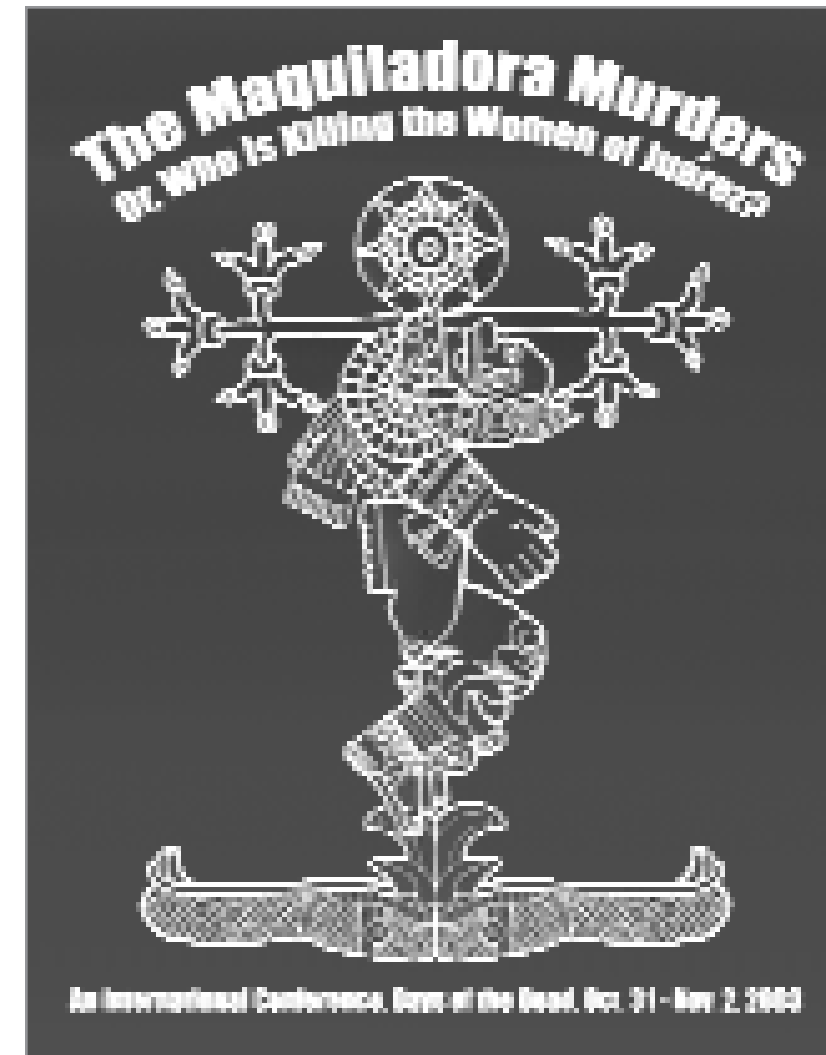
"So, tell me about your organization," she changed the subject. "Ximena didn't say much about it."

"These adoptions are Ximena's thing; I help her out because she gets me donations for Contra el Silencio, you know, one hand washes the other, but we're basically a non-profit, and other than advocate for the missing girls we also picket the courthouse and the offices of the Times and the Herald Post, protesting the silence of the authorities and the media on these murders."

"I don't get it," said Ivon. "Why the silence? You'd think this was big news."

"You really don't know what's going on in your own home town, do you?" He reached into the glove compartment and took out a pack of Winstons, offering one to Ivon. She declined. He lit one for himself and threw the pack on the dashboard.

"The victims," he said, smoke billowing out of his nose and mouth. "The lost ones. Not all of them have been maquila workers from Juárez. There are twelve girls from El Paso that have disappeared since 1996, two women from Las Cruces, and another



woman who was a journalist from Holland, she was investigating the crimes on her own, well, guess who just recently went missing? Border Patrol found the Las Cruces women—they were sisters, by the way—on the riverbank last summer, just west of downtown, and two months later Contra el Silencio found one of the El Paso girls buried under a pile of tires just across from the black bridge in Lomas de Poleo. Aurora was her name, and she was mutilated and violated in exactly the same way as the Las Cruces women. Each one was naked, had her face melted down, like it was burnt with a blowtorch, the right breast sliced off, and the nipple of the left breast mangled. Another of the El Paso girls was found, naked and disemboweled in a car in front of the Juárez police station."

"My God. Who's doing this?"

Father Francis shrugged. He took a last pull on his cigarette and threw the butt out the window. "The rest of our girls haven't turned up, and nobody's looking for them, officially, I mean. FBI has no evidence of malfeasance, they say. They can't get involved without evidence. Girls ran off with their boyfriends, that's the line of the judicial police over here. The activist groups that run rastreos on this side are only looking for the Juárez girls. That's why I started Contra el Silencio, for the friends and relatives of the American girls. But the media, or rather, the Mayor, doesn't want people in El Paso to know what's really going on, so once in a while, I get these little threatening phone calls about minding my own business. Goes with the territory, I guess."

"Here she comes." Ivon watched Ximena as she extricated herself from the crowd in front of the house and made for the car. In one hand she was clutching a piece of paper. Her face looked white as chalk. She got into the car, breathing hard, like she'd just run a few blocks.

Ivon and Father Francis both turned to look at her.

"Well? What happened?" asked Father Francis.

"You okay?" said Ivon.

Ximena stared straight ahead, eyes watery, chin trembling. "She's dead, you all. Cecilia's dead."

Ivon felt her face grow cold. "What?"

"She didn't come home from her shift last night and some guy on horseback found her body out by the airport this morning. Stabbed to death and with a rope around her neck, like she was dragged. Still wearing her smock and her nametag."

"I thought you were picking her up?" said Father Francis.

"We went to the factory, we were there before midnight, but she'd left. She punched out early and someone gave her a ride."

Father Francis pressed his hand over his mouth.

"Sick fucks," said Ximena, angry of a sudden. "Sick fucks running loose in this city." She slammed her hands against the back of Ivon's seat, and started to weep. "Son of a bitch! Frank, if I'd picked her up earlier—"

"Ximena, you couldn't have known."

"And ... and the baby?" Ivon felt as if a vice were squeezing her chest.

Ximena covered her face with her hands and wept.

Ivon felt the breath drain out of her lungs.

"What animals!" said Father Francis, opening his door.

"Where are you going, Frank?" said Ximena.

"Don't they need a priest in there?"

"They're at the morgue. Cecilia's grandmother and her aunt. The police took them to identify the body."

"By themselves?" said Father Francis, turning on the ignition. "Two women alone in a police car in Juárez?" He floored the gas pedal and the tires spun a cloud of dust around the car.

"They wouldn't try anything, not with all the witnesses that saw them leaving," said Ximena. "Say a prayer for her, Frank, while you drive. Say it out loud, please."

"Dear Father," Father Frank intoned, after making the sign of the cross over his face, "we ask you to bless the ravaged body of our friend Cecilia and the innocent soul of her unborn child. Take them unto your bosom and comfort them, and may they rest now, forever, in the valley of your perfect love."

Ivon felt the tears spill down her face. "We have to find out who picked her up last night," she said. Something was cutting into her vocal chords, and she knew it was the voice of the little boy—Mapi, he kept calling her, I'm starting to feel kinda lonely. "I want to go talk to that security guard. I want to know what he saw."

Father Francis looked at her and rolled his eyes. "You think he's going to tell you anything? He's probably in on it. For all we know, he's the killer."

A traffic jam had formed on the main road. The boy on

the skateboard they had passed earlier was sitting in the middle of the road hugging the skateboard to his chest. Cars had pulled over willy-nilly, and a line of buses stretched up the hill that led out of Puerto de Anapra.

Father Francis rolled down his window and called out to a group of girls.

"Qué pasa?"

"The bus hit that boy," said one of the girls.

"Is he hurt?"

"No le pasó nada al buey," said another girl. "He's always riding that chingadera in front of the buses." The girl pointed at her temple. "Le faltan canicas, es un baboso."



Father Francis rolled up his window. "This place!" he said, shaking his head.

Someone tapped on the windshield and startled Ivon. It was a boy on a bicycle holding up four old Barbie dolls with singed hair and high-heeled shoes, their shiny dresses cut high on the hip and low on the cleavage.

"Maqui-Locas," the boy said, flashing a gap-toothed smile at them. "Muy cheap!"

Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Associate Professor of Chicana/o Studies and English at UCLA, is the organizer of the upcoming "Maquiladora Murders, Or, Who Is Killing the Women of Juárez?" Conference at UCLA. She is the author of Sor Juana's Second Dream: A Novel (1999) and Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master's House (1998). Her new book of poems and personal essays, La Llorona on the Longfellow Bridge will be published by Arte Publico Press in September, 2003. The excerpt published here is an exclusive of *La Voz* with permission from the author.

They were young girls with dreams . . .

Since October, 1993, over 320 young women have been killed in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, on the border with El Paso, Texas. These crimes, in which the women have been kidnapped, mutilated, raped and murdered, have been described by the press as "Jack-the-Ripper style serial killings." More recently, Amnesty International declared them "crimes against Humanity." The victims, some as young as 6 years old, represent the most disenfranchised sector of the Juárez population—young, poor, migrant maquiladora workers, known locally as "las muchachas del sur," and colloquially as "maquilocas." The American-owned border factories, or maquiladoras, have shown little interest in investigating the large-scale murder of their own workers. Similarly, the U.S. press largely ignored this issue until 2001. To this day the murders continue and remain unsolved.

The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center in co-sponsorship with Amnesty International will host a three-day international conference on the murders, October 31st to November 2nd, 2003. The conference, "The Maquiladora Murders, Or, Who Is Killing the Women of Juárez?" will mark the tenth year since the murders began; and it will constitute the first such conference at a major American research university drawing upon scholars, policy specialists, journalists, artists and activists from the U.S. and Mexico, as well as families of the victims.

The Esperanza Peace and Justice Center of San Antonio has been invited to co-sponsor this historic conference, and will make a major contribution to the event. In homage to these innocent young women Dr. Gaspar de Alba has commissioned the women of MujerArtes, ten artistas and their maestra, Verónica Castillo, to create an altar/installation which will be exhibited in conjunction with the "Ceramic Trees of Life" exhibition at the UCLA

Fowler Museum of Cultural History and the Maquiladora Murders conference. The altar will remain on display at the Fowler Museum through December 28, 2003. A silent auction of the altar pieces will be held during the conference, and all proceeds will go to the families of the victims.

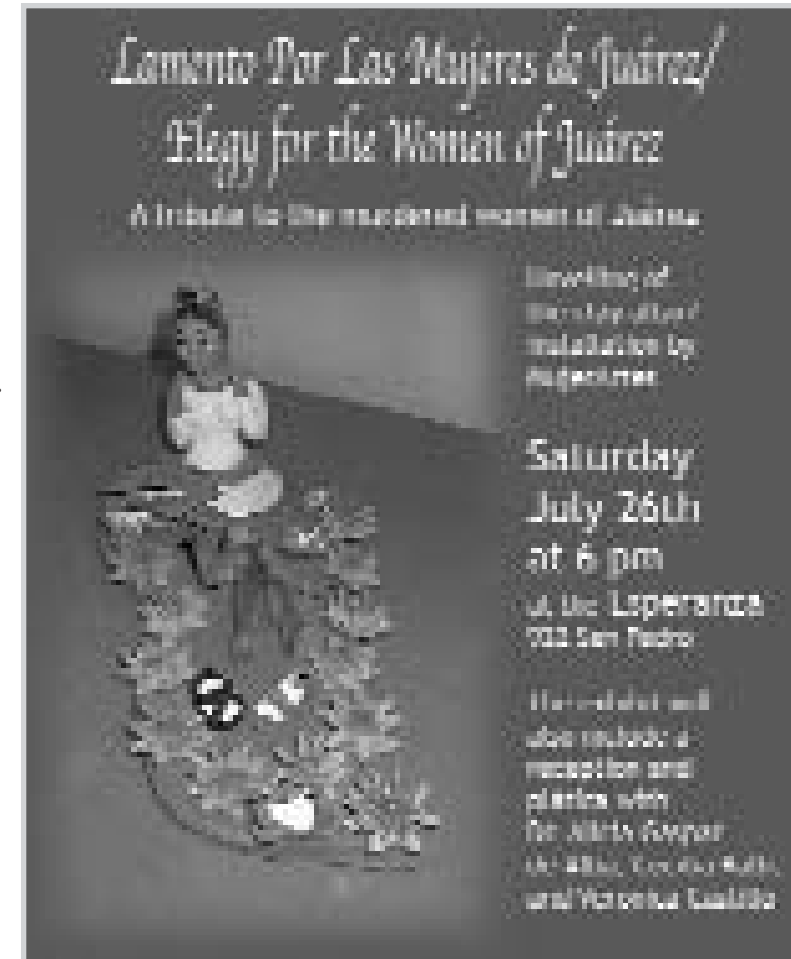
Locally, the San Antonio public is invited to the unveiling of this community altar at the end of July. The exhibit will also include a reception and plática with author/conference organizer, Dr. Alicia Gaspar de Alba, journalist, Cecilia Balli, and master ceramicist, Verónica Castillo of MujerArtes.

In a stunning clay assemblage of tribute and grief, mutilated women are strewn amidst ten "sequences" of rural domestic life, dinner-like and shoe-shaped plates, nichos, plaques, mosaics, politicized crucifixes and a majestic centerpiece, a tree of death, or árbol de la muerte, entitled, "Maquilando Mujeres/Piecing Women."

"I knew of the story," says Rosie Zertuche, a MujerArtes artisan who has fashioned a trio of faceless women shrouded in Siqueiros-like grief. Zertuche, a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, wanted to create something so memorable that people would be moved to find the killers.

"See the dove with a heart in its beak?" she says. The women's brushes pause for a delicate moment. "It could happen to us."

They were young girls with dreams just like the daughters of the women's pottery collective of the Esperanza Center, MujerArtes.



Un Altar Para Las Mujeres de Juárez:

Comentario de Verónica Castillo

Este proyecto, "Lamento Por Las Mujeres de Juárez/Elegy for the Women of Juárez," nació cuando escuchamos la historia real de las mujeres asesinadas en Juárez, México que nos presentó la profesora, Alicia Gaspar de Alba en la casita de

MujerArtes. En su plática, Alicia nos comentó que estaba organizando una conferencia en Los Angeles, California sobre el tema de los crímenes y nos invitó a participar para que esta comunidad de San Antonio

podiera aportar algo a la conferencia a través del Centro Esperanza y la cooperativa de MujerArtes. Decidimos hacer un altar en conmemoración de las mujeres de Juárez. La idea era crear un pieza principal estilo "árbol de la vida" que le queríamos llamar "árbol de la muerte," acompañada por varias otras piezas complementando el árbol con escenas hechas por las mujeres de la cooperativa.

Para aprender mas sobre el tema, vimos el documental "Señorita Extraviada" de Lourdes Portillo y todas tuvimos una reacción muy fuerte. Era una combinación de miedo, coraje, e indignación de la manera tan cruel que están siendo asesinadas tantas mujeres jóvenes en esa frontera. Del video sacamos algunas imágenes representativas de las

víctimas, como los zapatos, las batas de las maquilas, los autobuses misteriosos, y las caras cínicas de la policía y de los sospechosos. Las lágrimas de las madres es lo que más

nos calaba en el corazón, porque todas nosotras de MujerArtes



somos madres y sabemos el dolor que puede llegar a sentir una madre al perder a su criatura. Yo les pedí que hicieran escenas que fueran directo al grano y al corazón, o sea que sensibilizáramos a esta sociedad a través de la arcilla. Yo les dije a las mujeres que quería que estas escenas

sirvieran para abrirle los ojos a la gente y hacer un espacio para enseñar el horror de la relación entre la industria maquiladora y estas mujeres maquiladas que buscan trabajo pero se encuentran con la muerte y el olvido.

En mi "árbol" estoy mostrando la muerte bajo diferentes símbolos y figuras que esconden ciertas verdades profundas. Uno de esos símbolos, el más importante que yo veo para la vida de estas mujeres, es la maquiladora. ¿Qué ganamos con el tratado de libre comercio? ¿Tener una situación económica estable, una

vida más tranquila, más llevadera? O, ¿es que la globalización nos trae mentes enfermas a quienes no les importa el ser humano, únicamente el poder y el dinero.

En mi pieza, la figura central es una maquiladora sentada sobre una ruleta que está sostenida con cráneos, como ruleta de la muerte. Hay cuatro mujeres esperando entrar a la maquila donde no saben que suerte les espera. También hay cuatro asesinos, cada uno ultrajando a un cuerpo



femenino—ya sea, jalándole el pelo, arrancándole un brazo o el corazón, cortándole un seno—y todos con una sonrisa cícnica porque saben que van a salirse con las suyas, que hacen lo que hacen con impunidad social.

Espero que este altar nos ayude a recordar a las vidas inocentes que han sido arrebatadas de nuestro vientre familiar, y sobre todo que comunique el apoyo que la cooperativa de MujerArtes y el Centro Esperanza le queremos dar a las familias de las víctimas. Con respeto y dignidad.

Veronic Castillo will be part of the plática on Lamento por las Mujeres de Juarez on July 26th at the Esperanza.

Desalmado Corrido a Las Mujeres de Juárez

Enlutaste mi Casa con mi Muerte
Destrozaste la Esencia de ser Hembra
Me haces garras con las fuerzas de ser hombre
Mutilada en las tumbas de los montes
al que incumba americano o mexicano
Las Mujeres de Juárez
Han Hablado

Por vendido y por miedo al del dinero
Compañía Pocopaga y Papa Droga
Hoy Trabajadora y mañana prostituta
Justificando la maldad que has cometido
Al que incumba americano o mexicano
Las Mujeres de Juárez
Han Hablado

Si Nosotras fuéramos como los hombres
Ya no hubiera ni una vida en este mundo
Que vergüenza que alguien tan civilizado
Sacrifique a la Mujer como pagano
al que incumba americano o mexicano
Las Mujeres de Juárez
Han hablado

Pero no nos ganaran en esta causa
Escritoras contarán de Nuestra historia
Toda Hembra insistirá por las Fronteras
Las Cantantes cantarán Nuestras canciones
Al que incumba americano o mexicano
Las Mujeres de Juárez
Han Hablado

Y se escucha de allá del cementerio
Unos Ruidos en la niebla, a media noche
Las Mujeres De Juárez
Han Hablado
La justicia en Sus Manos y
Una Voz

Desalmado, te me voy a aparecer
Mientras vivas, dondequiera, a toda hora
de éste día ya no vas a estar en paz
Si fuera tu yo no me dormiría
Porque de ésta pesadilla
¡Ya no vas a despertar!



Dedicado a mi profesora
la Dra. Norma E. Cantú

Rosa Reyes, a professional educator, lives in Zapata, Texas with her herd of goats.

Hijas de Juarez

by Claudia Rodríguez

Mausoleo

I lived in el D.F. when I first heard this word. I'd get up every morning to go to school, waited on a seemingly abandoned road for the pesero to slow down enough for me to hop on board. By the time I'd get on, people were already hanging from the back door of the pesero. The inside was crammed with men and women slick and scented with clumps of sleep in their eyes but all set to start their day. I'd wait for it- the huge arc with a cherub fastened right in the middle to appear before us as if ascending out of the earth. From the front, the Mausoleo looked like a dull marble wall hanging from the sky from invisible cords. The gray wall was checkered with metal plaques with names inscribed like cicatrices. This Mausoleo was right in the middle of sparse buildings and vast parched land and surrounded by dusty stones. It stood one mile from my apartment and one mile from el periférico. "What an odd place to lay people to rest," I would always think.

Los Desiertos

Los desiertos de norte america no son tan deshabitados como pensamos. El desierto del Mojave, which stretches from southeastern California to Nevada, is rich with Joshua trees while saguaros speckle the landscape of Arizona but yucca and lechugilla are *not* the only things that grow in Chihuahua's desert. El desierto de Chihuahua contiene un mausoleo.

It is a lonely mausoleum where tumbleweeds anxiously race across and cacti stand around like as crosses. Strips of different colored cloths, the lace of a dress, the sleeve of a schoolgirl's sweater, the ribbon that once interlaced a braid, flap back and forth like bodiless wings in the wind. There are no plaques on this mausoleum cause there are no walls, there's only a roof of polluted air and endless sky and a floor made from female remains, chanclas, patent leather shoes y guaraches de piel.

This mausoleum is where precious flowers come to rest. Flowers that were yanked from their roots too early and never allowed bloom. These flowers are undetectable to the naked eye, they don't leave a scented trail when caressed by the wind but we know they exist because they leave vestiges of their presence knotted in murmured prayers, and in the shape of pink crosses. There are people who've had these

flowers in their lives, they woke every morning to see their flowers get bigger because they nurtured them with love. These people look like you and me; they walk to the mercados, get their hands dirty and enjoy café de la olla in pensive sips. But, when you come across such a person, "buenas tardes," while crossing the street you notice they wear a certain look on their face as if someone is holding them by their soul. That's the look of someone who had their flower taken in silence and are left with a void that will



resonate forever in their hearts. Many people believe that the mausoleum is watched over by a guardian that stands atop of the mountain. They say the guardian stands tall with his arms spread as if ready to catch the disappearing flowers in his arms as they rise to heaven. While many others believe that the guardian is nothing but a mirage, another one of the desert's false promises, after all, what type of guardian would allow for the flowers to be taken in the first place. The flower mourners have come together, joining their pain and hope, they use these forces to rake over the desert turning over every ajo lily, desert zinnia, primrose, poppy, fairy duster and chuparosa in search of their flowers.

January 10, 2003

In a place called Stevenson Ranch where a part of the California desert is plagued by the mushrooming of suburbia a man

squatted atop of a 400-year old oak. It is a massive oak thick with age and its roots lie deep, deeper than any of the pro-expansionists' thoughts could ever go. However, the oak stands inconveniently in the path of a planned highway-widening project. The tree-squatter fixed himself to the tree for 10 weeks in support of the tree's life. The tree was spared. For 10 years now the precious flowers del desierto de Chihuahua have been disappearing, over 400 have been reported missing, where do we need to squat to stop el lote bravo from expanding?



Claudia Rodríguez, a writer/activist from Compton is one co-founders and boardmember of Tongues (a project of VIVA). This poem was previously published in Tongues magazine.

Editor's note: The cross of nails pictured is erected at the downtown bridge from Juárez to El Paso and contains a nail for every victim to remind people of the murders. Bordercrossers see it on a daily basis.

LEJOS DEL GATO

carta de lourdes pérez

it all started after our return from palestine. it is that sensation deep in your body that tells you, you cannot stay living a contradiction. as the explosions fell over gaza in front of our own eyes, the implosion began from within...

living in a colony for 21 years and in the colonizers' home for 21 more was not my idea of growing. have I stopped fighting? no, never. but now i am doing it from a place that at the same time nurtures something in my soul that was in danger of dying.

in méjico, let's say that i can live what i sing and there is no price for that.

waking up to the wild colors of the bougainvilleas, the intended good morning of the people in the street, the noisy and friendly city of guanajuato where you know that what you buy was made by who is selling it to you.

i don't have a car, i don't need a car, i never want a car again.

the mountain of cristo rey on the way to los llanitos de Santana is where i now live. the smell, the color, the taste of comida caliente, maíz, chile, frijol cultivados en el mismo cerro. dozens of children asking us to go with them to bathe in the river 3 minutes from home. (that is, 3 minutes downhill because uphill is 10 minutes - at least for us). The smiles, the astute humor of the people who don't believe anything a politician has to say. where the religious celebrations are an excuse for the precious convivio.

it is the brilliant décima of guillermo velázquez who was made alive in my heart, the love for the décima of my country. it is connecting in verse with my mother in puerto rico...she sends me stories of her childhood, of our town of san sebastian, i turn them into décima. the other day she sent me a story about the ganaderos, i sent her a décima, she was moved. that is because i see the ganaderos here every morning. what would she say if i told her that they bring me the freshest cow and goat milk i ever tasted and that no matter how wide the merchants of war try to expand their greed, there are still places and people who cannot be touched?

what a gift that i am able to live now what she lived then, a life

PAVIMENTO DE ADOQUINES
TúNEL, CATEDRAL, MAÍZ
TEZ DE INDÍGENA RAÍZ
GENEROSIDAD SIN FINES
MÉJICO ASI SE DEFINE
CORAZA, ALEGRE VIGILIA
PARA TI, UNA BUGANVILIA
UN CIELO AZUL, UN ABRAZO
QUE HOY TE SIRVAN DE REGAZO
QUE EN AMOR, SOMOS FAMILIA

that no longer exists in my town.

some days i miss the sea and my centenary grandmother, but i have been able to see her in the faces of so many people of peace. here, el "sí, se puede" de dolores is incarnate. it is so rooted, my heart knew it. having lived in texas for so many years, seeing it in the eyes of so many chicanos. a dream that is not broken. a connection centuries old of a spirit that refuses to be exterminated. that is, to me, the blessing that i find here.

once you are welcomed by a mexican family, you are welcomed. and they will fight for you, for integrity is greater than your place of origin. they say if the u.s. invades, they will take them out "a nopalazos."

this is the same love that took hold of us in palestine.

i will sing in this upcoming trip to texas many new songs born here. given to me by viejitas like carmelita jaso who entered my heart to never leave. i will also sing from our new cd, pájaros de otro canto, a soundtrack for a film that looks at the tragic migration in the other direction, where I had the honor to work with my partner of 12 years, annette d'armata, as well as musicians literally from every punto cardinal of the américas, as well as the san antonio treasure, eva ybarra and my beloved and talented brother, raul pérez, to name some.

being here is to be a bird of another song, a bird from another place, finding new grass for a new nest, for the moment, flying from the cage of terror from the declarations of war, from hatred ...and from this side of their profitable border, scream with all the air in my lungs:

VÍVA MÉJICO, CABRONES!!!!



Lourdes Pérez's new CD is entitled Selections from Tres Oraciones. It can be ordered online at www.lourdesperez.com Perez' Spanish/Arabic version of "Unadikum" (CD single) is available only by donation to: Palestine Children's Welfare Fund: www.pcwfund.org

Don't forget to catch her live performance at the Esperanza on July 12, at 8pm.

An Open Letter to our African American Sisters and Brothers

Note: Peoples of color are being hurt more than ever today, thanks to the "Permanent War on Terrorism" and the War at Home. It, therefore, seems more important than ever to build alliances between our peoples who have similar struggles for liberation from poverty and racism, for peace with justice. This Open Letter is offered in that spirit. . .
~ the Institute for Multiracial Justice in San Francisco

The media have been full of it this year, with such headlines as "Hispanics Now Largest Minority," "America's Ethnic Shift" ... "Latinos pass blacks unless you count black Latinos" ... "Hispanics Pass Blacks..."

As Latino/a teachers, activists, community people, students, artists and writers, we stand fiercely opposed to anyone making those numbers a reason to forget the unique historical experience of African Americans, the almost unimaginable inhumanity of slavery lasting centuries, the vast distance that remains on their long walk to freedom. We cannot let whatever meager attention has been given to the needs of Black people up to now be diminished by those new statistics.

In the Latino community we will combat the competitiveness that could feed on those headlines and blind some of our people to the truth of this society. We will combat the opportunism that is likely to intensify among Latino politicians and professionals. We celebrate the unique resistance by African Americans over the centuries, which has provided an inspiring example for our communities as shown by the Chicano movement of 1965-75. We affirm the absolute necessity of standing with you against racist oppression, exploitation and repression—the real axis of evil—and of supporting your demand for reparations.

Latinos who may find it hard to see beyond their own poverty, their own struggles against racism—which are indeed, real—need to think about one simple truth. Only solidarity and alliances with others will create the strength needed to win justice.

Those newly announced statistics emphasize difference and pit brown against black like athletes racing against each other in the Oppression Olympics. But other numbers show how much we share the same problems of being denied a decent life, education, health care, all human rights. In times of war, look who fights and dies for the U.S. out of all proportion to our populations: Black and brown people.

To put it bluntly: we are both being screwed, so let's get it together!

History makes the message clear. It is worth recalling a major reason why George Washington—the invader who wasn't our Great White Father any more than yours—became president. He made a name for himself by successfully using the tactic of Divide and Conquer against different native nations and tribes. Divide and Conquer, later Divide and Control, has sustained White Supremacy ever since. It will continue to do so unless we cry out a joint, unmistakable, thunderous NO.

That will not be easy. Our peoples have different histories and cultures, together with great ignorance about each other. Competition for scarce resources, from jobs to funding for university departments, can be real. Latinos do not always see how in a nation so deeply rooted in racism, they may have internalized the value system of white supremacy and white privilege.

As Latinos, we are committed to help build alliances against our common enemies. We oppose the divisiveness encouraged by statistics about who is more numerous than who. As activists, we urge our community to support Black struggles and to fight together at every opportunity for our peoples' liberation. As teachers, we work to educate Latinos about both Black and Brown history, and our past alliances. As men and women, we can never do too much to assert our common humanity across color lines.

Last, but hardly least, Latinos are a very diverse people with many different nationalities and histories. Latinos also have various roots. In particular, we should recall that more Africans were brought to Mexico as slaves than the number of Spaniards who came, as can be seen by the all-African villages in Mexico today. The African in us demands proud recognition.

SIGNATORIES

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Leonard Valdéz, director, Multi-Cultural Center, Calif. State University, Sacramento CA



The letter was initiated by the Institute for MultiRacial Justice in San Francisco, California, cofounded in 1997 by Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez (now its director) and Phil Hutchings (last Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, SNCC, and currently an Oakland, CA activist.)



Anti-War,

Anti-Imperialism Work

Continues at the **Esperanza** by Amy Kastely

At the latest anti-war meeting at the Esperanza on June 14, we decided to continue our anti-war work. We want to share some of our thoughts with La Voz readers and make regular submissions that explore the connections between U.S. military aggression and other issues impacting our communities. Local to global to local, the issues are connected.

Here's the War Story the local news has reported: On March 20, 2003, the U.S. Government began bombing Iraq. On April 17th, General Tommy Franks and "his victorious commanders" straddled chairs, smoked Cuban cigars, joked with reporters, and shared back-slapping embraces in the presidential palace in Bagdad. The Express-News declared an end to the war and Roddy Stinson demanded an apology from Anti-War activists. On May 1, George Bush took the controls of a navy jet and flew to the USS Abraham Lincoln to declare the "liberation" of Iraq. Clearly, we might conclude, the war is over, the U.S. won, and the time for anti-war protest is over. Even national email-protests have moved on to other matters.

At the meeting on June 14, we recognized that one of the biggest problems confronting anti-war efforts in the United States is the enthusiastic participation of the news media in the public relations campaign staged by the government and the weapons industry. This is an especially frightening time, and the sense of powerlessness among many people in San Antonio is fueled by the strictly orchestrated news coverage of the Iraqi invasion. National news reporting was carefully shaped by the "embedding" of reporters, so reporters' observations were exactly merged with those of the U.S. military. Locally, the Express-News curtailed coverage of anti-war protests and removed at least two columnists – Julio Noboa and Marissa Stoeltje – while reprimanding others who wrote columns questioning U.S. military aggression.

We face an enormous difficulty when the news media not only refuses to report oppositional voices, but actively participates in the public relations campaign. Comparing current anti-WTO and anti-war activism to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s, June Jordan observed that the Civil Rights Movement "relied upon press coverage that was neutral, if not sympathetic," while contemporary progressive activists "confront a hostile or inaccessible or perverse press community." As a result, June Jordan wrote, contemporary activism must depend more completely on "non-virtual, in-your-face,

on-the-ground, at-the-meeting live exchange and support."¹

One important task in our on-going anti-war work will be to share information that has not been reported in the local press. For example, the U.S. government has not issued any account of war casualties and local news outlets have not reported any overall count. As of June 12, the most accurate independent reports are that between 5,500 and 7,300 Iraqi civilians have been killed in the U.S.-led invasion.² The only accurate estimate of Iraqi military casualties is limited to the battle at Bagdad, where approximately 1,500 Iraqi soldiers were killed. The total number of Iraqi soldiers killed since the beginning of the U.S.-led invasion must be several times that number. U.S. military casualties are approximately 125 and British military casualties are approximately 25.

In addition, the Express-News and other local news outlets have so far stuck to the story that "the war is over" even though U.S. military aggression in Iraq and other parts of the mideast has not ended. On June 15, the United States launched Operation Desert Scorpion, a military operation designed to "hunt down" Saddam-sympathizers and other terrorists. The Express-News did not report it. During the first days of this operation, U.S. forces killed approximately 100 Iraqis the U.S. identified as "Iraqi soldiers." The Express-News did not report it.

We must recognize that U.S. military aggression in Iraq and the mideast is not over and that the short "war" identified in the U.S. news media is just one aspect of the current policy of U.S. military action. On June 13, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz publicly acknowledged this long-term strategy:

"[O]nce aroused, this country does not relent. We have fought back . . . [with] brilliant military victories in Afghanistan and in Iraq. . . . But the fight against terror goes on. It goes on today even in Iraq and Afghanistan where brave soldiers are risking their lives to capture and kill terrorists. The fight against terror is going to be a long fight. But have no doubt about it. We will win."

As Ruth Lofgren reminded us at the June 14 meeting, U.S. plans leading **Esperanza Work Continues** on page 22

Panza to Panza

by Virginia Grise Yee Cortez

Those of you that know me, know my PANZA, not because it's big (even though that's true) but because I always talk about it. I show it (often). During serious conversations and tense moments, I'll flash you a little PANZA. I want you to look at it because I want to feel comfortable in my skin. The PANZA is something I think about a lot. With the outbreak of conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol, and heart disease as well as the different pressures and messages we get from our cultura, the PANZA for Chicanas and Latinas is a symbolic part of the female body that reveals many of the truths about our thoughts, our lives, our loves, our abuses and our overall conditions.

My creative partner, Irma Mayorga, and I asked women (young and old, flaca y gorda, poor and wealthy, inside the loop and outside the loop and across the land) for stories about their PANZAS. And the response has been incredible! We have stories about the international Panza, Panza pliers and being Panza-less. From Cha-Cha to Panza: The Story of Chicana Weight Gain. Pan for my Panza: The Unemployment Blues. We have collected radical Panza chants and have written The Panza Girl Manifesto. And please don't forget, the PANZA dances (me subes el colesterol mamacita, me subes el colesterol). Using the stories of our people's PANZAS, we want to build an original performance piece, un regalo y homenaje to the PANZA. Some of the stories are written as poetry, songs, prose, memories, and observations, others were collected in interviews. Some of the stories are funny, others sad and painful, all are revealing. The following piece is a poem from the Panza Monologues dedicated to my mother, Emma Lesi Yee Cortez.

Staged Reading of

The Panza Monologues (A Work in Progress)

August 11, 2003 at 8pm

Esperanza Peace & Justice Center

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para más información.

Donations Accepted.
Proceeds will be used
to help feed the panza
of the Esperanza (es
que esta bien hungry).

Part of the Mujeres
Activas en Letras y
Cambios Sociales
(MALCS) Conference



*i first heard music
in the panza
child in womb
listened to mother's*

*heart beat
listened to my own
heart beat
reverb*

*in the walls of the vientre
panza to panza
shared life
blood line*

*through umbilical cord
panza to panza*

*the first instrument
i heard was
the beat of heart*

*reverberated in the
panza of my mother
i could not exist
without her breath
feeding me*

*panza to panza
panza to panza
panza to panza*

*connected by
umbilical cord
cut after birth
placed in shoebox*

*buried deep in earth
underneath house
so that i never*

*lose my way
forget
where i come from
who my people are*

*umbilical cord cut
buried deep in earth
underneath house*

*so that i come back home
using my panza as guide*

Esperanza Work Continues on page 22

to the 2003 invasion of Iraq were formulated in the early 1990s, when Paul Wolfowitz was in charge of military policy in Bush Sr.'s Defense Department. Our anti-war work must continue because U.S. aggression continues.

Finally, we must continue our anti-war work because we cannot allow the loud messages of violence to be the only voices to be heard. As Maggie Arrive reminded us, there are lots and lots of people out there who oppose the use of U.S. military force in the mideast. Most of them can't actively participate in anti-war activities, because their time is consumed with work and family obligations. It is important that those people know that they are not alone in their opposition, that millions of others around the world oppose U.S. aggression. We must continue our anti-war efforts.

At the June 14 meeting, we committed to several avenues of anti-war work. First, is to write or encourage others to write a monthly item for La Voz and to distribute La Voz and other anti-war material broadly in our communities. Second, is to compile and distribute lists of anti-war resources for individuals and groups seeking alternative news sources. Third, is to develop a series of classes for anti-war activists and other community members. Suggested topics for these classes include: The

Bush Pre-Emptive Strike Doctrine; Recent Reductions in Domestic Civil Rights; U.S. Disappearances: Government Detention of Individuals Both In and Out of the U.S.; The Use of Violence in Anti-War Protests; The Use of Civil Disobedience in Anti-War Protests; and a History of Resistance Movements in San Antonio. Fourth, is to encourage and assist the Esperanza in programming pláticas, films, and other events focusing on U.S. military aggression, detention and other forms of discrimination against Arab-Americans; the history and contemporary struggles in the Middle East, and related issues.

The next anti-war meeting will be July 19 at the Esperanza. Coffee and informal conversation will be available from 9:30 am to 10 and the meeting will start promptly at 10 am.

1 June Jordan, *A Letter to Maria*, in *Some of Us Did Not Die* (2002), 34.
2 An excellent survey and evaluation of the civilian body count done by fifteen independent projects, available at www.iraqbodycount.net/editorial_june1203.htm

Amy Kastely is a professor of law at St. Mary's University and a board member of the Esperanza

mujercanto
a celebration of women, song and thought

september 26-27
7:30 at the
esperanza
peace & justice
center

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: lavoz@esperanzacenter.org or by snail mail to: 922 San Pedro, San Antonio, TX 78212. The deadline is the 12th of each month.

A featured event of the Gemini Ink's 6th Annual 2003 Summer Literary Festival, **Setting Our Own Place**, will present filmmaker, author, and San Antonio native John Phillip Santos for a benefit luncheon and documentary screening on Friday, July 18, noon to 2 p.m. at 513 S. Presa. The program will include a discussion of his writing and filmmaking career and a screened sample of his award-winning documentaries. It will conclude with a Q&A session and book signing. Admission is \$35. The festival continues July 7-20. Call (210) 734-9673 for info. or contact them at www.geminiink.org

The **EAST THEO STREET PROJECT: A Neighborhood With A Mission** is a special neighborhood arts installation on exhibit July 20th through the 31st at East Theo Street off of Mission Rd across from Mission Concepción. The Project, a celebration of the Mission Trail hike/bike trail being established on the south side, honors the history and heritage of the Concepción area community highlighting the working class vernacular architecture and anecdotal oral history contact between artists and residents. Everyone is invited to join the artists and residents for a Block Party Opening of the front yard installations on July 20 from 5-7 pm. The East Theo Street Project is a collaboration between **HACER: South**, a project of Mexico-North Research Network; Blue Star Art Space; the Esperanza Center and Sala Diaz and San Antonio's Office of Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment for the Arts. Contact: Penny Boyer 224-2518

A queer poetry anthology for young people will be published early next year by **Soft Skull Press**. This will be the first title from Soft Skull's new imprint, **Red Rattle Books**, publishing "alternative literature" for children and young adults. They are currently seeking a variety of poems that will approach the topic of "teen queerness" in a manner appropriate for a "young adult" audience. Contributors will receive 3 copies of the finished book upon publication. Publication is expected in the Spring of 2004. Submit work by July 31st by email to teenanthology@softskull.com or mail to: T. Cole Rachel and Rita D. Costello, ATTN: Adolescent Poetry Anthology, c/o Soft Skull Press, 71 Bond St. Brooklyn NY 11217. For further info check out www.softskull.com

The **Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS)** invites all science researchers, students and educators to attend the **2003 SACNAS National Conference** and k-12 Teacher Workshops in Albuquerque, New Mexico, October 2-5th. Join us in celebrating thirty years of encouraging excellence in science and promoting graduate education? This year's conference features new activities, such as an all-day program of mathematics mini-

courses. For information about the conference, financial assistance or to register online visit: www.sacnas.org or <http://www.sacnas.net/confNew/confClient/>

On October 1st and 2nd, The League of United Latin American Citizens, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement AFL-CIO, The César Chávez LULAC Council #4626, IUE-CWA Local 780, International Association of Immigrants and Workers of America, Mestizos En Marcha, Fuerza Unida and other community organizations are planning to depart from San Antonio, Texas, in a **HISTORIC FREEDOM BUS TRIP**. This historic Freedom Ride is a National Campaign to mobilize a Civil Rights Movement like in the 60s. If you are interested call Jaime P. Martínez, President of Labor Council for Latin American Advancement-AFLCIO, 210-226-2301, IUE-CWA-AFL-CIO, 1504 E. Commerce (César E. Chávez Memorial Way).

AURELIO SALAZAR, JR.

HAS BEEN NAMED "NATIONAL LULAC MAN OF THE YEAR." AURELIO IS THE YOUNGEST MEMBER FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA TO RECEIVE THE HIGHEST NATIONAL AWARD FROM THE NATION'S OLDEST CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATION. THE ESPERANZA CENTER TAKES SPECIAL PRIDE IN CONGRATULATING THE BROTHER OF STAFF MEMBER, MARÍA SALAZAR, IN RECEIVING THIS PRESTIGIOUS HONOR.

Community Meetings

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

Parents/Friends of Lesbians/Gays (PFLAG) First Thursday of each month at 7 pm at the Resource Ctr, 121 W. Woodlawn, call 655-2383.

Habitat for Humanity holds Volunteer Orientation on first Tuesdays of each month at 1st Presbyterian Church, 404 N. Alamo, rm 302 at 6 pm.

Amnesty International #127 Fourth Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm at Ashbury United Methodist, call 829-0397.

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.

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

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

A Multicultural Worship Service is held Sundays at 11 am at **Spirit of Life Lutheran Church**, call Rev. Kay Johnson at 691-5937 in sanctuary of Los Angeles Heights Methodist.

Fuerza Unida at 710 New Laredo Hwy., Call for information and meeting times, 927-229.

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

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

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

Mil gracias to staff member María Salazar who is now embarking on a new adventure pursuing a law degree at CUNY in New York City. Best of luck to María and her longtime partner JoAnn Castillo, both of whom have contributed much to the community of Esperanza. You will be missed and thought of often.

La Voz de Esperanza
ESPERANZA peace & justice center
922 San Pedro
San Antonio TX 78212

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Lourdes Pérez



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\$5 for seniors
and youth,
except infant
under five for free (cash)

for more information,
call 210-228-0207 or
check out the
website at
www.esperanzacenter.org

Saturday
July 12, 2003 at the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center