La Voz de Esperanza

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Memorias y historias

La VOZ de Esperanza

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 Letters with intent to slander individuals or groups will not be published.

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Tierra, Agua, Libertad, Ley y Justicia

Last month I watched the screening of a new film, *The Last Zapatistas, Forgotten Heroes,* at the Mexican Cultural Institute. Thirty five years after my participation in the Chicano movement, I see and hear veterans of the Mexican Revolution, some over 100 years old, talking about the ideals that they fought for. From the mouths and lucid minds of elders who can barely walk, the guiding principles of the revolution are repeated: Tierra, Agua, Libertad, Ley y Justicia. As a student I often heard Tierra y Libertad repeated, over and over. Now, the ideals ring in my ears in a way that makes me understand, again, why we at the Esperanza chose the slogan Todos Somos Esperanza-- which originated from the slogan Todos Somos Zapatistas.

Hearing these ideals makes me think of all the different issues we are struggling with today: the PGA threatening our water with one of the Zapatistas leading the charge against it being María Berriozábal; the war on Iraq with the the peacemakers who were against Vietnam on the scene again; the issue of globalization with women like Petra Mata and Viola Cásares of Fuerza Unida still fighting; the maquiladora murders in Juárez with the mothers whose daughters have been sacrificed at the high altar of the holy dollar calling for government action. It is obvious we continue to fight the revolution that began on this continent with la conquista. There are many issues, many warriors, but now the women figure prominently in the front ranks.

In *The Last Zapatistas,* the women talked about their abuse and rape at the hands of soldiers. It reminded me of my grandmother Epifania, who spoke one afternoon in the carport of my parents' home before she died telling us how los soldados would swarm into their pueblo and violate them at will. Women and children were never respected. My grandmother empowered herself as she grew older by reading everything she could on Zapata, Villa and the revolution before she died. Others empower themselves by recovering memory from stories, songs, chisme or reading books, the latter not always the most reliable source of history.

The Last Zapatistas, Forgotten Heroes ends with one of the original Zapatistas meeting Zapatistas from Chiapas. He advises them to settle for no less than their land and absolute liberty for their pueblo. It is clear that land has become a metaphor for life and living justly. It is clear that rape and the destruction of the land becomes the rape and destruction of a people. It is clear that México is teetering on the verge of becoming a colony of the U.S.

In a recent address to mujeres (www.FZLN.org.mx), Comandanta Ester of the EZLN advises, "Hermanas mujeres indígena y campesina, les queremos decir que se organicen para luchar contra el neoliberalismo que nos humilla, que nos explota y que nos quiere desaparecer como indígenas, como campesinas y como mujeres." Comandanta Ester goes on to speak of the murders in Juárez and how if those who were kidnapped, violated and killed were rich men, the government would waste no time in locating the perpetrators. She ends by saying, "Pero ahora es el momento de que juntas obliguemos a los hombres a que nos respeten lo que somos y como merecemos." And so shall it be, we will not ask permission to demand respect.

In this issue of Voz, the recovery of memory continues with a look at the archives of Esperanza, a reminder that the PGA issue is not over, words from the Zapatistas, a Christmas recuerdo, a report on the UCLA conference Maquilando Mujeres, and a look at cancioncitas innocently sung by young women of San Antonio which ultimately wound up in a national archives… y más. Para el año nuevo sigan mandando sus memorias, recuerdos, cuentos, historias and chisme to La Voz. They are all treasures that need to be exposed to the light so they can shine. Remember, we appreciate and need your support. If you need a tax-deductible donation for the end of year give to the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center. ¡Feliz año!

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.

¿What's Wrong With Este Retrato?

by Pablo Miguel Martínez

Several days after my mother's funeral, my sister and I went to Mamá's house on Mulberry Avenue to go through and divide between us the few personal effects Mamá bequeathed to us, her only children. How interesting, I thought, that we always referred to it as Mamá's house, since it was my father who made the payments. My mother had no money to leave us, but left behind a lifetime of carefully chosen knick-knacks, as well as mementos of frequent trips to family in México prior to her marrying my father, and, most important, an amazing collection of family photographs. My father, an angry, hard-bitten man, still says—twelve years after Mamá's death—that all she left him was a mountain of debt. Like too many Latinas, Mamá eventually succumbed to the devastating effects of diabetes, a slow death that generated staggering medical bills.

Mamá died exactly one week before Christmas. A mild chill, typical of South Texas winters, lingered as my sister and I began our task. Following Mamá's custom, we placed an enamel pot of water on top of the small gas heater in the bedroom. Three rows of sputtering blue flames warmed us, as did memories evoked by Mamá's clothing, her costume jewelry, her porcelain bric-a-brac, and the stacks of photographs. Dad was either in the kitchen or in the dining room; I can't recall which, leaving my sister and me to retrieve our inherited memories. He regarded this process as woman's work—in other words, work perfectly suited to his daughter, as well as to me, his son whose aversion to touch football was still as incomprehensible to him that winter afternoon as it had been one hot summe day when he insisted we play in the front yard—for all the neighbors to see—with the footbal he had given me fo my ninth birthday. I failed miserably. I was the son who would rather sit indoors reading. I was the son who always seemed more comfortable in the kitchen than in the garage. I was the son who never fit in.

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Her feet were frozen in that perfect Olympic-diver position: toes flat, heels lifted high. Each toenail was a shiny dot of candy-apple red. She wore smart plastic mules—open-toed, of course—the color of that gas-heater flame in Mamá's bedroom. Tiny faux-pearl drop earrings dangled from her perfectly shaped earlobes. But what I remember most vividly is her dress—a satin square-necked top that tapered to a wasp-waist and then flared into a satin skirt clouded in a froth of stiff, scratchy tulle. A tiny plastic clutch purse hung from the slender hook that was her hand.

She was perched on a shelf in the jerrybuilt Toy Department at the H. L. Green store on Alamo Plaza the first time I saw her. Standing there, in her plastic-sheathed box, one of a long row of dolls in the girls' toys aisle, she mesmerized.

Mamá, Grandma Beatriz (Mamá's mother), my sister, and I were there as part of a well practiced Saturday afternoon ritual, downtown shopping. This was before America's mad flight to suburbia and its omnipresent malls. This was a time when "going downtown" meant dressing up, even on weekend afternoons. It was a time when joining in the bustle of urban life was a public demonstration of our slow but steady climb up the socioeconomic ladder. The four of

us were willing and eager participants in this lively display.

Among the older photographs Mamá kept in a tufted satin box intended for hosiery were several purchased from roving street photographers. These images of her and her mother, or of her and relatives visiting from México, were snapped as they strolled along a particularly fashionable stretch of downtown—evidence of their sophistication. Never mind that things at home were always just a prayer away from fiscal disaster. While I was growing up, the stylish women in these photographs were the only women I personally knew who gave the satin doll at H. L. Green a run for her money.
Today, downtown San Antonio is a vast, curious labyrinth of vacant storefronts and expensive tourist attractions, the latter concentrated along the Riverwalk, which we always knew as el Paseo del Río, or simple "el río." A few architectural clues, testaments to downtown's vibrant past, survive. Some historical landmarks were spared the wrecking ball, many were not. Fortunately, much of San Antonio's lost history is documented in photographs. And so it was with my own family history.

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That Saturday afternoon was purposeful, as my sister and I well knew: it was late October, and that meant Mamá and Grandma Beatriz were shopping for our Christmas gifts. (For reasons I've never understood, we never called her abuela, a designation that was reserved for my paternal grandmother.) This exploratory mission was due as much to my grandmother's widely recognized organizational skills as it was to our working-class economic reality. H. G. Green advertised "a convenient lay-away plan" that promised its customers of lesser economic means, like us, a bountiful holiday. Oh, how readily we bought into the yearly celebration of consumerism! My sister and I were encouraged to look and select carefully. From this thorough preview our wish lists would be drafted and continuously refined. ("We can't afford that this year, mijito. Pick out something else.") Then the marathon prayers sessions would begin. We were never distanced from the Santa Claus myth, but Mamá always told us that it was el Niño Jesús who made the gifts possible. If that was the case—I was a deeply skeptical child—I would work hard to convince el Santo Niño that the doll in the blue satin dress was the only present that had the power to make me genuinely happy. She and I would gratefully celebrate his birthday with an appropriately lavish fiesta, I assured him in my nightly prayers. I'd even consider joining the Cub Scout troop at Our Lady of Sorrows if Baby Jesus delivered the elegantly dressed doll on Christmas morning. This intensive bargaining would continue for two months. But before I sold Baby Jesus on this fail proof recipe for my happiness, I'd have to convince his earthly mediators.

"Isn't she beautiful?" I gushed enthusiastically. I interpreted Grandma Beatriz's tight smile as a sign of complete agreement.

The Toy Department was crowded. We were surrounded by a gaggle of wishful girls.

"Yes, hijito, she is, " Mamá said. "She's very beautiful. Are you sure that's what you want?"

Her voice was free of even the slightest trace of disapproval. Mamá and Grandma whispered to each other in Spanish. My sister was in the Pet Department, a few aisles away. I could smell the grease from the lunch counter where we always stopped for a quick snack before moving on to Joske's, the more upscale store across the Plaza. I couldn't tell if the warmth that flooded my cheeks and forehead was from embarrassment, nervousness, anticipation, or from the heat of the luncheonette's grill.

"Ándenles, niños," Grandma hurried us. "Nos tenemos que ir."

The rest of that afternoon, and for many afternoons and mornings and nights after that day, I thought about the doll's striking beauty. I cleared a place for her on the nightstand between my sister's bed and mine. At every opportunity I released unsubtle hints about her to both my mother and my grandmother.

During morning recess everyone in Sister Angela Marie's first-grade class compared their wish lists. I kept silent

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about my special request. It was all right to talk about the doll to Mamá, Grandma Beatriz, my sister, my tía, my cousins (all girls), and maybe even to my madrina. Most of the women in my family seemed to tolerate my budding otherness, even if they didn't fully understand it. The men, however, were another issue. Even back then I was keenly aware of boundaries, especially those that I somehow knew never to cross.

In my head I meticulously scripted my responses to the inevitable questions from male relatives and classmates regarding Christmas gifts.

Then finally, the wait was over.

On Christmas morning my sister and I awoke to the aroma of Mamá's made-from-scratch biscuits baking in the oven. It mixed wondrously with the faint woodsy smell of the Christmas tree. Mamá came into our bedroom and wished us Merry Christmas. When I reel in these moments from memory's deeper waters, the ones that resist most strongly are the ones that have swallowed memories of my father. He is always in the background. Except, of course, when his anger renders him the focal point of my recollections.

These are the things that pull me back to that Christmas morning: my mother's kiss on my forehead as I lay under my blanket; my sister's pink flannel pajamas; the elaborately embroidered apron my mother wore; the construction-paper chain on our Christmas tree, each link a different color; warm buttered biscuits and tall plastic glasses of cold milk; Mamá washing the special china with the Christmas pattern, purchased on lay-away at Toudouze Market, that she would serve dinner on later that day. But everything about that Christmas begins—and ends—with the doll.

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My sister, a supremely gifted ceramic artist and art historian, attributes her artistic abilities, as well as my love of the written word, to something passed on from our father. She's probably right. My father, a printer and lithographer, has an exacting eye and unerring taste where visual art and printed matter are concerned. In his twenties he was an award-winning photographer. Part social commentary, and part formalistic statement, his images always captured their subjects' overlooked or hidden beauty. His photograph of my abuela in her tiny garden is as powerful a lesson in Mexican American history as any college textbook essay. Like Marlon Brando's character in the film "On the Waterfront," my father "coulda been a contender."

But Dad blames a long-ago decision by his mother, my abuela Macedonia, for a career cut short before it even had a chance to bloom. His mother, a full-blooded Chichimeca who rode horseback to South Texas from Irapuato to escape the Mexican Revolution of 1910, was an emotionally withholding woman who always favored her first son, my tío Genaro, over my father. Claiming that she needed my father at home (the family lived in dire poverty), she forced him to relinquish a scholarship to a Catholic high school that would have afforded him greater possibilities than any public school in their economically impoverished neighborhood could offer at the time. My mother, my sister, and I paid mightily for that slight and the resentment that pooled in my father's heart over so many years.

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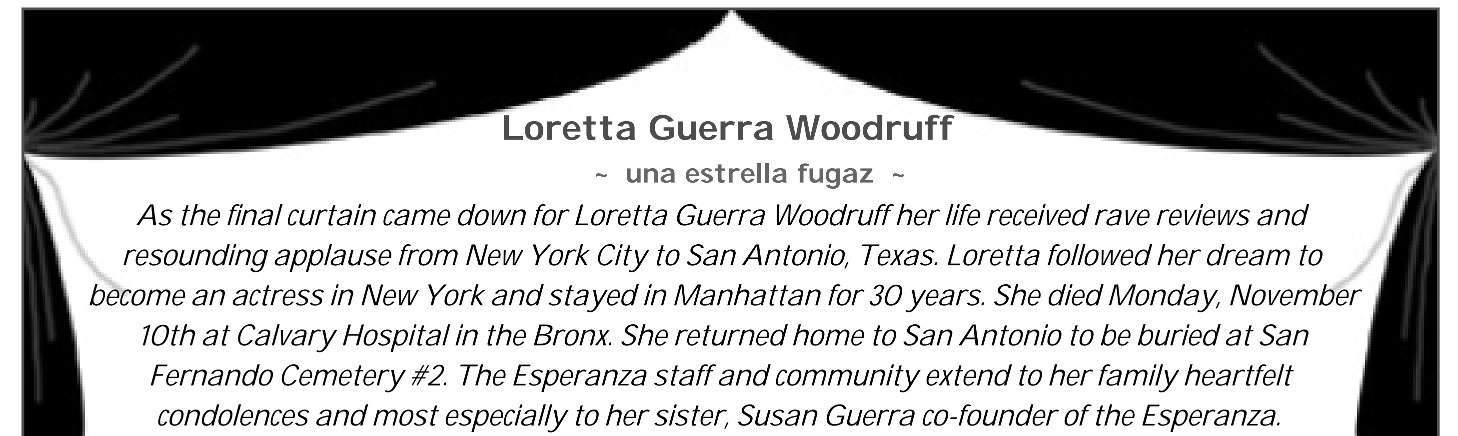
The details of that Christmas afternoon have faded over time. All that's left is the resulting image—or part of it anyway.

It must have been a warm, sun-drenched day, for everyone in the picture, which was taken outdoors, is wearing what would pass for spring wardrobes in other parts of the country. The youngest children—my sister, our cousins—stand in the first row, smiling, squinting, arms interlocking. I was placed at the far left of the center row, in front of the older cousins and adults. I'm wearing a new shirt and khaki pants bought in the Huskies Department at Joske's. The answer to my prayers is tightly, oh so tightly pressed to my chest: in the crook of my left arm I clutch the doll in the blue satin and tulle dress. A couple of the younger girls in the picture also hold their new dolls. Was it that I so closely identified with



them that my self-consciousness vanished for that moment? Or did the women in the picture prevail over my father's anger at the sight of his son flouting tradition? (I later learned that my mother had kept the gift a secret from my father, who first saw it when I unwrapped it.)

In her landmark collection of essays entitled "On Photography," Susan Sontag writes: "People want the idealized image: a photograph of themselves looking their best. They feel rebuked when the camera doesn't return an image of themselves as more attractive than they really are."

I had let my father down at a decisive moment. Camera in hand, he was prepared to document his family—his legacy—at its best, and I dared to reveal what he and many others regard as an unacceptable flaw.

He and my mother argued when we were all posed, before my father snapped the picture. I remember the angry words they exchanged, words that I knew had to do with me and my doll. I pulled the doll even closer, in the way a protective mother shields her young from threatening danger. (Or was I protecting my identity?) The tulle made my arm itch. I said nothing. If Baby Jesus had heard my prayers and given me the doll, how could it be wrong? My mother calmly walked back into the frame and my father, without telling us to smile for the camera as he usually did, took the picture.

Many photographs taken that day were enlarged, lovingly framed, and prominently displayed next to other cherished photographs, heirlooms, and mementos. Copies were shared with relatives. A few accompanied the following year's Christmas greetings. But that one group photo with me and my doll mysteriously disappeared.

...

Almost thirty years after my father made that picture, my sister and I go through my mother's collection of family photographs. Some are neatly preserved in chronologically ordered albums; other are stuffed into bulging shoeboxes and Tupperware containers. Some elicit quiet smiles; others raucous laughter. They all have back-stories that we share—my sister filling in the blanks in my recollection, and I reciprocated whenever possible. She is looking through a packet of photographs from a trip she and my mother took to San Francisco (a gift from me that Mamá boasted about to relatives and friends), when I come across the photograph, tucked in a short pile of older images. There's the family, minus my father, who was behind the camera. And minus me. I say nothing to my sister. She is telling me that Mom was thrilled by their visit to Muir Woods. I wipe the flow of tears that's coming faster and steadier before my sister notices it. Someone (my father?) had nearly, literally cut me out of the family portrait. Its left third is missing—I am missing. My father was after the idealized image. My presence, or rather, me and my doll, compromised that representation of the family and my father's notion of what constituted the family at its best.

Through the years I have come to understand that my father was doing "the best he could," as my mother always reminded my sister and me when we'd urge her to walk away from the pain he caused her and us. I long ago forgave him. I think of the love of books he instilled in me. I think about his taking me to Landa Public Library and the Witte Museum, where I was first introduced to worlds far beyond San Antonio. As abusive as he was, I realize I was one of the so-called fortunate ones. There are many who are physically excised—disowned—by their families and forced to the brink of even greater pain.

...

Soon after I moved back to San Antonio (I returned from 15 years of living in New York), several arts organizations here hosted the local presentation of "Americanos: Latino Life in the United States," a large-scale photography exhibition that originated at the Smithsonian Institution. It had traveled around the country (I first saw it a the Museum of the City of New York) and was hailed as a groundbreaking show that Edward James Olmos, who spearheaded its organizing and promotion, described as "the story of Latinos." But like the mutilated, incomplete photograph of my family taken that Christmas Day, the exhibition left out of this Latino family portrait individuals who, in the minds of Olmos and company, might compromise their highly idealized image of what

continued on page 10

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Memories of Esperanza

15 Years of Community, Politics and Cultural Visions at the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center in San Antonio, Texas

by Hector Carbajal

> ". . . I like to think the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center was named after a certain Esperanza Cordero who would one day march away with her books and papers only to come back for the ones who could not out. . . I have never asked Graciela Sánchez directly whether the Esperanza was named for my protagonist from The House on Mango Street, or whether it was simply a case of 'Saint Coincidence.' I do not ask perhaps because I want to believe the two Esperanzas are related. I know that when I dubbed my character "Hope," I meant for her to be an inspiration, and I believe Graciela Sánchez also meant her organization to inspire as well."
>
> -Sandra Cisneros, Chicana novelist, poet and activist

Sandra Cisneros best describes the way in which the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center is a place of hope and a space where a community of activists, artists and writers have found a space from which to, as Chicana historian Antonia Castañeda has written, "exhibit the artistic and cultural expressions emanating from the knowledge, experience, history, aesthetic sensibilities and world views of non-male, non-straight, non-white, non-middle-class cultures." In sum, the Esperanza, as it is called with honor, is a place from which hope, community, politics and cultures have shaped and inspired many visitors, volunteers and activists for 15 years.

The Esperanza Center on San Pedro, a Pro-Choice Zone, 1996

Early last year, I was asked by Dr. Yolanda Chávez Leyva, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Texas at El Paso and continuing supporter of EPJC, to help the staff and volunteers of the Esperanza to create a public archive that would be designed, housed and available for the San Antonio community. My drive to recover the lost voices in Chicana/o history and the history of queers of color gave me the confidence to accept the invitation.

When I arrived at the Esperanza Center for the first time in March 2002, I was amazed by the glorious colors of the artwork on the center's walls. I gazed at all six rooms of the center that featured art exhibits by many local artists. The artwork was multi-dimensional and thought provoking in that it jumped out of the walls for attention. The artwork told a story of voices reclaiming memory, history and empowerment. I vividly remember seeing Citlali, the Chicana Superhero, on a giant canvas as she posed with one muscular fist in the air while saying: "NO CHINGEN CON MI RAZA!" Citlali made me feel at home.

I visited the Esperanza Center for the first time after being asked to assist in creating a public history archive where documents, promotional material for their programming, and newspaper clippings could be organized, housed and displayed for researchers interested in Esperanza's history. During the summer of 2002, I conducted a formal inventory of 52 boxes owned by the center. Twenty-nine

boxes consisted of back issues of La Voz, some which had been thought to have been lost or forgotten over the years, Esperanza monthly newsletters (dating from January 1989 and up to June 2002), event postcards, and

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posters from film festivals (dating from 1989 up to the present) or rallies held by the Esperanza.

In addition, I took an informal inventory of 15 boxes of personal letters, magazines, certificates, plaques, flyers, newsletters, notes from international conferences (relative to women of color in film), past mailing lists, artist press kits and newspaper clippings, financial records, address books, and notes from past Esperanza meetings. In conducting this formal inventory, I knew that these materials told a history of an organization that has achieved success, faced conflict and survived with the help of its community.

Unfortunately, I did not have time to conduct actual research using the materials in each box. I knew that an inventory would be ideal to know what materials are currently owned by the center, which are a treasure that speaks volumes about an institution that has supported equal rights for women of color, lesbians and gays of color, working class Chicano/as and San Antonio youth of color through cultural programming since 1987. However, from my internship experience and acquired published material inside the archive, I was able to write a brief history of the organization and make it a testament for why the Esperanza needs to continue collecting, preserving and documenting their history through a public history archive.

The history of the Esperanza begins with a group of Latina activists looking for a space to organize and address political issues in the San Antonio community in 1987. These Latina activists united during a time frame when the spirit of activism had been shaped by the legacy of fighting for social justice during the movements of the late 1960s and 1970s. Specifically, the activist spirit of early Esperanza was shaped by the issues of women's rights, lesbian and gay rights, racism and U.S. involvement in Central America.

In 1987, the Oblate priests in San Antonio agreed to rent space for a room at 1305 North Flores Street, which required a $1 rent fee. Within this space, Susan Guerra, Esperanza co-founder remembers, a community of organizations congregated and shared space. Among those organizations were the American Civil Liberties Union, Habitat for Humanity, the Refugee Aid Project, the Anti-Hunger Committee of San Antonio, and activists protesting U.S. involvement in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Guerra described this new space as unique and full of hope:

"People of all colors gathered to work, to share, to argue, to hold seminars, help each other with mail outs, spring cleaning and keeping the fishpond clean! It was not always one big happy family but it was the first time in San Antonio when Chicano/a, white and African-American activists came together. I decided what I already knew inside of me, to give the center the name of Esperanza."

1991 MLK March

Guerra added that the Esperanza developed slowly with donations of furniture, office supplies and money from different organizations. So dire was their economic situation that even the organization's phone was considered a luxury.

Early that year, an advisory council brainstormed ideas on a more solid based organization. Graciela Sánchez, co-founder and current director of the Esperanza, was part of this group. Her mother, Isabel Sánchez, was another active supporter who recalled the struggle in the organizations' early days:

"These people did not have money, only a deep vision and determination. It was hard, frustrating. Like me, I am sure people they talked to could not see that it could be possible since they had no money to invest. Each time Graciela went somewhere and did not get a response, she would talk to me. She also told me what other people were doing to make Esperanza a reality. This is how I got involved in their dream."

Being an advocate for public education in Westside San Antonio, Isabel Sánchez's spirit as an activist led her to support the Esperanza by linking la gente grande of the Westside to the Esperanza community.

The Esperanza slowly took shape as more organizations congregated at the Esperanza. In 1987, the budget averaged to $5,900. By 1998, the budget had significantly increased to $250,000, which propelled the organization to continue cultural programming. By 1992, the center's location had become crowded and lack of space prevented more cultural programming. [editor's note: Aside from "crowding" the Esperanza was evicted from its space on N. Flores due to its activities which were in direct conflict with the teachings of the Oblates. See article in La Voz, Sept., 1993] The advisory board decided to conduct a survey of the San Antonio community in order to move the organization into a larger building.

In October 1993, the Esperanza staff and community of supporters helped raise $40,000 to buy a new building to house the Esperanza Center. On March 8, 1994, the building at 922 San Pedro was bought and the Esperanza's objective of promoting cultural programming continued in a larger space. Dr. Yolanda Chávez Leyva remembered her experience at this new space:

"I remember the first time I walked into the San Pedro building. I had just moved to San Antonio and was cautiously feeling my way around a new job and a new city. The bright colors of the walls, the energy of the people, the amazing art work, y los abrazos which I received as soon as I walked in it made me feel immediately welcomed . . . Since that day in 1997, I have seen the colors of the walls change, the art exhibits come and go, and new faces appear at almost every event. What has not changed is the deeply held dream of social justice that is constantly nourished by undying hope and that hope is the very heart of everything done at Esperanza."

Mujercanto at 1305 N. Flores in 1991

With this feeling of support for new visitors and a new location, it seemed Esperanza had entered a second chapter in their history. Their revenue had increased and, by then, some Esperanza programs were being funded by the San Antonio City Council.

Enjoying success, the center also came to face political conflict and fierce protest from leading power channels in San Antonio. For instance, on September 11, 1997, Christian right-wing groups launched a campaign to pressure the San Antonio City Council to discontinue funding for the Esperanza on charges that the center's programming was unfit. In addition, a group of white gay conservatives attacked the Esperanza and encouraged the de-funding. At one point, a public hearing was held where pro-Esperanza and anti-Esperanza arguments held court for three hours.

According to an article in La Voz, city officials had made the decision to de-fund the center even before the public hearing. A year later, the center filed a lawsuit on legal claims that the San Antonio city council had violated the

Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, the 1st Amendment of the United States Constitution and the Texas Public Meetings Act. With many delays and internal problems, the lawsuit went to trial in August 2000. Finally, San Antonio Judge Orlando Garcia ruled that the council had “unconstitutionally discriminated against the Esperanza Center” in the City Council’s de-funding decision. The verdict strengthened the feeling of community within Esperanza as messages of support from all across the country filled the pages of La Voz.

When I left the Esperanza during the summer floods in 2002, I spoke to Graciela and the Esperanza staff about how to realize the materials collected in their storage room as a public archive containing Esperanza’s memories. They must not be erased, thrown out or forgotten, I said. Every document, every book, every note in the room tells so much about a 15-year-old institution that belongs to the people of San Antonio. The history of SALGA (the San Antonio Lesbian and Gay Association) sits in that room. The stories of working class women of color reside in those documents. The history of efforts by activists Graciela Sánchez, Susan Guerra and Gloria Ramírez—and many more—waits to be written from that room.

By revisiting the beautiful history of this institution and the strength coming from its community, I conclude this article by encouraging readers of La Voz and the community that has and continues shaping Esperanza to support this archive now. Visit the archive. Organize the archive. Research the archive. Remember this archive. Support the making of this archive into a reality for our history—la historia de nuestro pueblo. Unite to preserve Esperanza’s history.

This is my hope.

Hector Carbajal is a scholar, activist and writer from El Paso, Tejas. He received his B.A. in English from New Mexico State University in 2000. He is currently a candidate for the M.A. in Borderlands History at the University of Texas El Paso, where he is currently researching and writing about displaced Mexicana/Chicana garment workers along the U.S.-Mexico border (1974-1994). He has received a 1999-2000 Robert E. McNair Scholarship and the W. Turrentine Jackson Award in 2002. His creative work has been featured in This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformations, edited by Gloria E. Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating (Routledge 2002). His creative work has also appeared in The Thing Itself (1994), Frontera/Norte-Sur (1999) and El Ocotillo (2000).

continued from page 6

constitutes latindad, the image we choose to project to a larger, oppressive society. Alongside images of the every-Latina and the every-Latino, “Americanos” juxtaposed photographs of well recognized figures, such as Celia Cruz, Jaime Escalante, Carolina Herrera, Rita Moreno, Ellen Ochoa, Oscar de la Renta, Carlos Santana, and others. But I wanted to see my life reflected in these portraits. Where were pictures of Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Luis Alfaro, Gloria Anzaldúa, Rafael Campo, Rudy Galindo, Marga Gómez, Cherríe Moraga, Michael Nava, Achy Obejas, Carmelita Tropicana?

I look around and ask my father, a wise if difficult man, “What’s wrong with this picture?” The question is met with a silence that insists I put away the satin and tulle.

Pablo Miguel Martínez is a poet and cultural worker. His work has appeared in the San Antonio Express-News, La Voz de Esperanza, El Placazo, and Ilya’s Honey, as well as in the anthology Voices Along the River. He is currently pursuing the MFA degree in Creative Writing at Southwest Texas State University.

The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center invites you to the unveiling of
Our Lady of Guadalupe Veladora Tile Sculpture
by Artist Jesse Treviño
Friday, December 12, 2003
outside the GuadalupeTheater
1301 Guadalupe St.
7:30-10 pm Free
“Mosaico de Paz”
Concert / CD release featuring
Lourdes Pérez &
Dama de Noche
including Eva Ybarra
A reception will follow at the Progreso Community Center.

Memorias Americanas

Mexican Girls, San Antonio, Texas 1934

by H. Esperanza Garza

Last week I went to a birthday party for my 11 year old cousin at my grandmother’s house. My mother, three sisters and brother and their families crowded the table for Happy Birthday and blowing out the candles. After we sang Happy Birthday, I sang *Las Mañanitas*. Only my grandmother joined in. The children didn’t know the song. Their parents knew the tune, but not the words. After the party my grandmother and I made a pact to sing the song at every birthday. She said that eventually they’ll learn. If we care, they’ll learn.

My grandmother recently told me of a picture she found of herself. She is standing on the front porch of the local *curandero* in a dress she made for herself out of crepe paper. She told me they would dance and sing at the *curandero*’s house because he was kind and generous and also the owned a Victrola. If the *curandero* had a customer asking for a tonic or a charm, he would tell them to play at another house while he tended his business. The rest of the time, neighborhood children would all gather there to practice. In the evenings, from behind bed sheet curtains on that stage-porch, they performed for their parents. They would dance until the hems of their dresses were in shreds. They had little or no money, Grandma tells me, but they had each other and they were happy.

La Indita, a song that names its singer a Texan Indian, and another, Yo Soy Indita Mexicanita, play in my mind…

Tía Della

Della was my grandmother’s sister. She died almost ten years ago. She, her three brothers, and my grandma, were raised by their mother Nieves and Tía Guadalupe in a three-room house in San Antonio’s Westside on Gould and Hamilton. She had six children, one of whom died young. The others have married, and most divorced, all with children. Tía Della owned her own house on the Eastside, liked to smoke cigarettes and tell a good story. Here’s one of her favorites.

Jovita Gonzalez, singing with five students from St. Mary’s Academy photographed by the Lomaxes in 1934

Fifteen years ago, my Tía was watching a morning show. To her surprise, she recognized a person on the program. Fifty years before in his youth, the man had recorded her singing with other neighborhood children . She was so moved she wrote a letter to the morning show explaining how much it meant to her to see him after so many years. They responded with a call— would she like to come to New York and meet Alan Lomax?

Cuando estabamos de novios un pañuel’ hice mascada
‘Hora que estamos casados los ‘arramos a pata’s

The Lomax Family

To understand the historical significance of my Tía Della's experience, we have to know who the Lomax family was. John Lomax, an amateur student of folk music, lived in Austin, Texas. He knew and associated with J. Frank Dobie and Jovita Gonzales. In the 1930's, he and his son Alan Lomax began recording folk music, which resulted in a renaissance in American music.

It all began in 1931 when John Lomax's wife died leaving him behind, as well as four children. John, in a deep depression, was urged by his children to pursue his lifelong love of music. The new technology of portable discs recorders(as in record players not CD's) made it possible for people to document sound from anywhere. John was accompanied by his young son Alan on a trip recording music of the people from Austin all the way to New York City. In New York they got a book deal to document the lyrics of the songs they recorded. In the years that followed, John and Alan were employed by the Archive of Folk Music sponsored by the Library of Congress to document the songs of people in their everyday lives.

Yo se que chiquilihuil, chiquilihuil, chiquilihuil
Yo soy Indita Tejanita que mante'go con el (parial)

Folk Music

The significance of Folk music is that it is people's music. It was defined in the 1930's as not professional, although some that played it got paid for their talents. It was not orchestral, although some folk music is exceedingly complicated musically. It was not jazz, although there is a history of improvisation in folk music also. What differentiates it from other music is that it was not bought or sold. Before everyone owned a radio, record player or television, folk music is what they did.

People sang these songs at home, at work, in schools, in prisons and in their neighborhoods. It is how they entertained each other at parties, during the holidays and special occasions. It's how they celebrated their gods and denounced their demons and oppressors. It was a part of living culture and daily experience.

The people that sang these songs were working class people, poor people. They were black people, white people, religious people, and secular people. In Texas, there were also cowboys, Indians, Mexicans, and Spanish people. They sang the songs their elders taught them. They also sang each other's songs the best way they knew how, a theft and a homage, weaving a rich cultural fabric that has still not been recovered by us, their children.

Vendiendo jarras y molinitos y jarras de chocolatán
Yo te ma'ne que chiquilihuil, chiquilihuil, chiquilihuil

1939 Recordings on American Memory

For years, these recordings have been housed in the Library of Congress. A few recordings were released by the Library of Congress through Folkways. Some purely commercial labels have been granted permission to put out a handful of these recordings. However, until recently, one had to travel to DC and know how to get past the gatekeepers in order to hear the more obscure music the Lomaxes and others recorded. Recently, I decided it was finally time to learn about the Lomaxes myself—I had never forgotten the family story Tía Della had told me. As I was searching the internet to learn more about the recordings I found an archive recently placed on the Internet by the Library of Congress's web division, American Memory.

Neighborhhod friends on San Antonio's Westside
photographed by the Lomaxes in 1934

Southern Mosaic: The John and Ruby Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip is archived at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/lohtml/lohome.html. This site offers us amazing insight into the many different types of folk music that are available to us in the Library of Congress. On this particular recording trip seven weeks of the twelve-week trip were spent in Texas. Approximately 350 of almost 700 recordings were done in Texas. Amazingly, of these, 102 were made by Spanish language artist- that is, in total, about 15% of the recordings. These Spanish language recordings were made in Brownsville, Falfurrias, Kingsville, Houston, Sarita and Sugarland. They include corridos, lullabies, children's songs, religious songs and songs of celebration.

As I explored the site I found a photo archive. Unfortunately, throughout the 1939 field recordings no pictures were taken. The photo archive was compiled from other field notes and included to give people a better understanding of what these folk musicians looked like. As I scanned the photos, I found one of Jovita Gonzales singing with her students at St. Mary's Academy here in San Antonio. I did another search, this time looking for all San Antonio photographs. I found two pictures entitled "Mexican Girls...". I had seen one of those photos before.

Yo soy Indita Mexicanita
Que vendo flores en el portal
Tambien patitos y molinillos
Tambien monitos de tu nana

Second from the left, my tia, Adela Flores at age 10,
photographed by the Lomaxes in 1934

Cantando sus canciones

The 1939 recordings of John and Ruby Lomax are important because they tell us who we were. These recordings offer us a glimpse into the past. The images and sounds that were part of our elders and antepasados daily speak to us from beyond and from inside ourselves. For them, the poor, the black, the Mexican, these recordings solidified their place from the margins slowly into the center of what is defined as American culture.

These recordings tell us who we are. The 1939 recordings are exciting because they span so many types of people in Texas. These people, like my Tía, may not be here with us, but they created the world in which we now live. Many of them raised us. Their presence and experience made us who we are and when we hear their songs, we become more of who we are.

These recordings tell us who we can be now. Beyond commodity, beyond the buying and selling of our culture, we are distinct and our cultural traditions need to be preserved and cherished. We can turn off the radio and tune in to one another. Sharing our talents and our stories may be a revolutionary act against capitalism which attempts to define us all by what we buy. We can be who we really are, people participating in and creating a dynamic community and lived experience. That daily reality which we create, be it music which we sing and play or the television on every night during dinner, will be the culture our community's children will inherit.

My Tía Della never went to New York to meet again with Alan Lomax. She felt she was too old to go alone and none of her children were able to make the journey with her. But the morning TV show sent her a picture they found. It had been stored in the Library of Congress for 50 years and had "Mexican Girls, San Antonio, May 1934" written on the back. It showed my Tía barefoot, singing with her neighborhood friends. Whenever she showed the photograph she would always say she was ashamed to be the only one without shoes. Why would mama let her out of the house with no shoes? Yet that picture hung framed in her house until the day she died. It proved what she already knew—that her story and her culture are important. Although they hid her recordings and her picture from us for so long, even the government recognized the importance. I still have not heard her song. But I will.

H. Esperanza Garza is a lifelong activist, who first began working with the Esperanza at 16, opposing the 1991 Gulf War. She does layout and design for La Voz and has recently returned to school for herteacher certification.

Zapatistas' Words of Hope for Humanity

by Antonio C. Cabral

Mexico's civil society has started commemorating two historic anniversaries marking the existence of the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN). Taped video messages by EZLN commanders found their way from deep in Chiapas' Lacandon Jungle to several cities where thousands saw and heard words of resistance and hope.

The commemoration began with the introduction of a new book that tells the story of the 20 years since the founding of the EZLN and the 10 years since its armed uprising.

The book titled "20 y 10, el fuego y la palabra" was written by Gloria Muñoz Ramirez, a journalist who in 1994 went to Chiapas to cover the uprising for a newspaper. Except for brief visits to her Mexico City home, Muñoz Ramirez remained in the Lacandon Jungle living side by side with the EZLN guerrillas.

The book's title is now the slogan of the campaign commemorating the EZLN history. The video messages shown on November 17 included messages from four comandantes: Fidelia, Esther, Zebedeo and David. Each comandante's message was addressed to a different audience: Women, youth, indigenous people and to the world's civil societies.

Comandante Fidelia addressed her message to Mexican women. She said, "I send my small words primarily to the young and old sisters who work in the fields and as domestic workers. You must join hands and pull each other as sisters to say 'Ya Basta' (enough) to poverty, humiliation, discrimination and injustice."

Comandante Zebedeo told young people to "..come and be near so that you may learn what we seek, so that you can learn to struggle and to sacrifice. Those of you who are students, I advise you that, as good persons born on this Planet Earth, you must use your intelligence and your knowledge for the benefit of your civil society. Don't take the side of conformism. It is beautiful if you place yourself in the hearts of the people. But if you are studying to become another neoliberal, in the future you will meet only disdain."

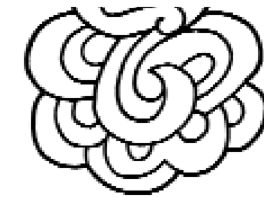
Comandante Esther addressed her words to the indigenous people reminding them that the Zapatistas have already began establishing their own autonomous governments and have stopped waiting for the Mexican regime to solve their problems of health, education and economy. "We are not afraid," She said. "They will never be able to kill us all because we are now stronger. It is time. Don't wait for it to be handed to you. Form your own local self governments."

Comandante David's message was to the world's civil societies. He encouraged active resistance against the "globalization of death" resulting from the spread of the 'free market' economy that is now the doctrine pushed by corporate-owned politicians in the U.S., Mexico and other parts of the world. He warned, "This globalization is the common enemy of humanity that is causing hunger and death. The worldwide resistance and indignation is growing. But it is not enough to grow indignant. We invite you to think, to analyze and plan, to search for the path to a great movement against neoliberalism and the globalization of death."

The EZLN's messages apply to U.S. working families. The Bush regime continues to tighten their fascist-like control over U.S. civil society fearing its inevitable awakening to the fact that the inhuman impact of the globalization of the corporate 'free market' doctrine is causing economic and social havoc upon the U.S. working class. The comandantes' words offer an alternative and, through that alternative, offer us hope.

Antonio Cabral is a free lance journalist and frequent contributer to La voz de Esperanza.

Alerting All Good Stewards of the Earth



by Maria Berriozábol

Re: Article I read today in San Antonio Business Journal entitled :"Planned retail project could drive local business to PGA Village." (November 21, 2003)

A retail component in the proposed PGA Village will be a village within a village. Seems it is being developed by Lumberman's according to Bill Kaufman.

Proponents are quoted as saying: "....it could also help drive local business to the world-class resort and ignite spin-off activity in a portion of the county primed for retail growth".

Attorney Bill Kaufman is quoted: "The plan calls for a retail village that would be located near the (proposed Marriott) hotel." Then, "The concept is to move some of the full service restaurants and retail out of the hotel development and into this village."

AND he continues:
"...the strategy behind the planners' and designers' concept is to attract more local visitors who may not be anxious to shop and dine inside the resort facilities WHERE THEY MAY FEEL OUT OF PLACE OR UNWELCOME." (Caps are all mine!)

The rest of the article describes how this retail component is good because terrorism has the potential to hurt resorts and hotels so "the more revenue that can be generated out of the local market, the better these developments should perform." This according to T. J. Connolly the next chair of the North Chamber.

The article talks about the declining and flat revenues in the golfing industry.

And there is an interesting statement that PGA might possibly take another hard look at the proposed project in San Antonio and the economic climate before signing in.

Of course, Mr. Kaufman, refutes this and says that his folks are committed to keeping the project moving forward AS LONG AS THE PGA AND THE HOTEL ARE WILLING TO WORK TO MOVE FORWARD. (emphasis mine)

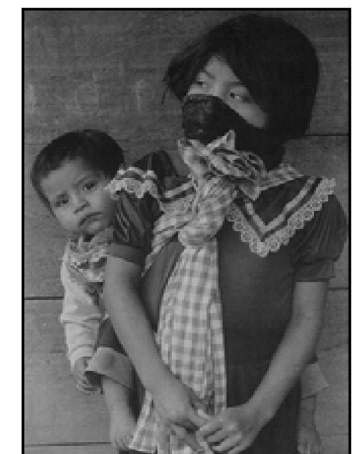
Lumberman's, as I see it, is trying to figure out a way to make their golf project succeed in bad golf economic times and a bad economy. Seems that at first they thought the rich people from outside would make it work and now they are wanting the locals. What I see in this is Lumberman's creating themselves the very density they said they would avoid if they could do the PGA resort. This little turn in their road to development has more in it than meets the eye.

Some of the very things we cautioned the City Council about are happening even before the project starts.

What do you all think?

Editor's note: The PGA issue in San Antonio is not dead. The Esperanza and community continue to monitor its "progress."

Celebrate the Anniversary 20-10 of the Zapatistas
at the
Esperanza Peace & Justice Center
with
Video Screenings and Discussions
in January, 2004
Bring your paliacate and revolutionary spirit!
Call 228-0201 to volunteer y pa' más detalles...



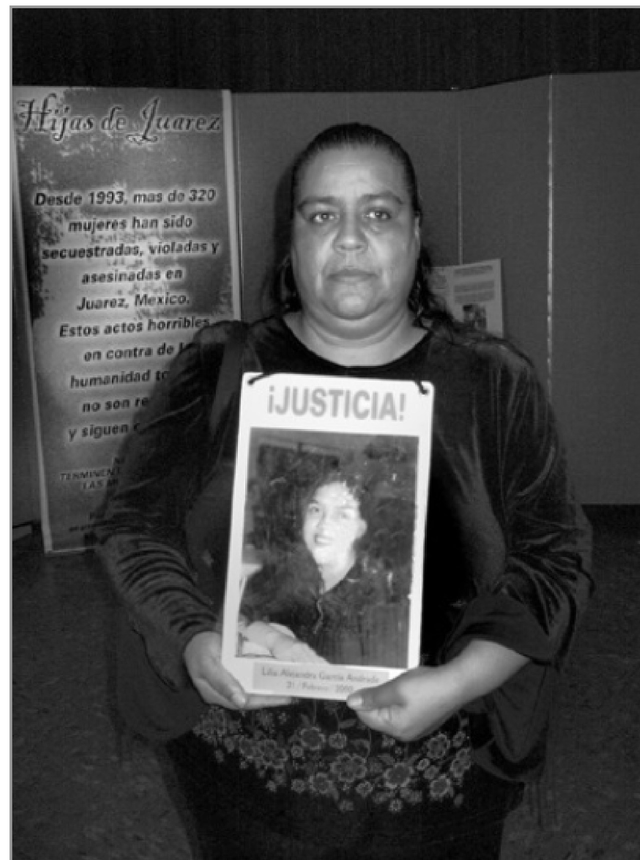
Factory Femicide

UCLA conference brings international attention to the murders of working-class women in Juárez, Mexico

By Emily Ng

Editor's note: The Esperanza, a co-sponsor of The Maquiladora Murders conference, was respresented at the conference by Mujerartes women and Esperanza pictured in the accompanying article. Michael Marinez, boardmember, drove the group in a van to Los Angeles. Alicia Gaspar de Alba, conference organizer, worked closely with Mujerartes and the Esperanza in San Antonio and in Los Angeles to get the Mujerartes exhibit, Lamento Por Las Mujeres de Juárez/ Elegy for the Women of Juárez to the conference. The conference has resulted in increased attention and publicity surrounding the murders in Juárez. Many thanks to all who labored to make the conference a success.

On Valentine's Day, 2001, 17-year-old Alejandra did not come home after work as she usually did. She worked at one of over 300 maquiladoras built along the border city of Juárez. The maquiladora program allows foreign manufacturers to send production components into Mexico duty-free, where they are assembled and usually re-exported.



Norma Andrade at the conference holding a picture of her daughter, Alejandra

Alejandra's nude body was found in a deserted lot seven days later. She had been kept alive and raped for six days, then strangled and dumped off.

"Alejandra dreamed of becoming a reporter," said Alejandra's mother, Norma Andrade, her voice cracking as she sobbed and described her "timid, shy, always daydreaming" daughter. (Note: Andrade's comments have been translated from Spanish). The circumstances of Alejandra's murder are not unique. Over 370 bodies of women and girls have been found within Juárez, a city in Chihuahua, Mexico, since 1993. These were not just random killings. All the victims were poor, petite, dark-skinned working-class young women, most of whom work in maquiladoras. The source of the crime wave has not been pinpointed. Most of the murderers have not been convicted. Most mothers do not have the equipment and support to find their daughters' bodies. Due to state corruption and the devaluation of the young women's lives, these crimes have been systematically ignored by Mexican authorities. The global economic context in which these maquiladoras are situated also add an international dimension to the crime. After years of small-scale organizing among the victims, mothers and relatives, the crimes have finally come to international attention.

Andrade was one of three mothers who participated in the three-day international conference titled "The Maquiladora Murders: Or, Who is Killing the Women of Juárez?" that took place from Oct. 31 to Nov. 2 at UCLA. The conference included presentations from victims, mothers, forensic specialists, politicians, journalists, academics, artists, and activists from the U.S. and Mexico; a film screening of "Señorita Extraviada," a documentary about the murders; and art exhibits at the Kerckhoff Gallery and Fowler Museum. Additionally, the entire conference was broadcast online and a simultaneous "virtual sit-in" drew tens of thousands of supporters from around the world. Two women sat behind a small glass screen inside the Ackerman Grand Ballroom and provided bilingual translation for the audience via wireless headsets. The crowd consisted of high school students, college students, academics, journalists, and others. Alicia Gaspar de Alba, associate director of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center and associate professor of Chicana/o studies, organized the event.

"It takes power to talk to power. That's why the conference took place at UCLA," explained Gaspar de Alba. With the co-sponsorship of UCLA student organizations such as Ni Una Más!, Raza Womyn, Conciencia Libre, La Gente de Aztlán, and others, Gaspar de Alba put on the conference not only to inform the community, but to increase the burden of responsibility among academics and politicians who have been unwilling to "dirty their hands" on this topic for 10 years.

"The activists are there, it's the academics that are missing," she said. "Let's bring our grant money... (and use it to go into) an in-depth analysis of social, cultural, economic, and psychological aspects of the Juárez border that might explain why these murders are happening to this particular demographic of women."

The Murders

There have been numerous theories constructed to make sense of these crimes. All of the women targeted have been young, working-class, petite, and dark-skinned. Most of them immigrated to Juárez from the southern parts of Mexico to work in maquiladoras that opened after NAFTA was signed in 1993. Juárez, a city of 2 million, is located across the border from El Paso, Texas. Most of the victims were between their teens and twenties, the youngest being a 5-year-old girl found with stab wounds and her eyes cut out. Most of the bodies were found in the city, where people walk by everyday: in the bushes, near railroads, buried in drainpipes, and dropped off in the desert.

The Mujerartes altar, Lamento por las Mujeres de Juárez/Elegy for the Women of Juárez installed at the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural Studies by Verónica Castillo.

Candice Skrapec, a forensic psychologist who has researched incarcerated serial murderers in different countries for the past 18 years, said that the unique element of these murders is the way men are killing repeatedly in groups.

"Most serial killers act alone. It's not wise to include others because others can become witness, (thus lead to the killer's) own undoing," said Skrapec. This unusual tactic may also reveal something about the victims.

"(The group killings) suggest that the value of women is so low that it's really not such a big deal," explained Skrapec. These killings have been deemed "femicides," as the common term "homicide" does not account for the misogynistic and sexually violent nature of these crimes.

The Police

The Mexican police, who are supposed to be protecting these women, are neither equipped nor genuine in their investigations, according to Skraptec. When she went to the police station, she found that there was not even an evidence room. Other panelists echoed similar experiences: finding police stations with no maps, and no photos of the women. Skrapec was once told that the weapon used to bludgeon a woman, covered with blood and hair, was thrown out by a janitor. Without evidence, the convictions are made the "traditional way"¨by confessions. So far, many false accusations and convictions have been made. Bus drivers, relatives of victims, and foreigners have been tortured by the police into making fake confessions.

The police have not only lost, but destroyed evidence, said Cynthia Bejarano, a professor of criminal justice at New Mexico State University and the co-founder of Amigos de las Mujeres de Juárez, a New Mexico-based NGO dedicated to assisting Juárez women. Clothes found in the desert are often burned. Families of victims sometimes get information from the police, then later return to find that the same files cannot be found anymore.

"The general population in Juárez is scared of the police. Why would they call the police if the police are so corrupted? People witness crimes, but are not willing to talk to police," explained Lorena Mendez, a Fox 11 News investigative reporter and co-founder of the Los Angeles-based Coalition for Justice and Women's Rights in Ciudad Juárez.

The experience of María, a mother featured in "Señorita Extraviada," helps us understand why the crimes are so difficult to solve. When she went to the police to inquire about her daughter's death, she was harassed by a female officer, then raped by a male officer. María was later followed near her house after she spoke out about her experience. She ran inside and wanted to call the police, but then remembered that they are just as dangerous as the criminals.

The Theories

Carmen Medrano of Mujerartes and Graciela Sánchez, director of Esperanza speaking on an arts panel at the conference.

According to Diana Washington Valdéz, an El Paso Times reporter

who has been following the cases since 1995, there have been two sets of theories about who the culprits are: pre-2002, and post-2002. The earlier theories have included snuff film creation due to the women's similar physique, satanic cult murders due to the matching semicircle-shapes carved into some of the women's backs, gangs, serial killers, copycats, and organ trafficking.

The more recent lines of investigation point to groups of serial killers, drug dealers of the local cartels, a band of powerful men whom the authorities dare not accuse, and participants in organized crime.

"These are high-profile, untouchable people," said Valdéz. She explained that corruption is often "top-down," that the murderers enjoy a level of impunity from the government due to their social status.

On the first day of the conference, the Mexican Consolate sent Gaspar de Alba a 12-page urgent fax. The fax summed up the Mexican government's perspective. It listed "lots of organizations, actions, and acronyms" in attempt to show that they had been active about the issue, described Gaspar de Alba. The fax concludes that there needs to be more investigation, and that the problem needs to be prioritized. Gaspar de Alba scoffed at the faxed comments, as did the audience.

Rosa Soria-Peña of Mujerartes with one of her ceramic pieces on exhibit at the Fowler.

"The authorities know who,s doing it. They're just not doing anything about it," Valdéz said after her presentation.

Blaming the Women

When co-founder of United Farm Workers and University of California Regent Dolores Huerta was in Mexico, she asked maquiladora owners what they have been doing to protect their employees. The owners showed her three posters that they have been displaying near bus stops to ensure the women's safety. The first poster had a picture of a woman, with the word cuídate, or "be careful," printed on it. The second one read in Spanish, "Don't wear your blouses too tightly." The third one said, "Walk in areas with street lights." There are no street lights around the shantytowns, said Huerta.

These "tips" suggest that the women are the ones who are responsible for their own safety. Comments about clothing imply that rape and murder are consequences of the victims, choice of provocative dress, not the pathology of the assailant. The media focused on whether or not these women were prostitutes, as if it justified their death.

Irasema Coronado, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Texas, El Paso, spoke of the stereotypes portrayed by the government. The authorities frame the women as those whose "skirts are too short," whose "lipstick is too red." Blame is also placed on women who go out at night, which neglects the fact that working-class women often have jobs that require late shifts. Norma Andrade described her experience.

Cindy Rodríguez of Mujerartes next to the Día de Muertos altar installation which included her contributions and photos of some of the young murder victims.

The police insulted Andrade when she inquired about her missing daughter. They told her that she "did not know who her daughter was going around with." Government officials were not any better.

"(The officials) said 'your daughter is on the streets, she,s a bitch, she,ll come back someday.' They said 'good women are in the house, bad women are on the streets,'" Andrade recalled.

The mothers of the victims are vilified by authorities as well. They are framed as viejas escandalosas, or "scandal-mongering women," when they inquire about their daughters. Furthermore, the mothers are often threatened when they speak up about their daughters, creating a silence in the city about the crimes.

"The authorities said, 'you have one child still alive, you better shut up or they'll end up like your other daughter,'" Andrade related. The mothers and activists who came to speak at the conference received death threats for participating. According to Andrade, all of the moms are being followed back in Mexico. A 65-year-old mother was followed, then beaten by three people. The police claimed it was a robbery.

Fighting from All Fronts

Many different approaches have been taken in response to the murders in Juárez. The first groups to form in reaction to the murders consisted of the mothers and relatives of the victims. They banded together to form grassroots groups such as Voces Sin Eco, Mujeres Por Juárez, 8 de Marzo, and Casa Amiga (the only rape and abuse crisis shelter in Juárez). The groups assisted the mothers with their basic needs, such as walking through the desert to search for missing daughters, and bringing the remains to forensic specialists. They also staged protests and wrote letters to the government.

The newest of these groups, Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa, was co-founded by Norma Andrade in February 2001. Another group, Justicia para Nuestras Hijas, is a Chihuahua-based group formed after bodies of young women, patterned after the Juárez crimes, were found in Chihuahua city.

The issue of the Juárez crimes gained major international attention in 2003 when Amnesty International, a co-sponsor of this conference, released a report entitled "Intolerable Deaths, Mexico: 10 years of murder and missing women in Ciudad, Juarez, Chihuahua." The report was released during an international press conference in Juárez on August 11, 2003. It called on the Mexican government to improve the policing and stop these murders. While this has drawn much press coverage and public awareness, the killers seem unaffected. A day after the press conference, two more bodies turned up dead.

Moreover, the governor of Chihuahua, Patricio Martínez García, responded to the Amnesty report by saying, "I want to ask Amnesty International how many murders there are every year in the state of California. Don't come to us with this archaic position and say that only in Juárez are there women murdered."

Mujerartes participants speaking on an arts panel about their work which was dedicated to the women of Juárez. A slide of one of the ceramic pieces is projected above them.

Another way the activism has gone international is through what writer and performance artist Coco Fusco, also a speaker at the conference, calls "hacktivism," which entails the usage of electronic disturbance as a form of protest. The "virtual sit-in" that took place involved FloodNet, a program that allows online participants to freeze up the Mexican government's computer server.

"This is like blocking the streets in front of the White House, but we're blocking the bandwidth in front of the government server," explained Fusco, an associate professor at Columbia University School of the Arts who initiated the FloodNet actions.

"It's appealing to young people, who use computers to play games, who don't want to march and vigil," said Fusco.

Graciela Sánchez, director and co-founder of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, does not agree with the reliance on technology for activism.

"Some cyber connections are disastrous. People are not talking to each other face-to-face anymore, not even talking on the phone," Sánchez said. She explained that besides the fact that many people do not have access to such technological tools, the "hard stuff" of political organizing is the personal interactions, where activists must take into account one another's sexism, racism, and homophobia.

"(In person) is where people say, Œhey, you,re talking too much,," Sánchez noted. This keeps hierarchies from forming within activist groups. She also mentioned that trust must be built in-person. When sending e-mails, people are cautious with their words, and distrust can easily shatter movements when organizers have only met each other through e-mails. Sánchez believes that community-building is the key to helping the situation in Juárez.

Others believe in working from the top down. Congresswoman Hilda Solis of California, the only U.S. congress member who has dedicated energy into the Juárez murders so far, believes that we should get more congress members involved in order to affect Secretary of State Colin Powell and President Bush.

"I don't think it'll take all that much work. We just have to do it," said Solis.

Globalization and Juárez

While the Mexican government and police are a source of the problem, Gaspar de Alba points out the role of those on the other side of the border.

continued on page 22

A Death in Exile

By Andy Clarno

Days before he died, Edward Said made a phone call to the Israeli historian Ilan Pappe. They spoke of the Palestinian refugees, their longing for their homeland, and their inter-nationally recognized rights to return to their homes and to receive compensation. Said implored Pappe to continue striving to bring the issue of the Palestinian refugees' right of return to the forefront of the struggle for justice in the Middle East.

But Edward Said was unable to return. He died, as he lived, in exile. Now he is buried in Lebanon, prevented even in death from returning to his homeland – the land from which his family, along with nearly one million other Palestinians, was systematically and forcibly expelled in 1948.

A humanist, a professor, a distinguished literary critic, one of the greatest public intellectuals of our time, and the most eloquent spokesperson for the justice of the Palestinian struggle, Edward Said was – after all – a Palestinian refugee whose life, struggles, writings, and death were defined by the experience of exile. As Said remarked, "The fact is that for most exiles the difficulty consists not simply in being forced to live away from home, but rather, given today's world, in living with the many reminders that you are in exile, that your home is not in fact so far away, and that the normal traffic of everyday contemporary life keeps you in constant but tantalizing and unfulfilled touch with the old place."

Best known for his passionate defense of Palestinian self-determination, Said was equally uncompromising in his opposition to racism in South Africa, his denunciation of US imperialism, his contempt for academic complicity in the pursuit of empire, and his insistence that Palestinians learn to understand the devastating impact of the Nazi holocaust on the Jewish people. Laurie King-Irani, co-founder of the Electronic Intifada (http://electronicintifada.net), recounts that Said insisted:

We must make clear the link between the Shoah (the European Jewish Holocaust) and the Nakba (the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948). Neither experience is equal to the other, and neither should be minimized. We must emphasize this link not for short-term political gains, but because we cannot continue to work apart as two wounded yet incommunicado communities. We have to begin to admit the universality and integrity of each other's experience of suffering. As Arabs, we demand acknowledgement and reparations. We cannot accept that the 'redemption of the Jews' required the dispossession of millions of Palestinian people. We must rethink our common past if we want to have a future, and it is time to honestly state that we are fated to have a common, not a separate, future.

This common future demands an honest and just recognition of the Palestinian refugees' right to return to their homeland, which Said saw as "the basic, the irreconcilable, the irremediably interlocked contradiction between Palestinian and Israeli nationalism." Only when Jewish Israelis admit responsibility for the crimes of 1948 and begin to compensate their victims can progress towards overcoming that contradiction begin. Like many on the left, Said understood that the deeply flawed Oslo accords would never secure peace. He referred to them as an unconditional Palestinian surrender, a 'Palestinian Versailles.' Tragically, the lifeless corpse of this long-dead 'peace process' is still being propped up and carried along by the Israeli and American administrations, which are intent on installing a subservient Palestinian authority that is willing to endorse the final capitulation – a capitulation that would involve, above all, relinquishing the refugees' right of return.

At a conference in Boston three years ago, Said underlined the impossibility of this concession: the refugees are not going away. Remember, he said, it was the diaspora that produced Arafat and leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). If the grievances of the refugees remain unacknowledged, the diaspora will certainly produce another movement with a new set of leaders that will insist upon a just solution.

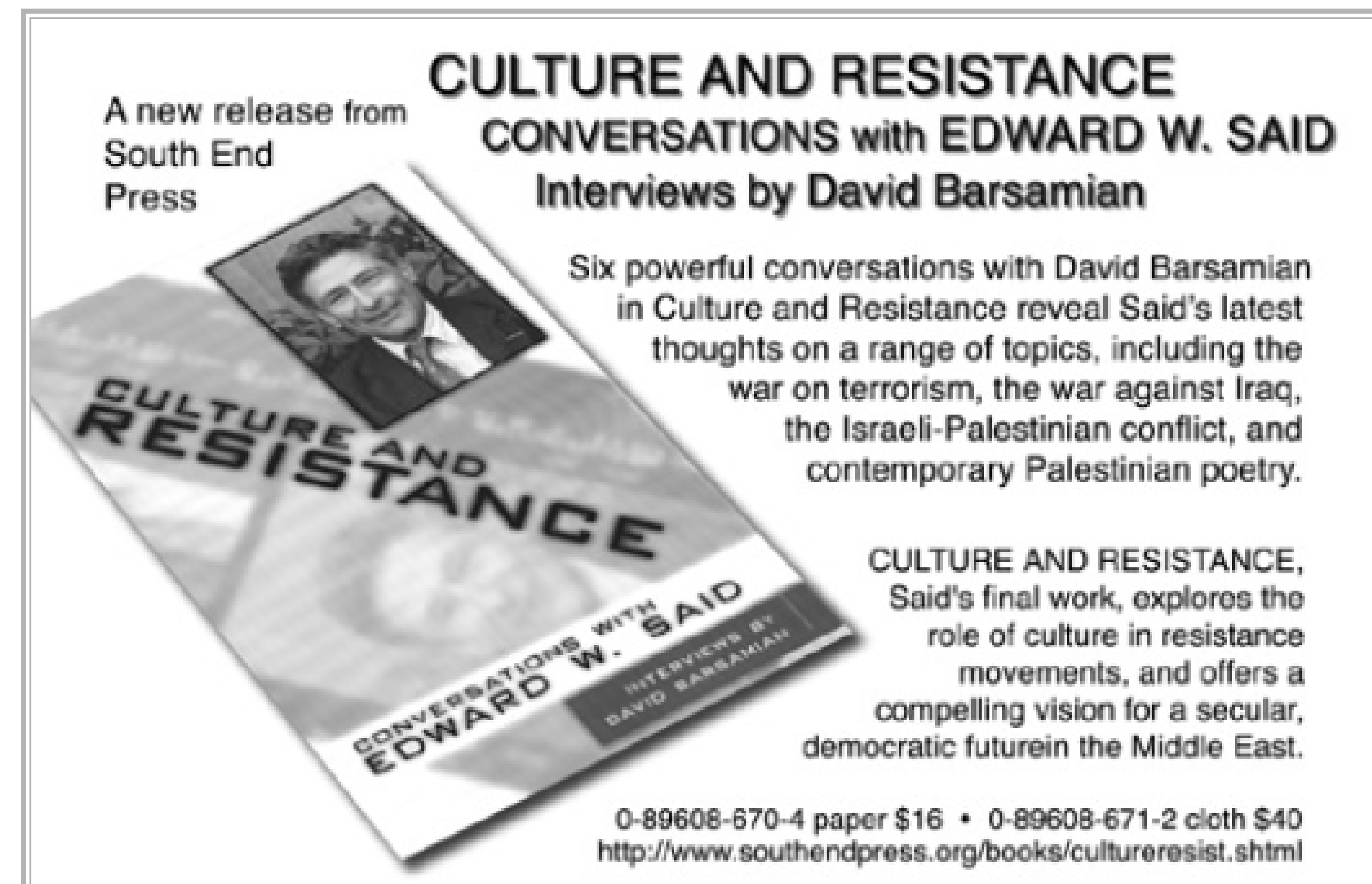
Last year, in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon, I was told a story that lends powerful support to Said's argument. One of the orphanages in this camp receives a great deal of funding from the Australian government. A high-ranking Australian diplomat in Lebanon used to visit the orphanage from time to time to see the children. In 2001, he was being transferred – he was leaving Lebanon to take up 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 a plaque or something like that. But when they came back out, they had a rock with them that they had all signed. They said: "We want 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." These children are the third and fourth generations to be born in the refugee camps outside of Palestine. They have never seen Palestine, yet they consider it their home and they want a role in the struggle to return.

The situation in Palestine/Israel shows no signs of improving. Suicide bombings continue unabated, while, on a daily basis, the Israeli military continues demolishing Palestinian homes, assassinating activists, terrorizing civilians, manning roadblocks, imposing curfews and sieges on Palestinian cities, constructing settlements, imprisoning and torturing thousands of young Palestinian men and women, and building an 'Apartheid Wall' that is imprisoning the entire Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Now more than ever it is imperative that new approaches are introduced into the equation to help break this unending cycle.

In order to overcome the contradiction between Palestinian and Israeli nationalism, Edward Said – along with a growing number of Israeli, Palestinian, and international analysts – came to embrace the creation of a secular, democratic state in which Palestinians and Israelis will co-exist. To some, such a solution is contaminated with anti-Semitic undertones. We must reject those charges. A one-state solution can only be based on mutual appreciation of the suffering, the fears, and the common humanity of Palestinian Arabs and Jewish Israelis. It must be fundamentally secular and defined neither as Palestinian nor as Jewish. Furthermore, it demands recognition that the establishment of a Jewish state in the Middle East was made possible by the expulsion of nearly one million Palestinians in 1948, the ongoing refusal to allow them to return, and the continued discrimination against Palestinians living inside Israel today. In the end, the establishment of a secular, democratic state is perhaps the only just and viable long-term solution. As Said made so poignantly clear, Palestinians and Israelis "are fated to have a common, not a separate, future." To his life, his work, and his vision, we pay tribute.

Andy Clarno is currently studying the geography of apartheid in South Africa and Israel. Contact him at: aclarno@umich.edu

For more on/by Said: www.edwardsaid.org/



continued from page 19

"We're not conscious of the fact that women have died making your walkman, your clothes, your shoes," Gaspar de Alba said.

After NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) was signed between the U.S. and Mexico in 1993, women have been drawn toward the maquiladoras in Juárez, which embodied many dreams and promises of "being right next to the wonderland."

NAFTA allows U.S. companies to follow Mexican labor laws instead of U.S. laws, which is why maquiladora workers are paid an average of $5 per day, according to Gaspar de Alba. The majority of these maquiladora workers are young women. They are viewed as disposable to the foreign companies.

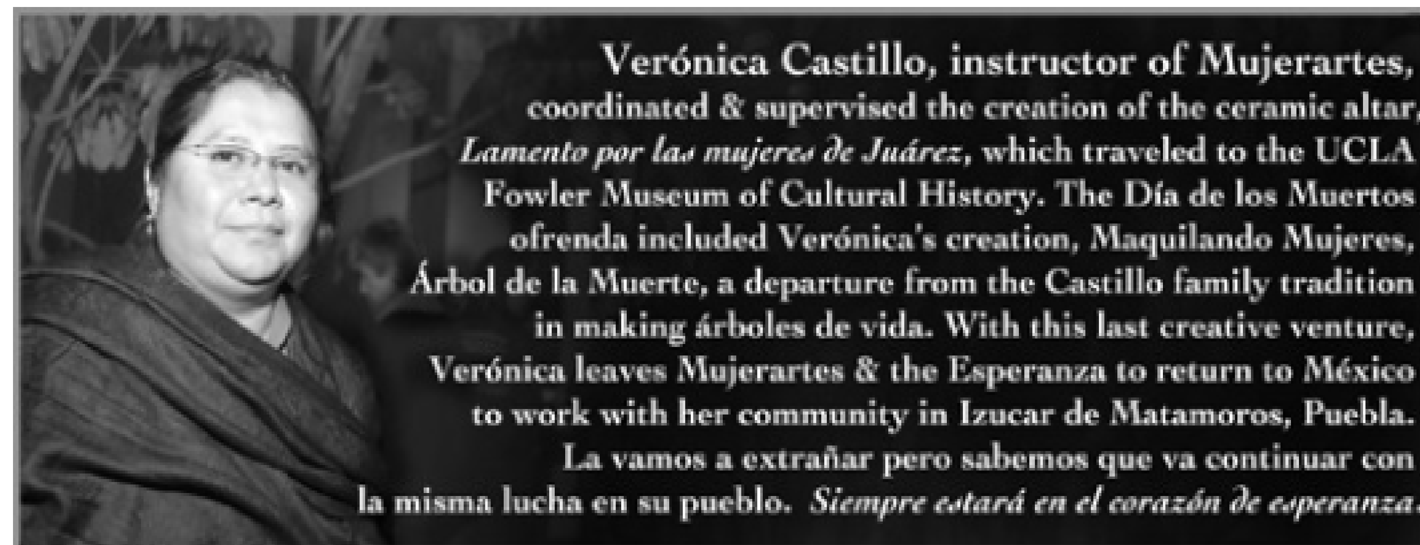
"For every girl killed, there are 25 girls waiting in line to take her place," said Gaspar de Alba. Thus, the companies have taken no responsibility for the safety of their employees so far. Women in Juárez continue to endanger their lives to manufacture cheap goods for foreign consumers. According to "Señorita Extraviada," over 80 percent of the maquiladoras in Juárez are U.S.-owned.

On Valentine's Day 2001, Norma Andrade's 17-year old daughter disappeared after leaving work at the maquiladora. On the same day, North Americans spent an estimated $2 billion on goods and services, according to the Gartner Group. The deaths in Juarez reflect a global economy that treats its assembly workers as dispensable units, where company owners base their actions on sales gains, and are able to remain distant and unaccountable for their workers' safety.

"These crimes are not just a Mexican problem," Gaspar de Alba said.

Emily Ng is a second-year anthropology undergraduate student at UCLA. She is also the editor in chief of FEM, UCLA's feminist newsmagazine. You may reach her at fem@media.ucla.edu. This article was originally published in the Fall 2003 issue of FEM, and was reprinted in La Voz with permission from the author.

All photos with the exception of one were taken by Carol Petersen, courtesy of the UCLA Chancellor's office, Faculty Diversity. The Norma Andrade photo is courtesy of Anita Revilla of L.A. via San Antonio, Tx.



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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.***

StoneMetal Press Gallery opens a special exhibit on December 4th, 2003. ***Worth Repeating: Multiple Originals by African American Women***, features original prints by Elizabeth Catlett, Samella Lewis and Arleen Polite. The three printmakers create original work grounded in the realities of their lives. The exhibit is the third in a series of exhibits devoted to African American artists that began three years ago with renowned artist. Dr. John Biggers. This historic exhibit runs through January 31, 2004. StoneMetal Press Gallery is located in the Blue Star Art Complex at 1420 S. Alamo. Call 227-0312.

Cara Mía Theatre Company presents ***Cholos y Chulas and other stories***, a night of three plays in English, Español y Spanlish at Dallas' new **Latino Cultural Center** on December 4-20 at 8:15 p.m. Tickets are Wednesdays, $5, Thursdays, $10 (buy one get one free), Fridays, $12 and on Saturdays, $15. Call 214.946.9499 or contact www.caramiatheatre.net

Jump-Start Performance Co. will host a special holiday event, ***Nopales y Tamales*** on Wednesday, December 10 from 6-9 pm. The evening will include performances, music, dancing and lots of tamales. Admission is $10 in advance and $15 at the door. Proceeds go to the *Jump-Start Millennium Campaign* to renovate the facility and establish a cash fund. Author Sandra Cisneros and playwright Alicia Mena are the honorary hosts for the evening. For reservations or info call 227-JUMP.

A second holiday event for **Jump-Start Performance Co.** features the voice of impressionist Jimmy James. *Jimmy James: Home for the Holidays* will run for one weekend only on Thursday, December 18th through Saturday, December 20th at Jump-Start Theater. Shows begin at 8 pm. Tickets are $15. **Jump-Start Theater** is located in the Blue Star Arts Complex, at S. Alamo and Probandt. Call 227-JUMP for info.

The 17th Annual Fine Arts and Crafts Market, ***Hecho A Mano***, sponsored by the **Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center** takes place on the weekend of Friday and Saturday December 12th and 13th at the **Guadalupe Theatre** space, 1301 Guadalupe St. In addition to the usual there will also be a sale of children's art. Free. Call 271-3151.

Christmas Wish List. Contact **Peers for Women** to donate items for Women With AIDS-HIV at 738-9644 or drop off items at 1142 W. Woodlawn Ste 2. You can also contact the **River City Living Church** at 822-1121 or drop off items at 202 Holland here in San Antonio. The Christmas wish list for women and children includes toiletries, cosmetics, gift certificates, and canned or boxed foods. Call Anna-Marie at 723-7158 for specifics.

Check out First Friday on January 2nd at **Gemini Ink** as they continue their Reading Series. Extrenando el año nuevo will be our own Pablo Miguel Martínez among other illustrous readers. **Gemini Ink** is located at 513 Presa behind El Mirador Restaurant. Call 734-WORD for details.

The Texas Lesbian Conference~ San Antonio presents comic Suzanne Westenhoefer, winner, Gay & Lesbian American Music Awards, best comedy CD in 2000 and in 1998. The performance will take place on Saturday, January 24th, 2004 at 8 pm at McAllister Auditorium, 1300 San Pedro @ Courtland. Presale tickets are $20 at Candlelight Coffeehouse, 3011 N. St. Mary's St., ph. 737-2323 or Madhatters Tea, 320 Beauregard, 212-4832. For $50 or $100 reserved tickets call 210/532-9821 or email TLCSanAntonio@aol.com

The *16th Annual Texas Lesbian Conference* is slated for May 21-23, 2004 in San Antonio, Texas. For info visit www.tlcsanantonio.com or email TLCSanAntonio@aol.com or phone 210/532-9821. Vendors are encouraged to apply for space.

Community Meetings

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

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

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.

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

Fuerza Unida at 710 New Laredo Hwy., Call for information and meeting times, 927-2297.

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

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

S.N.A.P. Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests meets the last Wednesday of each month at 7 pm at 3534 Ave. B, call 725-8329.

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

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.

Bexar County Green Party First Sunday of each month at 2 pm at the Estela's Mexican Restaurant, 2200 W. Martin St.

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

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

Trabajamos por la buena gente de Esperanza. Gente que cree en paz, justicia y servicio a la communidad y a la madre tierra. Para regalar un aguinaldo* (tax-deductible) fill out and send the form on p. 22 to the
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*aguinaldo-Mexican tradition of gift giving at Christmasparticularly to those who provide service during the year.

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