

La VOZ de Esperanza

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Comandante Ramona



1959 ~ 2006

La Voz de Esperanza

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Cover photos:

Comandante Ramona in La Realidad, Chiapas in 1996 (AP Photo/Scott Sady, File) Above: A Tzotzil woman carries flowers in tribute to Ramona in San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Mx., January 7, 2006. (AP Photo/Eduardo Verdugo)



¡Bienvenidas! Conjunto de Nepantleras

The Esperanza Peace and Justice Center Board of Directors has recently undergone a change and welcomes members to the new governing body now named, the Conjunto de Nepantleras. The Conjunto is comprised of 22 members including four members previously on the Board of Directors and two members from staff who were not previously part of the board. The remaining sixteen members were selected on the basis of their work with the Esperanza as buena gente volunteers. The change reflects a renewed commitment to the work that Esperanza has done for nearly twenty years and brings new ánimo (energy) and connections to the Esperanza community.

The term “Conjunto” which replaces the term “Board” means a coming together. It also signifies a group that has commonalities. “Conjunto” sparks visions of gente dancing in San Antonio to the music of the acordeón. What better way to signify a group coming together to do the joyful work of the Esperanza. “Nepantleras” which replaces “Directors” comes from “Nepantla,” a nahuatl word meaning a place that is in-between, ni aquí ni allá. In the last twenty years, scholars, writers and artists, mostly Chicanos and Latinas have used the word “Nepantla” in a variety of contexts. It was brought to use most notably by Gloria Anzaldúa in her book *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras* published in 1990. She continued to write about the concept of nepantla until her death in 2004.

Conjunto members listed their understanding of the word Nepantla at one of our meetings as: *a place or process of transformation, having nothing completely defined, a place of being that is neither here nor there which may be uncomfortable, hybridity or mestizaje, negotiating two or more worlds, a birth channel and a place where we are constantly struggling against conquest or cooptation by the dominant culture.* One member added that after the conquest of México, the Aztecas were known to have said, “Estamos en nepantla.” Nepantla is also a town in México where Sor Juana Inéz de la Cruz was born, a town where people of great social conscience live. Later, we found out that in 1974 in the town of Nepantla a small but significant massacre took place. The Mexican government raided a house full of members of the leftist National Liberation Forces where five people were killed. The survivors dispersed and regrouped in the Lancandón jungle of Chiapas, emerging later as the Zapatista National Liberation Army.

“Nepantlera” evolved from Nepantla and was coined by Gloria Anzaldúa to define a unique type of visionary cultural worker. Nepantleras are threshold people; they move within and among multiple worlds, and use this movement to transform themselves. It can refer to those who live in multiple worlds and understand multiple issues and who have the capacity to bridge communities and facilitate new understandings. Both terms, Conjunto and Nepantleras inherently reflect the work of Esperanza.

The Conjunto de Nepantleras of Esperanza began meeting in October of 2005 and as each nepantlera introduced herself or himself it brought into focus a common love for life and the desire to work towards securing the future of mother earth. We began to see that the new name, Conjunto de Nepantleras, fit the group that will guide the Esperanza Center into 2006. As we continue the dynamic process of understanding our new identity we are also aware that the concepts of Nepantla and Nepantlera are being embraced worldwide. As I close this welcome, one of the conjunto members writes that she has found a book entitled, *Nepantla*, from a press in South India. It is about the space between generations in Mangalore. Again, it brings to mind the work of the Conjunto de Nepantleras: bridging communities and bringing groups closer together to create a better world.

As we continue to explore and learn more about ourselves as Nepantleras, we will be sharing who we are in future issues of La Voz. Bienvenidas, members of the Esperanza’s Conjunto de Nepantleras: Deanne Cuellar, Lacey Dalby, Brenda Davis, Anel Flores, Graciela García, Monica M. García, Ana Ramirez, Jessica O. Guerrero, Araceli Herrera, Rachel Jennings, Amy Kastely, Mariana Ornelas, Kamala Platt, Gloria Ramírez, Rudy Rosales, René Saenz, Nadine Saliba, Iman Saliba, Graciela Sánchez, Fabiola Torralba, Monica Velásquez and Andrea Vince. ¡Adelante! -GAR

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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.



UNA MUJER DE MUCHA ENAGUA

Comandante Ramona, Tzotzil Indian born in the highlands of Chiapas in 1959, leader of the Zapatista movement in Mexico, passed away on Friday, January 6, 2006. Her death on Día de los reyes underscored the power of her influence as a freedom fighter, una reina dando luz al camino de los reyes. A woman who gave direction to the Zapatistas insisting on women’s rights, family rights and dignity above all else.

After a decade-long battle with kidney disease, la Comandante died en route to a hospital in San Cristobal de las Casas. She died because of a lack of health facilities near her home in San Andres de Larrainzer. Ironically, she had pleaded for medical facilities to be built in San Andres since 1996. When the Mexican government offered first-class private medical care for her, instead, she refused saying she wasn’t fighting for her own privileges but for all. Her brother donated his kidney in 1996 and she was active in the movement for 10 more years.

In 1993, Comandante Ramona with Major Ana María consulted indigenous Zapatista communities about the status of women and subsequently penned the *Revolutionary Laws of Women* the foundation of the Zapatista movement and often referred to as the first Zapatista Revolution. On March 8th (International Women’s Day) of 1993, the *Laws* were passed (in English, and in Spanish). In 1994, on New Year’s Day, Ramona led Zapatista rebels into San Cristóbal de las Casas demanding rights for the indigenous people of Chiapas and protesting the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which came into effect that day. As a member of the **Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee (CCRI)**, the highest authority of the **EZLN**, Ramona’s rank was higher than Subcomandante Marcos, (now known as Delegate Zero). Marcos took his orders from Ramona and the CCRI.

Ramona, an embroiderer who put aside her work for political activism, won the hearts of many Mexicans after the media showed fellow Zapatista commanders towering above her during a first round of peace talks with the government in February of 1994 in the colonial cathedral of San Cristóbal. She later showed up in Mexico City for the National Indigenous Congress which Zapatistas were forbidden to attend. Zapatista sympathizers from all walks of life encircled Comandante Ramona to ensure that she was not arrested. She was showered with flowers at the Congress. Later, she addressed a crowd of 100,000 supporters in Mexico City’s massive central plaza.

The last public appearance by Comandante Ramona came in September, 2005 when she spoke in front of the plenary sessions held to plan the Other Campaign deep in the Lacandon Jungle, the heart of Zapatista territory. The nationwide tour that seeks more support for Indians and the poor before the July 2006 presidential election was put on hold until after Ramona’s funeral near Oventic. In a speech, Marcos was quoted as saying: “Mexico has lost one of those fighters that matter, and a piece of

our heart has been ripped out.”

Comandante Ramona is one of a long line of Revolutionary women who are invisible in the annuals of history, but very much alive in our own memorias. In a 1997 **Column of the Americas** article, *Winds of Change Blow through Mexico*, she was characterized thus: *Unlike other commanding women in the Zapatista army, La Ramona is not known for her oratory. Instead she challenges power with a haiku of words made strong by her work among her community and imbued with the moral authority of her ancestors: as an indigenous woman, her existence represents centuries of other women’s courage.*

A statement from the Kurdistan Free Women’s Movement—on the German-based website Hezen Parastina Gel, —noted the passing of Comandante Ramona: *...Ramona is a symbol for the women’s liberation struggle of suppressed peoples. Her guiding role in the uprising of San Cristobal has made clear to the world that women of all nations take their destiny in own hand and do not surrender to injustice. The determination, the courage and strength which commander Ramona - in spite of her severe illness - has emanated in her struggle for freedom and human dignity have shown that the desire for independence of women can be detained by nothing. Her insisting efforts for the draft and the implementation the “Revolutionary Women’s Laws” of the EZLN shows that the organized women’s struggle can create a revolution within the revolution. As Kurdish women we know from the experience of our own liberation struggle only too well how much strength and perseverance this requires. 1/9/2006*

Libertad, Democracia y Justicia!

Kurdistan Free Women’s Movement

In an article entitled *We Are All Ramona* in which Ellen Calmus interviewed Chiapanecan women in Mexico City years before Ramona’s death, she wrote: *A woman and an Indian in a Third World country, she is one of the most oppressed of the oppressed--yet she has somehow turned that to advantage, refusing to be a victim. She symbolizes the power of authenticity: borders don’t cross Ramona, Ramona crosses them. Con sus enaguas muy bien puestas, petticoats and all.*

About the role of indigenous peoples, Ramona said: *“There will never be another Mexico, without us,” Nor one without the women.*

Indeed, it is las inditas del sur, who, when they go north to work in maquiladoras become corpses in the desert. Maybe, those mujeres in Juárez are being killed because of the potential power they represent to change this world. Maybe, they have been recognized as the Ramonas they can become. For when we find our power:

Todas Somos Ramona.

¡Qué viva Ramona!

-G. Ramirez





Historic Lawsuit Filed In San Antonio Against Railroad Kings

by Barbara Renaud González



Remember this day, January 6, 2006. Today, El día de los tres reyes, Ralph Velásquez and his familia, have filed a historic lawsuit against the railroad kings. In a 16-page complaint, Ralph has taken on the Union Pacific, Burlington, General Electric, OxyCam and SafeTran in Federal Court, presided by Judge Royal Ferguson, a Clinton appointee.

In Ralph's corner: lawyer Amy Kastely (and colegas), who won the unprecedented Esperanza suit against the City of San Antonio in 2001 on all four counts. In Velasquez' corner tambien: he's not in it for the money, and neither is Kastely. They are not desperate nor hungry for millions, believe it or not. They want their day in court. They want a jury trial. And my bet is they will win. Big time.

Velásquez, his ex-wife Leticia, and their four children

...a freight train collision created a chlorine and an anhydrous ammonium gas leak in southwest Bexar County.

are the survivors of a nightmare that began at 5 a.m. on June 28th, 2004, when a freight train collision created a chlorine and an anhydrous ammonium gas leak in southwest Bexar County.

Four people died that night, including the Union Pacific train conductor. The media failed to count a "lodger", and this is what happens when you count bodies according to Union Pacific. The tragedy happened near Loop 1604 and Nelson Road, after a Burlington Northern Santa Fe train, waiting for a Union Pacific train to pass, was struck on the side by the Union Pacific train. Burlington had 123 cars that night, when 80 is considered a regular load. The cars were empty, and traveling west, when the Union Pacific train, car #63, made impact, creating a tsunami of poisonous gas.

So what? Union Pacific saw over 9,000 accidents and 145 deaths in the last ten years, says Kastely. And it's part of the cost of doing business for the railroads. It's in their budgets, part of the calculation, explains Isabel De la Riva, part of Kastely's legal team, who also worked on the Esperanza case. De la Riva is calling the Velásquez case the "Pinto" case for the railroads. In other words, ¡Ya basta!

Velásquez, fiftyish and with the look of a man who has seen la muerte, with the clock ticking loudly inside him, told me his story alongside Kastely and De la Riva. He had returned home early after taking his children on a fishing trip that was rained out. Everyone went to sleep. Then, a noise woke him up. He looked at the clock. 5:07 a.m. Leticia was choking, and that's when Ralph saw it: a cloud, a wave, a rolling fog of something that was within 50 feet of engulfing his house. There was no way to avoid it. He started choking too, coughing up blood, tissue, and what he later learned were pieces of his lungs.

He and Leticia gathered up the kids, rushing to their car, instinctively realizing that the only chance they had were the back roads, to move faster than the fog sweeping down on them. They took the backroad, only to be snared by a neighbor's barbed wire fence. Desperately, Leticia tried to open the fence, and then tried again, and finally Velásquez just rammed their way through, ripping off the sunroof and windshield wipers, exposing them to the creeping gas now entering the car all

around them. Then they hit what seemed to be a "sea of mud." It had been raining all that week, and Velásquez said it changed the landscape so that he didn't know where they were.

"Daddy, go right, go to the left," the Velásquez children frantically gave advice as the car spun, whirring, gaining momentum, as they took off toward a field of weeds. Then they came to a place where they just couldn't see ahead of them. A ravine. Velasquez backed up the car as fast as he could, stepped on the gas, and somehow, the car lurched, jumping across the emptiness. That's when they saw an open area, where Velásquez knew a rancher who was keeping undocumented workers locked in a barn. In a mad rush, he freed the men in the barn so that they would have a chance. From there, he knew where he was.

At the first gas station he called 911. "Are we gonna

die?," his daughter cried. Velásquez was bleeding from his nose, and after fifteen minutes of explaining and then waiting and waiting, got hung up on. He hurried to Wilford Hall, where he and his family were stripped, decontaminated, and where Ralph spent 2 days in ICU. It is a milagro that he lived. The doctors told him that he should have died. Like the other three people who didn't make it that night. His neighbors and the train conductor.

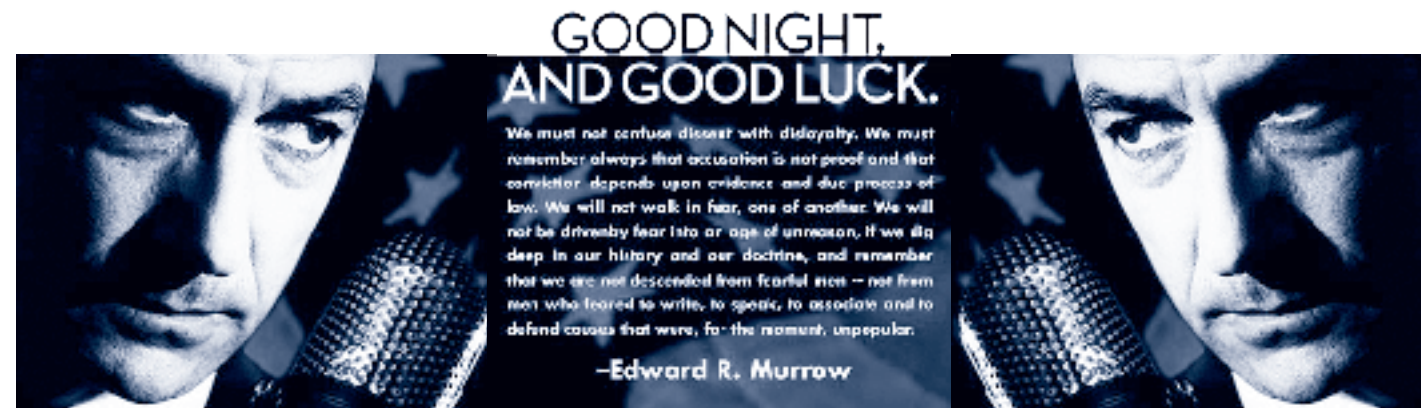
The railroad industry sees 2 1/2 derailments a day, says Kastely. In 2004, San Antonio had three serious train derailments alone - forcing Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff to demand accountability from Union Pacific. But that's the trouble. To whom is Union Pacific accountable? Not to us.

Kastely believes that the railroad industry sees "accidents" as a consequence of industry. Which I understand as lax government regulation. Think mining. Or the New Orleans levees. She cites the railroad's moratorium on upkeep, the employee RIFs, the limitations on new hires, the skeletal crew, the overworked employees pulling double shifts - in short, the cost-cutting measures endemic in many of the industries essential to our national stability. And security.

Most of the train derailments have occurred in poorer communities, where the railroads cross frequently. Poor people are vulnerable to settlements, they don't want to go to trial. And the industry, she says, knows this well.

Velásquez says that about 500 lawyers have called on him, including Johnny Cochran. But he was looking for the right lawyer, the one who would understand the national picture, someone who cared about the latino community, someone with a track record of beating the odds. And he wanted someone to go the whole way with him. He may not live to see what he has done. But with Kastely beside him, we've already won. And Willie, his brother, a community organizer who founded the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project in 1974, would be so proud.

Bio: Barbara Renaud González is a freelance writer and journalist currently working on her first novel. Check out her blog at: barbararenaud.blogspot.com



by Rachel Jennings A random Critic in San Antonio

In *Good Night, and Good Luck* (2005), director George Clooney pays homage to his hero, Edward R. Murrow (1908-1965), the broadcaster who relentlessly exposed the venomous falsehoods of Senator Joseph McCarthy, the self-styled hater of commies. For many, Clooney's choice for beatification may seem unfortunate. Although he took a blow professionally for taking on McCarthy, eventually losing his public affairs program, *See It Now* (1951-1958), Murrow (David Strathairn) was honored even in his too-short lifetime. What about the victims whose lives were destroyed? And what about the trade unionists, civil libertarians, lawyers, artists, and intellectuals who anonymously combated McCarthyism with heartbreaking personal consequences? Clooney's project is not merely to honor Murrow but to reflect upon the importance of historical memory, particularly as realized in our cultural legends and mythic heroes. An empowered man of privilege, Murrow still matters because we associate him with a humanist tradition of integrity and selflessness. His courage still resonates.

Shot in black and white, *Good Night, and Good Luck* vividly recalls a time when smoke-filled newsrooms were run by white males in white shirts and dark ties—in this case, by "Murrow's boys," as the famous broadcaster's intrepid young reporters came to be known. In the 1950s, as this film honestly depicts, women were rarely seen at CBS except as secretaries. Even more invisible were people of color.

Only two black characters appear, even marginally. Intermittently, we listen to a jazz singer (Dianne Reeves), whose performances in the film may be as much to pay tribute to Clooney's aunt, Rosemary Clooney, and her jazz influences, as to convey the racial climate of an era. In addition to the jazz singer, we encounter Annie Lee Moss, whom Joseph McCarthy accused of being a Communist spy. Because she is the most intriguing character by far in Clooney's movie, Moss's brief appearance leaves the viewer frustrated. One wonders whether Moss was, in fact, a Communist. If she was, one would like to know her reasons for Communist Party membership, her history with the Party, and the rest of her life history. (McCarthy-era criminalization of Communist Party affiliation, like the criminalization of Islam, leaves one wondering what our "democracy" purports to be.) Also, one wonders whether this working-class black woman really was a spy. If so, what were her motivations? Like McCarthy, Moss is startlingly brought back to life not by an actor but with archival news footage. This fifty-year-old footage reveals a frightened Pentagon worker being bullied by a sneering McCarthy on the basis of secret and possibly exonerating or nonexistent evidence. "You'll note that I don't know" if she is a Communist, Murrow says, "but she has a right to face her accuser." The possibility that Moss is guilty of spying is left open. Clooney, instead, focuses upon Moss's lack of civil liberties, including access to prosecutorial evidence and the right to face one's accuser.

Although Clooney's (and Murrow's) concern for civil liberties is valid and honorable, the filmic marginalization of two black women is regrettable. Too perfectly, the film reflects the invisibility of black people in the fifties by placing both women outside the central narrative. Clooney's crafted reflection of this invisibility, paradoxically, makes the two black characters "visible"

but also exoticizes and objectifies them. Thus, although the scenes with Moss and the jazz singer are the most haunting in the film, this result is not adequate and is no moral defense. Given the history of racism and sexism in broadcasting and in Hollywood, one could argue that Clooney's hagiographic priorities are outdated and misplaced. The time has come, surely, to present the McCarthy hearings from Annie Lee Moss's perspective.

Still, in this fifties environment of white male privilege, one can be certain that Murrow, the anchor of *See It Now*, and Fred Friendly (George Clooney), Murrow's producer, had no selfish motive in fighting McCarthyism. Not black, not gay, not Jewish or atheist, not socialist or Communist, Murrow could easily have overlooked the persecution of individuals accused, essentially, of nonconformity. Instead, Murrow risked his career—and his fine house, as CBS boss William Paley (Frank Langella) ominously threatens—to confront McCarthy and empower others to do the same. Imbued with clear ethical standards, Murrow does not waiver in his commitment to do what he deems is right. Because of this personal integrity, as David Edgerton commented, Murrow deserves his reputation as the "patron saint of American broadcasting."

Indeed, Murrow's larger than life reputation calls to mind another hero who was only seven years Murrow's junior—Américo Paredes.¹ If this comparison seems forced—a Paredes scholar forcing her personal interests into a movie review—consider that Paredes, too, was a journalist, having worked as a writer for the *Brownsville Herald* and as a reporter and political editor for the military newspaper *Stars and Stripes* (Meier). Both Murrow and Paredes proved their mettle in World War II. Whereas Murrow covered the London Blitz for CBS Radio, Paredes covered the war crimes trials in Tokyo for *Stars and Stripes*. In the post-war 1950s, Murrow persistently confronted Joseph McCarthy despite pressures from Alcoa and his anxious boss, William Paley. During the same period, Américo Paredes enrolled first as an undergraduate and then as a graduate student at The University of Texas at Austin. This entrance into UT-Austin required considerable courage at a time when "Regular" (Dixiecrat) Democrats ran the state of Texas, the politely repressive Good Government League ran San Antonio, and civic leaders in Texas were more likely to belong to the John Birch Society than to labor unions or civil rights organizations. In fact, the flagship University of Texas banned black students, routinely excluded Mexican American students, and strictly enforced segregationist policies on campus.

At UT-Austin, even apologists for Anglo domination like J. Frank Dobie, author of *Coronado's Children* (1930), and historian Walter Prescott Webb, author of *The Texas Rangers* (1935) and *The Great Plains* (1931), were summarily pigeonholed as subversive liberals. Ironically, even as Webb was derided as a horrid "liberal" for his ecological concerns and anti-corporate populism, his good-old-boy influence at UT-Austin nearly derailed Paredes's career. At the forefront in founding the UT Press in 1950, Webb had enjoyed an unusually long term on the faculty advisory board when Paredes submitted his book for publication 1956. Moreover, Webb was the close friend and mentor of the Press director, Frank Wardlaw. Unwilling to offend his friend and father figure, Wardlaw resisted publishing Paredes's first scholarly book, *With His Pistol in His Hand* (1958), without the removal of all critical references to Webb and his beloved Texas Rangers. In effect, Wardlaw's aggressive editing

would have erased the substance of Paredes's argument regarding folklore, history, memory, and resistance. Standing up to Wardlaw much as Murrow stood up to William Paley, Paredes successfully ushered into print his version of Texas-Mexican history.

In examining the lives—and legends—of Murrow and Paredes, one is struck by such examples of character and willingness to stand up to power. Having seen the demise of See It Now as a result of William Paley's profit-driven decision that U.S. audiences care more about entertainment than thoughtful news analysis, Murrow confronted the most powerful professionals in broadcasting in a famous speech at a banquet in Chicago in 1958—the very year, incidentally, that Paredes's With His Pistol in His Hand was first published. Murrow's speech before this elite audience frames the central narrative of Clooney's film. Likewise, Paredes stood up to power in-person as well as in print. As José E. Limón has observed, Paredes was “never one to kowtow to hegemonic power” (Dancing n.216). When Paredes was awarded the Order of the Aztec Eagle Medal from the Mexican government in 1990, for example, he “‘thanked’ the Mexican government by attacking most of its conformist intellectuals such as [Octavio] Paz for their disparagement of Mexican-Americans” (Limón n.216).

When considering the careers of Paredes and Murrow, one must consider the function of oral legend as well as of factual biography. Paredes's life story became an “unsung protoballad,” that is, “a folklore narrative combining ballad and legend” (Limón, Mexican Ballads 88). Similarly, as Gary Edgerton writes, one often hears of the “‘Murrow legend and tradition’ of courage, integrity, social responsibility, and journalistic excellence.” In the same vein, David Halberstam observes that Murrow was “one of those rare legendary figures who was as good as his myth” (qtd. in Edgerton). Such legends and oral traditions do not emerge haphazardly; clearly, both Paredes and Murrow were men who continue to be admired after their deaths. Indeed, just as Paredes mentored an entire generation of Chicano/a scholars, Murrow “hired a generation of electronic journalists at CBS, such as Eric Severeid, Charles Collingwood, and Howard K. Smith” (Edgerton). Just as Paredes provided a model of a published Chicano intellectual to Chicano/as throughout Greater Mexico, Murrow “offer[ed] the public a heroic model on which to focus their energies” (Edgerton) not only in the McCarthy era but during the difficult World War II years.

Despite the legitimate purposes of legend and hagiography, one cannot lose sight of our cultural heroes' frailties. As Paley points out in Clooney's Good Night, and Good Luck, Murrow was expediently selective in revealing McCarthy's redbaiting lies. Apparently not wishing to appear too sympathetic to Communists, Murrow fails to correct McCarthy's claim in a televised commentary that Alger Hiss was convicted of treason when he was actually convicted of perjury. Murrow chain smoked, thus exposing his own vulnerability to the power of marketing and advertising. Given the chance to help his friend, Don Hollenbeck (Ray Wise), who is driven to suicide by anti-Communist redbaiting, Murrow is too preoccupied with his own anti-McCarthy drama. Finally, Murrow signs the loyalty oath required of CBS employees, setting a poor example for colleagues who might also have refused to sign. Murrow had his faults; Paredes, likewise has been taken to task for his patriarchal worldview, his classism, his cultural anxiety regarding new waves of Mexican immigration, and his objectification of Asian and Anglo women during his years in Japan and China. Both Murrow and Paredes were human beings with human weaknesses. Their achievements merely symbolize the triumphs of many.

It behooves us all to recall that these men's achievements were gained with the support of friends and colleagues. In addition to his “boys,” including his close associate Fred Friendly, Murrow enjoyed unusual loyalty even from his harsh boss, Paley. Likewise, as Paredes struggled to publish With His Pistol in His Hand, he enjoyed strong support from former professors, including his creative



Dianne Reeves as the jazz singer

writing teacher, Gerald Langford, and his folklore mentor, Mody C. Boatright. Neither Murrow nor Paredes can be characterized as isolated figures without friends or professional community.

One wonders what might be Murrow's ultimate legacy. After all, Murrow's acts of courage in the 1950s did little to prevent the decline of today's broadcast journalism or the continued corruption of U.S. government. Now as in the 1950s, ambitious politicians trample on the principle of habeas corpus and the Bill of Rights. Now as in the 1950s, CBS refuses to challenge the powers-that-be for fear

of losing ratings or angering corporate sponsors. Alcoa, which sponsored See It Now, wielded power in the same manner that Time-Warner, Microsoft, Wal-Mart, and Coca-Cola do now. Senator Joseph McCarthy, the self-styled hater of Communists, was not of a separate cloth from George W. Bush, Tom DeLay, or Bill Frist, who self-servingly trumpet their contempt for terrorists. Finally, the House Un-American Activities Committee acted with no more malice than the tyrants who passed the Patriot Act.

In pondering Murrow's legacy, I do not dwell on the transience of his anti-McCarthyism victories but also recall Harvest of Shame (1960), the documentary which so powerfully exposed the living conditions of migrant farmworkers to the U.S. public. Admittedly, these conditions have no more improved since Murrow's time than political witch-hunting has vanished from the earth. Inarguably, Murrow does not deserve sole credit for this film, since producer David Lowe conducted most of the research and interviews (Discovery News, “Harvest of Shame”).² In publicizing the plight of farmworkers, however, Harvest of Shame helped set the stage for the Chicano Movement, which originated in acts of solidarity between farmworkers and young Mexican American college students (Limón, Mexican Ballads 82-83).

Certainly, Murrow's role in establishing the conditions for the Chicano Movement was minor, perhaps a small footnote. After all, Harvest of Shame focuses on black and white farmworkers rather than Mexican Americans. Still, Murrow's documentary appeared at a time when the labor film Salt of the Earth (1954), which concerned union organizing in a New Mexican zinc mine, was blacklisted; when Paredes's With His Pistol in His Hand mostly just gathered dust in the Texana section of libraries, since so few Mexicanos were enrolled in universities; and when William Madsen's and Arthur Rubel's problematic studies of Mexican communities in South Texas had not yet been conceptualized. Thus, one imagines, Murrow's grave, dignified narration must have inspired certain young Mexicanos to examine and reflect upon the historic exploitation of their people.

In contrast to Murrow's Harvest of Shame, which was broadcast the day after Thanksgiving on November 25, 1960, one can consider Charles Kuralt's Christmas in Appalachia, which was broadcast December 21, 1964. This film highlighted, with equal emphasis, a lack of shoes and schools in the Appalachian region. Naturalizing Appalachian poverty—portraying Appalachians as a backwards, fatalistic people—Christmas in Appalachia set the stage for a decade of documentaries and War on Poverty programs that both romanticized and denigrated the Appalachian people. Failing to examine Appalachian poverty in the context of capitalist exploitation by coal companies and the Tennessee Valley Authority, Christmas in Appalachia today is remembered not with pride or gratitude but with shame, anger, and indignation. Only within this contrastive light should one evaluate Murrow's Harvest of Shame.

Whether exposing Senator McCarthy's bullying tactics or the living conditions of farmworkers, Murrow deserves to be remembered. Despite its omissions and oversights, George Clooney's Good Night, and Good Luck pays tribute in a manner that dignifies all of us.

Bio: Rachel Jennings, a frequent contributor to La Voz, is a San Antonio educator, scholar, and activist who is also a member of the Esperanza Conjunto de Nepantleras. Footnotes available from la voz @ espranzacenter.org.

Ever been depressed?

by Judy Lerma

Have you ever been depressed? I don't mean: “They didn't have those red shoes in my size. I'm so depressed!” I mean seriously, clinically depressed. If you haven't, you're lucky, but chances are you know someone who has been or is depressed. Although the term “depression” is commonly used (as above) to describe a normal emotional reaction, it is also the name of one of the most common and treatable of all mental illnesses. Depression is most effectively defined by its symptoms:

- *Depressed or sad mood*
- *Loss of interest and pleasure*
- *Irritability or agitation*
- *Changes in appetite*
- *Changes in sleep pattern*
- *Loss of energy*
- *Decline in personal hygiene and self care*
- *Inappropriate guilt*
- *Inability to concentrate*
- *Persistent thoughts of death and suicide*
- *Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, or worthlessness*

The pattern and severity of symptoms are used by health care providers to determine the type of depression a patient is experiencing. Mental health professionals both diagnose and treat depression. Antidepressant medications are the most commonly used treatment. If the patient is experiencing severe anxiety, the provider may also prescribe an anti-anxiety medication. Some patients who suffer from depression also experience disturbances in their thoughts. They may hear voices or see things others do not hear or see. They may also feel paranoid and begin to have thoughts that are not reality based (delusions). This will likely require treatment with antipsychotic medications.

Psychotherapy or counseling, sometimes called “talk therapy,” is another frequently used treatment for depression. In fact, most research shows that the best outcomes result from a combination of medication and some form of “talk therapy.”

According to the National Institute of Mental Health website, at any given time approximately 19 million adults in the U.S. have a depressive disorder. That's almost 10% of the adult population! Nearly twice as many women as men suffer from depression. For various reasons, only a fraction of these individuals seek treatment. Older adults experience depression as well. Late life depression plagues six million individuals age 65 and older, but only 10% ever receive treatment.

The statistics for children and teens are even worse. According to the National Mental Health Association website, up to one in 33 children and one in eight teens may suffer from depression, but 70% of children do not receive services. Teenage girls are more likely to develop depression than teen boys. Children or teens who have a chronic illness, who have experienced abuse or neglect, or who have experienced other trauma are at increased risk of developing depression. One episode of depression increases the likelihood of recurrence within five years.

Depression is often complicated by the co-occurrence of substance abuse. This happens in about 15% of adults with



a mental illness. The children of substance addicted parents are up to four times more likely than other children to become mentally ill or substance addicted. As many as 20% of youth in juvenile correctional facilities have a serious emotional disturbance and 30% have a substance abuse disorder.

People of color are more likely to be inadequately treated for depression for many reasons including cultural barriers, mistrust of healthcare providers, co-occurrence of substance use and lack of finances.

Untreated or inadequately treated depressed individuals sometimes lose all hope and resort to suicide as a way to escape their symptoms. Suicide is the 11th leading cause of death in the U.S. It's the 3rd leading cause of death among 15-24 year olds and the 6th leading cause of death for 5-14 year olds. The elderly are more likely to commit suicide than any other age group. Individuals age 65 and older constitute 13% of the population but account for 20% of suicides. More than 90% of people who kill themselves have a diagnosable mental disorder, commonly depression and/or substance use. Four times

as many men as women die by suicide, but women attempt suicide two to three times more often than men. There are an estimated 8-25 attempted suicides to one completion. These numbers are higher in women and lower in men and the elderly.

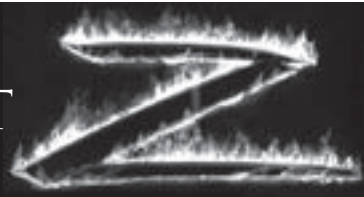
Treatment resources depend on funding. A depressed individual who has insurance should first check with the carrier (whose phone number will be on the insurance card) to determine if he or she has mental health benefits (it's possible to have insurance and NOT have mental health benefits). If so, the insurance carrier can direct the individual to an “in network” provider. That's a provider who is contracted with that particular insurance. If no one on the list is taking new patients or if the wait is too long the insurance carrier should take responsibility for speeding things up or approving the use of an out of network provider. It is the responsibility of the patient or someone advocating for them to make the carrier aware of the problem.

The Yellow Pages has a purple section called the M.D. Specialty Guide which lists psychiatrists. A psychiatrist is an M.D. who diagnoses and treats (with medication and sometimes with talk therapy) mental illnesses. The Yellow Pages also has a listing for psychologists, who are PhD's who provide counseling as well as psychological testing and a number of other services. There is also a listing for Psychotherapists, who may be PhD or Masters prepared and may be psychologists, social workers or nurses with advanced training or people with specific counseling credentials. All of these mental health providers are state licensed and will have their credentials prominently displayed. Other individuals with the same or similar qualifications may be listed under the heading Counseling Services. Many of the listed agencies provide services on a sliding scale basis. Some employers offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which provides 8-12 counseling sessions per year free of charge to employees and their families.

People without insurance may access care through the

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"THE LEGEND OF ZORRO," OR, LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HISTORICAL AMNESIA



By Alicia Gaspar de Alba in Los Angeles

A few months have passed since I saw "The Legend of Zorro," so I'm not so hot under the collar anymore about the latest example of Mexican misrepresentation that Hollywood wants to pass off as entertainment. But since this month we are celebrating the 158th anniversary of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, and since the film is set in 1850, just two years after the Treaty, and references specific issues brought forth in that document which gave legal birth to Mexican-American identity, it seems necessary to share some of my randomly critical thoughts about the movie. Keep in mind that this is not a review, *per se*, but a commentary on historical inversion, that endearing colonizing tendency to rewrite or recast history to the colonizer's benefit. "It took one year [after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848]," writes Rosa Linda Fregoso in *MeXicana Encounters* (2003), "for Anglo immigrants to reinvent themselves as 'native' by recasting the inhabitants of the former Mexican territory as 'foreign'..." (127).

For over a century, the colonialist discourse of Hollywood has employed two strategies - stereotypes and repetition - by which to erase the 19th-century history of the Anglo conquest of northern Mexico and simultaneously reinforce the historical inversion of the "native" white man and the "foreign" Mexican. By repeatedly portraying Mexicans as "illegals" or immigrants and Anglos as citizens of the landbase that we now know as the American Southwest and by deploying racist stereotypes of Mexicans as bandits, degenerates, and savages that the white man has had to defeat in defense of his community and freedom in film after film since the silent film era, the image of the "evil Mexican" and the "heroic American" have become forever etched into the popular imagination.

At first, "The Legend of Zorro" inverts our expectations of the typical Hollywood formula. Not only do we have a bilingual Hispanic hero working in the service of his Mexican Catholic community (albeit in the process of becoming a fully American state), but also a European villain (French, to be precise) plotting against the nascent nationalism of California with the help of a secret society and the explosive potential of imported soap. That is, until we realize that the ideological context of the film is the Monroe Doctrine (Europe must keep out of American affairs and never again establish another European colony in the New World) and the American Dream. In that context, the colonizing European would have to be the villain and the hero

would have to be the pro-assimilation, English-Only, about-to-be-Americanized conquered Mexican. Very tricky, but the formula prevails.

"The Legend of Zorro" opens in 1850 with the town of San Mateo in wine-country California in an uproar about the polls. The townspeople appear to be predominantly Mexican (working-class Mexican, to be exact), and they're all very excited about the fact that California may be on the verge of statehood—and freedom from slavery and oppression—if enough votes are collected in favor of the Constitution. Little voting booths are shown from an aerial perspective and a close-up of the ballot reveals two choices: *For the Constitution* and *Against the Constitution*, in two languages. Already, in the first two minutes of the movie the filmmakers have insulted my intelligence. Bilingual ballots in 1850 California? Mexicans being allowed to vote in the territory of California? Yeah, right. According to the modified, ratified version of Article IX of

the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (see sidebar) the Mexicans who chose to remain in the conquered territories would be given citizenship when those territories became incorporated into the Union, that is, when Congress admitted them into the United States. California became the 31st state on September 9, 1850; prior to that date, the Mexican inhabitants of California were not considered citizens of the United States, and so could not exercise their right to vote; therefore, California was not voted into statehood by its working-class Mexican inhabitants, as the film would have us believe.

But wait, I tell myself. Maybe, the screenwriters were looking at an older version of the Treaty; maybe they found the original wording for Article IX, which stipulated that Mexicans who remained in the conquered territories were to be incorporated as citizens of the United States immediately, able to exercise the same civil and political rights they enjoyed under the Mexican flag. That would be a logical explanation. "The Legend of Zorro" is portraying precisely the situation articulated in that original version of Article IX. Which must explain why all the Mexicans in the film are in such high spirits about their imminent Americanization only two years after losing their land, their culture, and their Mexican identity. They're happy because the same rights they had as Mexican citizens have been respected, because their legal citizenship in their new country has never been questioned, and because it is understood by all that not only do they have a right to vote in any election, they

also have a right to vote in either English or Spanish.

Who the hell are they kidding?

A lot of people, actually. I bet they're banking on the fact that the young mainstream audience to whom this film is targeted doesn't know a thing about the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (and sadly, that includes Chicanos/as). If Americans know anything at all about the U.S.-Mexico War it's the cliché of "Remember the Alamo," which took place ten years before the war, and became emblematic of American heroism and Mexican treachery. The U.S.-Mexico War (1846-1848) was provoked by a border dispute created by the United States, and resulted in Mexico being occupied by American troops and losing over 50% of its northern landbase to the Anglo conquerors. It was the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that gave Uncle Sam the territories of Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, California and even parts of Wyoming. And it was the same Treaty that provided a loophole for denying the Mexicans who stayed in the conquered territories their citizenship rights until "the proper time" came for them to be admitted into the Union. Until such time, they would be "maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property," (meaning they could not be enslaved) and, according to Article VIII, their rights to their property would be "inviolably respected."

Here's some more historical trivia, relevant to "The Legend of Zorro," that mainstream moviegoers, and perhaps some readers of *La Voz don't know*. A year after California became a state, and only three years after the signing of the Treaty, California passed the Land Law of 1851, which required Mexicans to prove ownership of their land. What the newly minted Mexican American second-class citizens of the state quickly discovered was that, in fact, their rights to their land were not "inviolably respected," as Anglo squatters, believing in their right of conquest, refused to pay rent until the deeds and the land grants were validated. When matters were taken to court, the new Mexican Americans discovered that the judicial system was conducted in English and that their documents—if they even had documents to prove their claim to the land, and most didn't, for the land had been passed down in their family since the Spanish colonial days, three centuries earlier—their documents were not valid if they were not written in English. Yet others whose claims to the land preceded even the colonial period and whose ancestors had used and tended the land for several centuries prior to Spaniard encroachment, found themselves in the same boat. No documents, no land; documents not written in English were as good as nonexistent. Of course, English-speaking lawyers could be hired to advocate for the Mexican Americans, but either the lawyers charged outrageous fees, sometimes taking as their cut some of the very land they were supposed to be defending, or, they were rewarded by the judicial system for keeping a case tied up in court while the squatters and the settlers dug in their roots.

When the ugly American in the film (he's ugly because he's allied himself with California's French nemesis) wants to usurp that Mexican family's homestead, they're actually fighting over documents that wouldn't have held any weight in the Mexican's favor to begin with. But at least, it's the only part of the movie that references the Anglo conquest. Abraham Lincoln makes a cameo appearance at the movie's end (to hammer home the idea of emancipation, no doubt) when the governor of California announces to the people of San Mateo that they are now free citizens of the United States. Viva voting booths!

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

Pertinent Excerpts (signed February 2, 1848;
amended by the U.S.; ratified by Congress, July 4, 1848)*

ARTICLE VIII

In the said territories, property of every kind, now belonging to Mexicans not established there, shall be inviolably respected. The present owners, the heirs of these, and all Mexicans who may hereafter acquire said property by contract, shall enjoy with respect to it guarantees equally ample as if the same belonged to citizens of the United States.

ARTICLE IX (the modified version)

The Mexicans who, in the territories aforesaid, shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican Republic, conformably with what is stipulated in the preceding article, shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States, and be admitted at the proper time (to be judged of by the Congress of the United States) to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States, according to the principles of the Constitution; and in the mean time, shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, and secured in the free exercise of their religion without restriction.

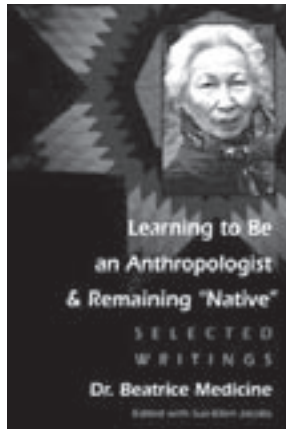
ARTICLE IX (the original version)

The Mexicans, who, in the territories aforesaid, shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican Republic, conformably with what is stipulated in the preceding Article, shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States, and admitted as soon as possible, according to the principles of the Federal Constitution, to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States. In the mean time, they shall be maintained and protected in the enjoyment of their liberty, their property, and the civil rights now vested in them according to the Mexican laws. With respect to political rights, their condition shall be on an equality with that of the inhabitants of the other territories of the United States; and at least equally good as that of the inhabitants of Louisiana and the Floridas, when these provinces, by transfer from the French Republic and the Crown of Spain, became territories of the United States.

*Check treaty website: <http://www.mchsmuseum.com/treaty.html>

Between the mainstream educational system in the U.S. and the Hollywood industry, who needs French-milled glycerin to explode the lies in which we continue to be immersed? History has always been a matter of whose story is being told, and in the "Legend of Zorro," it's not Zorro's story we're learning, but the story of how even Zorro—masked champion of the poor brown people of California—has an American agenda: life, liberty, and the pursuit of historical amnesia. In late twentieth century Mexico, the black mask has become symbolic of the indigenous people's resistance to the economic and racial colonization of another Anglo conquest, NAFTA. Another Mexican popular hero whose name was apostrophized by a Z became the galvanizing force for the movement. All we need now is a Hollywood movie to invert that history and show the Zapatistas as nothing more than disenfranchised entrepreneurs. Who knows, maybe Marcos' new name will be Delegate Zorro rather than Delegate Zero.

Bio: Alicia Gaspar de Alba is currently teaching Chicana Lesbian Literature and Bilingual Creative Writing at UCLA. There are rumors that she is going to write a new novel in the month of February.



Beatrice Medicine 1923-2005

Beatrice Medicine of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of South Dakota, died December 19, 2005. She was 82. A noted author, scholar and advocate for Native rights, she taught at colleges and universities throughout the U.S. and Canada. She wrote two books about Native American women published by University of Illinois Press. Her native name was Hinsha Waste

Agli Win, which translates to Returns Victorious With A Red Horse Woman. She was born at Wakpala on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation and grew up there.

She was an advocate for the rights of children, women, ethnic minorities-especially American Indians- and gay, lesbian and two-spirited people and served as head of the Women's Branch of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples for the Canadian government, helping draft legislation to protect the legal rights of native families. She served as an expert witness in several trials pertaining to the rights of American Indians, including the 1974 federal case brought against the individuals involved in the Wounded Knee occupation of 1973. She received numerous awards but was perhaps more proud of having been the Sacred Pipe Woman at the Sun Dance at Sitting Bull's Camp in 1977. Donations can be made in her name to the American Indian College Fund, 8333 Greenwood Boulevard, Denver CO 80221.

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Center for Health Care Services (CHCS), which is the mental health authority for Bexar County. The telephone number for securing an appointment is 358-5888. The intake office is located at 1115 W. Martin in the West Annex building at the University Health Center downtown. CHCS treats Bexar County residents only. Residents of other counties should seek out their county's Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MHMR) facility. Bexar County residents without funding are required to apply for assistance through the county's Carelink program. This requires ID, proof of county residence and proof of income or lack of income. The telephone number for Carelink is 358-3350. Application for Carelink should be made at CHCS at the time of intake.

Depressed individuals sometimes find themselves in crisis at times other than "regular hours." The CHCS Crisis Unit is open 24/7 and is at 527 N. Leona at the University Health Center Downtown. Their phone number is 223-7233.

Although lack of funding is a serious and major barrier to accessing treatment for many depressed individuals, another factor that keeps afflicted individuals from seeking treatment is plain old fashioned denial. That's where the patient's friends, family and loved ones come in.

If you know someone who is suffering from depression, don't wait. Especially if the person is talking about death or suicide, speak up. Acknowledging that your friend seems depressed may be all it takes, but if it's not enough, don't give up! Calling 911 and accessing an ambulance or the police may be an option in life threatening situations. Above all, keep at it. Don't give up. You may save a life.

Bio: Judy Lerma is a registered nurse and longtime community activist. She is also one of many buena gente involved with the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center.

St. Mary's University presents:

Sylvia Méndez, plaintiff in the 1946 landmark case Méndez v. Westminster



Tuesday, February 21, 2006
Méndez v. Westminster:
Para los Niños
Documentary Film:
11:10 am-12:20 pm
@ St.Mary's University Center,
Conference Room A
-a panel presentation follows-

The story of the suit that the Mendez family and other Mexican Americans filed, and won, against the Westminster School District in Orange County, California. It ended segregated schools for Mexican American children in Califas. The case was decided 7 years before Brown v. The Board of Education, and argued on Appeal by Thurgood Marshall of the NAACP, among many others.



Taller Popular on
MESTIZAJE
Revealing Retratos



A workshop with author,
John Phillip Santos and Dr. Arturo Madrid
February 25, 2006 9-4 pm
Trinity University
contact: amadrid@trinity.edu



Safo, The Dissertation Dog January 1994 - January 4, 2006

My 12-year-old dog, Safo, a black Lab and Doberman mestiza de "puro corazón," was put to sleep yesterday after having developed congestive heart failure and a tumor on her liver. I've always called her my "dissertation dog" because she came to me on the day that I mailed off my finished dissertation. She loved rocks. The way some people chew tobacco, Safo chewed rocks. So much so, she ground her teeth down to nubs, and every time I cleaned out her doghouse, I'd find handfuls of little rocks buried under the mat. Thank you, Ms. D, for doing everything you did to keep her going. I know it was hard for you. And thanks to Ellie, too, for taking care of her once I was out of the picture. Sleep well, my Safo. My sweet, sad-eyed, big-hearted dissertation dog. Thank you for sharing your gentle spirit with all of us for 12 years. We are all going to miss you. Your ashes will stay with me por siempre.

- Alicia Gaspar de Alba



Ninfa's Story: Buscando el Amor

by Ninfa Ruiz

Editor's note: In this Valentine story Ninfa shares her experiences of a search for love in hopes that young women recognize that sometimes one has to sort through the caterpillars to get to the butterfly.

When I was eighteen and Catarina, my sister, was sixteen, my father and Lydia, my father's companion, took us to a small dance on Somerset Rd. There I met Abel. Soon after, Abel was coming to visit me at home. Abel was short and slim, with a thick mustache and smooth hands. He played the guitar and would sing the music of Gerardo Reyes to me. We would go out to the movies. He told me he loved me and wanted me to come with him to Mexico to marry me there. I would say, "If you love me why can't you marry me here?"

He would answer that his family was in Mexico, that he wanted his abuelos at the wedding. But, I had a suspicion that he just wanted to get me to a place where I would be dependent on him and vulnerable. I don't think that I even loved him, but I would have married him because that was my dream. I wanted to have someone to love and marry and live with happily ever after. When he realized that I was not going anywhere with him unless he married me right here in the states, I saw less and less of him until he completely stopped coming by altogether.

One day that same year, I went walking to the store nearby to get bread. On the way back a car stopped, and a man offered me a ride. Being somewhat of a risk taker, I accepted. This man's name was Joe. Joe was a little taller than me and wore baggy pants. He kept his hair in a flat top. He told me he was 28, divorced, working and going to St. Phillips. I liked him. He took me dancing, to the movies, to parks. I remember one Sunday that he took me to Mass and to eat. Then, to see St. Phillips and to the Zoo. I had such a delightful time. He would come over, bringing snacks and flowers for me. Joe introduced Catarina and me to chips and dips. We had never before seen or eaten dips or imagined that we could cover crisp chips with tangy and salty sour cream and onion dips. We were so impressed!

Once, when he was going to St. Phillips to register for classes, Joe invited me to go. The lady behind the counter asked to see his driver's license. When he placed it on the desk, I noticed right away that he had lied about his age. Joe was not 28; he was 32! I confronted him about his lie, and we had a big argument on the way home. But, we didn't stop seeing each other. I told myself, "So, he is 32. He's still fun to be with"

Once, he asked me if I would marry him. I said, "Yes!" He said, "I knew you would say that because you're lonely and want some form of security but not because you love me." Then, he said, "Someday you will find somebody and marry for love."

I didn't love him but could have fallen in love with him. He was fun to be with. He was older and knew more about the world. Now that I think of it, he looked older with wrinkles around his eyes. I would have married him just to fulfill my dream of having somebody belonging to me. I don't remember how long our dating lasted, but it ended one Friday night when Joe showed up at my house drunk. Our father was out with Lydia. Catarina and I had spent the evening playing cards. Joe worked late on Fridays, so I hadn't expected to see him. At midnight, he showed up drunk at our house, demanding to talk to me. I told

him to meet me in the backyard. It was February and cool in the evenings, but still so comfortable that I didn't need a jacket. When I got outside, Joe started grabbing me and telling me he could not believe that I was waiting for marriage, that I was only pretending to be a virgin. "Mentirosa!" he yelled.

He told me he could not believe that my father lived with Catarina and me since he was never home, and he could not believe that I didn't have a mother. He acted as if I was the one who had started out the relationship by lying. He told me that he was already tired of waiting. I got angry and told him I didn't care whether he believed me or not: I intended to get married first. I told him I never wanted to see him again. I don't know if Joe ever stopped by or called to say he was sorry because we moved to my sister Juanita's house who had become a widow.

A young soldier began coming to Dan's Restaurant where I worked. His skin was not too dark and he had big, dark brown eyes and a mustache. He always wore a cap. Once, when I missed my bus he offered me a ride home, which I accepted. Based on a few rides home, some strolls where we held hands, and a few kisses over a period of three weeks, John told me he loved me and that he wanted to marry me. He was going overseas to Vietnam but asked me to please wait for him. I desperately needed somebody to love me, somebody that cared for me, somebody that would marry me. Like a fool, I believed him.

Our romance consisted of letters he wrote telling me how much he loved me and how he couldn't wait to get home. For about two months, I received letters almost every other week. John never mentioned what was happening over there. He said he lived waiting to get my letters. My letters told him I loved him and that I would wait for him and what was going on at the restaurant. Then, I stopped receiving letters. I didn't want to think he had died, so I wrote two or three more letters hoping that he was all right. It seems that he had been shipped somewhere else so my letters were forwarded to his San Antonio address. One afternoon, a car stopped in front of Juanita's and a woman carrying a baby rang the doorbell. Juanita and I walked together to the door and opened it. The woman demanded angrily, "Let me speak to Ninfa!"

She was about my height and had long black, uncombed hair. Beyond her I could see three more children sitting in the car. I told her I was Ninfa. She showed me the letters I had been sending and said John was her husband and the father of her baby, and that she wanted me to leave him alone. At first I was speechless, and then I told her how I didn't know he was married, that our relationship had only involved letter writing. For several weeks, I felt embarrassed that I had even been considered the other woman. My sisters must have recognized how embarrassed I was because neither one said anything about it either.

I so wanted to marry and live happily ever after, that once again, I had trusted someone and gotten hurt. All three of these experiences made me felt like I was never going to find the right man. If I could not find somebody to love me, marry me, how was I going to be able to fulfill my need of having my own happy family?

David was handsome with dark, curly hair. He was not

much taller than me and not too slight. He worked at a restaurant called El Rancho and never made much money. The romance started slowly, going to movies and the zoo. As soon as Nancy, my sister, Juanita's, stepdaughter, found out about the romance, she began to tell me what a good husband David would make. She was constantly encouraging both of us. Today I feel that if they would have left us alone to decide for ourselves it might not have gone as it went. One day Nancy brought him over, and she asked my father for my hand in marriage because David didn't have anybody to speak on his behalf. She presented a ring, which I immediately put on. We set the date for December.

I didn't love him, but at least he wanted to marry me. I had an engagement ring to prove it. Juanita kept telling me not to marry him because if I did she was never going to get Nancy out of her life. Of course, the more she told me not to marry him the more determined I became, even though I didn't love him.

This is how it ended – one day at the movies, we argued. I wanted to sit up close to the screen, and he wanted to sit further back. So we each sat where we wanted, and I walked home alone afterwards. A whole week passed, and he didn't call me or stop by my house. One day when I was home alone, I called him and told him I wanted to talk to him about where our relationship was going. Were we still engaged? I wanted to say that if he hadn't bothered to see me over some disagreement, then obviously our engagement wasn't that strong. I wanted to know whether he was planning to marry me because he wanted to or if someone was telling him to do so.

The actual conversation didn't take that long. When he walked in, I could see his neck and saw that it had red love spots all over. I told him that our engagement was over, took off the ring, and threw it at him. He told me that he was a man that kept his word. He said, "Keep the ring until Saturday when I can come talk to your father so he knows you're breaking the engagement and not me."

I told him to leave at once and that he didn't have to tell my father anything because I would. That evening I told everyone the engagement was off. Juanita was happy! She said she had suspected Nancy's meddling. Was she just trying to keep in touch with Juanita, through me?

My plans and hopes had come to nothing. My prospects were bleak. Abel, Joe, John, David – I had hoped to walk to the altar four times, and each time some disaster had kept me back. I was still hoping, though growing more hopeless. Needless to say, I did not feel good about dating.

Robert was a regular at Rene's Café, where I was then working. He was taller than me and güerito with thick locks and curly hair. He was of medium build and dressed nicely. Robert was also very aggressive. We began talking when I waited on him. He told me that he worked selling records, and to prove it, he started bringing me all kinds of music. We began to date. He took me to the movies and we would double date for dances with his sister and her husband. Sometimes, we double-dated with Catarina and her boyfriend Frank, who was a nephew of Dan's, my sister's deceased husband. By this time, Catarina, who was seventeen, was preparing to wed Frank with a big Catholic Church wedding. She had known Frank for four years, since she started working at Dan's restaurant on weekends. They planned to marry on November 20, 1971.

When Catarina asked me to be a bridesmaid in her wedding I refused because I didn't have an escort. So, she told Robert, who came to me and said that he wanted to be my escort.

I turned him down, I believe, because he had an aggressive personality like me. I used to wear gold rings on all my fingers and he wanted me to take them off. He would say it looked tacky and that respectable women only wore their wedding and engagement rings. During that period, we helped Catarina with her plans for the wedding. We made decorations. When Robert was with us, he would always refuse to help. "Why should I help?" he asked. "There's nothing in it for me!"

My father to solve the problem said, "I have a friend at work that will be your escort, mi'ja. Tomás owes me a favor. I'll invite him over on Sunday, so you can meet each other and make arrangements for Catarina's wedding."

When Tomás came over, I liked him right away. He was taller and older than me. He was twenty-six years old and was nice and polite, always referring to me as *usted*.

I would do all the talking and use bad words. *Pinche, pendejo, cabron*; I thought of them as everyday words. Tomás would always remain very quiet. He never corrected my speech. He was to be my escort. To get to know each other, we went out on dates to the movies. My father was always saying good things about Tomás and that they were friends. He would always be telling me what a hard worker he was. Even though I enjoyed Tomás's company, I still took it slow. I was distrustful and scared to let myself fall in love since I had never fallen in love before. Also, I was still going on dates with Robert.

One Saturday, I had a date planned with Robert but Tomás called to see if I wanted to go to the dance. I said, "If you come right away, I will go. If not, I can't." He came right away, and when Robert came to pick me up, I was not home.

Catarina and Juanita, my sisters, asked me about my feelings for Tomás, and I said, "He's going to be my escort, and after that, if I never see him again that's all right because I don't care for him."

One night Tomás said, "I love you, Ninfa." I replied, "I love you, too." I knew I did love him, some and I thought that maybe I could love him more. Mostly, though, I was saying those words like other times.

One very cool October evening Tomás and I had just stepped off the bus at the corner of De Soto and Thompson, one block from Juanita's house when he put his arm around me as we walked towards Juanita's house. We said words to the effect that we were going to belong to each other. I told myself that these were just words, and they didn't mean anything. After all, how many times had I been told I was loved? How many times had I said as much only to have it not be true?

By this time in my life I had developed a reputation as being mean, not taking crap from anybody, and only doing what I wanted to do. With all my failed romances, it was hard for me to trust anyone. I had developed a cold heart, cussing, letting no one control me. All of these things I used as a shield to protect myself from being hurt deeply. Even though I was hurting with loneliness and feeling that nobody could understand how much I was suffering, I was too proud and scared to openly admit it or let others see me cry.

On October 31, 1971, Tomás' father dropped him off at my house in the afternoon, and we rode the bus downtown to see a movie at the Alameda. We had a wonderful time. Tomás was so attentive to me. He was loving, yet respectful. As we got



off the bus, Tomás declared his love for me. He said he wanted to spend his life with me. He told me that he knew we belonged together. By this time, I had known Tomás for three weeks. Inside, I felt I couldn't trust him or plan a future with him. How many times had I been disappointed by this kind of trust? I hadn't yet learned to speak my mind about such things, so I told him what I assumed he hoped to hear—that I felt the same for him. Inside, I told myself I didn't have to believe it.

Tomás' father was supposed to pick him up later at our house. We waited from 7 pm to midnight, but he never came. Everybody in my house was asleep. Tomás said it was too late for him to enter my house, so he slept in my father's car. I went to get a blanket and pillow for him, then said goodnight and went inside. In the morning, I woke early and rushed to put some clothes on so that I could go out there and see him. I could hear Tomás and my father talking outside. My father's car had a flat tire, and Tomás had already fixed it, so that they could get to work on time. By the time I stepped outside, they had already driven away. That evening when my father came home from work, he told me that an INS officer had come by work and picked up Tomás because he was a Mexican citizen.

None of us knew Tomás was from Mexico. My heart felt funny. It seized up, and for the first time in my young adult life, I began to cry. I had never before cried, not for Abel, Joe, John, David, or Robert; not even for my mother's departure. I realized I had fallen in love and to make the situation worse, he was in Mexico, and I was here alone. It was November 1, 1971, nineteen days away from Catarina's wedding, and again I didn't have an escort.

Robert came into Rene's Café that day, and I waited on him. When he asked me, "How's it coming with Catarina's wedding?" I told him it was fine and went to the kitchen to get him some coffee. When I came back and put his coffee down, he said, "You don't have an escort." I said nothing. He continued, "I asked you once and you said no. If you need one now, I'm willing to reconsider."

I guessed that he had already talked to Catarina. A loyal friend, despite my disloyalty, he offered to be my escort, and I had to accept. I told myself that the wedding could not have one less bridesmaid. Everything was planned. My bridesmaid's gown, a long green dress with gold trim, was already made. Catarina expected me to be there for her.

The ceremony was held at St. James on Theo Avenue. My father gave her away. Afterwards, there was a dinner with cake and also a dance. From what I remember, I had an awful time. I moved through each event weighed down by sadness. From having my hair done, to dressing, to participating in the wedding I felt only Tomás' absence. I was there out of duty.

Robert insisted I remove my rings. Every time Robert and I danced, I was reminded of Tomás because I liked to dance with Tomás. With Robert, I always felt like I wasn't doing something right. With Tomás, I just felt comfortable and found it easy to enjoy myself and have a good time. I liked the feel of Tomás' arms around me during slow songs.

I didn't hear anything from Tomás until he wrote me a letter telling me how much he loved me and how he regretted not being able to be my escort. If I felt the same about him, he would make every effort to come back. I wrote him and told him that I loved him and that my feelings for him had not changed,

although in reality they had. Unlike the first time, this time I spoke my love and this time I was absolutely sure. Now I was desperate to save our relationship.

One cold December morning, the phone rang. It was Tomás calling to tell me he was back in San Antonio. I was the happiest I had been in my twenty years. We were very much in love, and yet I didn't think that we were going to get married soon. I mentioned that maybe the coming year, but he said that it might be harder next year to become a legal resident because laws were always changing. He asked why, if I loved him, could we not get married before the year was out.

I loved him very much and saw the chance to fulfill my dreams. I would never be lonely. I would be happy as a wife and, hopefully, a mother. He was a hard-working man, so I knew I could trust him to help support me. We were compatible, too. He was quiet, whereas I was always talking. Somehow, even though I was sure we were in love, I didn't know if I could trust him completely. I would keep asking, "Are you sure that you are not already married?" And he would say, "No."

Finally, I agreed. His father came to Juanita's house and asked my father for my hand in marriage. My father had always liked Tomás, but when he found out he was from Mexico, he didn't like him anymore. He said, "I would prefer you didn't marry Tomás, but I know that you will anyway. You do not have my blessing, but I can't stop you."

Afterwards, when Tomás and I were in Juanita's backyard, Tomás said, "Maybe you should listen to your father." I replied, "Why, are you married?" Again he said, "No. I am not married."

Within three weeks of his return, we were married at Juanita's house. The date was Friday, December 24, Christmas Eve. I had told him that I knew he couldn't afford a lot. I wanted only simple wedding rings, which we bought at Shaw's.

The judge arrived at 4 pm. My father attended, as did my mother and my sisters and brother. Tomás' father came, too. Juanita and her old boyfriend Chale were witnesses. Afterwards, we had a big celebration. Since it was Christmas time, we had plenty of tamales, rice, beans, chips, soda, beer and cake.

We took lots of pictures of us getting married, cutting the cake, drinking champagne and dancing to music on the stereo. Looking back, I realize how lonely and scared I felt. In almost all of the photos, I am holding on to Tomás as if I fear he will let go. Everything happened so fast: getting the marriage license, taking blood tests, and renting an apartment one block from Juanita's. I had managed to save five hundred dollars of my tip money. I hoped this would help us through our first year.

When I was getting ready to marry, I chose a simple peach dress, but Juanita said no. She said that I should wear white because if I didn't, people would think badly about me. So, I spent one hundred dollars on a white dress that I did not want. I did it to please other people. Since that time, I don't do anything just to please other people. I do what I think is best for me and my family, and I don't care what other people think as long as I feel that what I do is best for me.

Looking at the pictures, I think that I would be just as happy to see a peach dress.

(Editor's note: But, Tomás has a secret to reveal...) *Bio: Ninfa Ruiz works in food service management for the South San Antonio I.S.D. and has written her memoirs to share her experiences with other women. Ninfa and Tomás have been married 34 years and now have a grown son and daughter. Tomás retired after 29 years of service to City Public Service. More stories in future issues of Voz.*

community meetings

Amnesty International #127 meets on fourth Thursdays at 7:30 pm at Ashbury United Methodist. Call 829-0397.

Bexar County Green Party meets first Sundays at 2 pm at Picante Grill, 3810 Broadway.

DIGNITY S.A. holds mass Sundays at 5:15 pm at St. Ann's. Call 735-7191.

Fuerza Unida is at 710 New Laredo Hwy. Call 927-2297.

Habitat for Humanity holds Volunteer Orientation on first Tuesdays at First Presbyterian Church, 404N. Alamo, Rm 302 at 6 pm.

Parents/Friends of Lesbians/Gays (PFLAG) meets the first Thursdays at 7pm at the Resource Center, 121 W. Woodlawn. Call 655-2383.

Proyecto Hospitalidad Liturgy meets on Thursdays at 7 pm at 325 Courtland. Call 736-3579.

The Rape Crisis Center is located at 7500 US Hwy 90 West, Building 2 in San Antonio. The hotline number is 210.349-7273. Call 210/521-7273 or Drominishi@rapecrisis.com

San Antonio NOW meets on fourth Wednesdays at La Madeline on Broadway at 6:30pm. Call: 210.673-8600 Mail: Box 34551, 78265-4551

The Shambhala Buddhist Meditation Center offers meditation instruction on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7pm and Sundays at 11:30 am. Practice is on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7pm and on Sundays from 9:30 am-12:30 pm at 1114 South St. Mary's. Call 222-9303.

The Society of Friends meets

on Sundays at 10 am at The Friends Meeting House, 7052 N. Vandiver. Call 945-8456.

The Society of Latino and Hispanic Writers of SA meets 2nd Mondays @ 7:00 pm at Barnes and Noble, San Pedro Crossing (north of Loop 410). Open to the public.

Solidarity: Peer Support for Mental Health Consumers, meets the first and third Saturdays at 10:30 am at the Travis Park United Methodist Church, Rm 210. Call 734-7527.

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

S.N.A.P. (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests) meets the last Wednesday of each month at 7 pm at 1443 S. St. Mary's. Call 725-8329.

Voice for Animals meets the last Saturday of each month in the meeting room of Whole Foods Market in the Quarry 3 - 5 p.m. Call 737-3138 or visit www.voiceforanimals.org

Texas Media Empowerment Project meets every 1st and 3rd Wednesday @ the Esperanza Center @ 6:30 pm. Contact: Deanne Cuellar deanne@tokyo.210.320.7561

The Metropolitan Community Church of San Antonio (MCCSA), 611 East Myrtle at North St Mary's has non-denominational, faith-based Christian services and Sunday School every Sunday at 10:30 AM. Bible Study Groups as well. Call: 599-9289.

The **ESPERANZA PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER** is part of **Another Way Texas Shares**

Sign-up to donate monthly to the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center directly from your paycheck at work through these AWTS participants:

In San Antonio:

(San Antonio Area)

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- San Antonio Combined Federal Campaign
- City of San Antonio Local Charitable Campaign
- Bexar County Employees Local Charitable Campaign
- San Antonio Combined School District Charitable Campaign
- San Antonio Water System Local Charitable Campaign

Outside of San Antonio:

- Central Texas Combined Federal Campaign (Austin area)
- City of Austin Combined Charities Campaign
- Travis County Combined Charities Campaign
- City of Houston Combined Municipal Campaign
- Houston ISD Combined Charities Campaign
- City of El Paso Combined Charitable Campaign
- County of El Paso Combined Charitable Campaign

And, all of Another Way Texas Share campaigns in the private sector.

ESPERANZA PEACE & JUSTICE CENTER*

*Call us at 210•228•0201

to sign up with our electronic direct deposit program. or to access employment site codes.

Submissions, deletions or changes to community meetings may be made through lavoz@esperanzacenter.org or mail to La Voz, 922 San Pedro, San Antonio, TX 78212

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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.

On Thursday, February 2nd at 7pm, Pulitzer prize-winning novelist **Edward P. Jones** gives a free public reading, sponsored by **Gemini Ink**, followed by an audience Q&A session at the **San Pedro Playhouse**, 800 W. Ashby. Free. A book signing follows. Contact 210.734.9673/877.734.9673 or www.geminiink.org

At the **Jump-Start Gallery** artist and journalist, **Xelena González**, shares photographic images and vignettes from the pyramids of Giza, the temples of Thailand, a street corner in Sydney to a San Antonio storefront. Opening reception for **Coming Home** is Friday, February 3rd from 6 pm to 8 pm. Call 227-JUMP.

Lorraine Hansberry's **A Raisin in the Sun** presented by **The Renaissance Guild** shows at the **Jump-Start Theater** February 10-26. Thursday -Saturdays performances are at 8 pm and Sundays, at 4 pm. Call 210/656-0349 or contact the renaissanceguild.org for reservations.

The American Society of Newspaper Editors is seeking high school teachers for an expenses paid, 2 week summer institute. The **ASNE Journalism Institute**, will take place at five universities, including the UT Austin. Application can be downloaded at <http://www.highschooljournalism.org> **Deadline: February 20, 2006.**

The Chicago Tribune Nelson Algren

Awards is accepting entries for short stories by U.S. writers. Submit up to 2 stories of 2,500-10,000 words. Email efigula@tribune.co for guidelines. No entry fee. **Deadline: February 28, 2006**

Project GATEWAY offers scholarships to eligible degreed professionals seeking a teacher certification in Bilingual Education or Mathematics through the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program at **Texas Woman's University**. Grant recipients will commit to teaching in the Dallas area for at least three years. Applications for Summer 2006 are due on **March 1st**. Check: <http://www.twu.edu/gateway> or call Lillian at 940/898-2217.

Can We Talk? Apeace and justice coalition of over 50 women's organizations in San Antonio schedule talks each year to commemorate Women's History Month. On Saturday, March 4th, **Judge Barbara Nellermore** will moderate a talk on **Women of Courage**. Networking begins at 9 am, breakfast at 9:30 am and the program at 10 am. Cost is \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door at the Bright Shawl, 819 Augusta Street. Vendor tables are available. Contact Sylvia at 210-219-5507 or canwetalknow@sbcglobal.net

Jump-Start Performance Co. and **El Mundo Baking Company** present **Latino Odyssey** a Chicano chronicle of the first Latino family in space. Consisting of three serial episodes, the

play is experimental in format. Episodes I and II will be presented on March 10-12 and Episodes II and III will be presented on March 17-19. Episodes I, II, and III will have a final presentation March 24-25. Fridays & Saturdays at 8 pm and Sundays at 4 pm. General admission is \$12/discount, \$9. Call 227-JUMP.

Women & Their Work is soliciting proposals for individual and curated group exhibitions for its **Gallery Artist Series** to begin in January, 2007. Works in all media will be accepted. Find requirements and application at www.womenandtheirwork.org **Deadline: March 10, 2006.**

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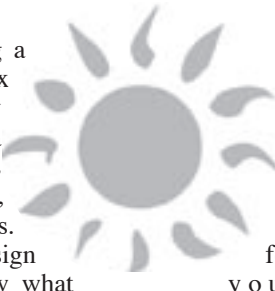
Dr. Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Associate Director of the Rockefeller Foundation's Creativity & Culture program retired in December of 2005 after a long and distinguished career in the field of arts and culture at the Foundation in New York City. Tomás, a native of San Antonio, has written and published extensively, focusing on Latin American and U.S./Latino cultural issues. His impact in the Chicano movement and the development of Chicano Art in the U.S. will always be a part of our history. Museums and cultural arts centers throughout the U.S. have become richer and more diverse places as a result of his work on behalf of people of color, women and the lesbian/gay community. Tomás retires with a long list of writings and awards. The Esperanza, in particular, wishes to express our deepest gratitude for all of his exemplary work.



Gracias, desde el corazón y goza de la vida. Enjoy!

Visiones de Justicia

This year we will be having a group of students from Fox Tech High School beautify the side wall of the Esperanza Center. Possibilities include painting a mural, and xeriscaping the grounds. To help in creating the design for the mural, we want to know what your eye sees when it envisions the Esperanza. Send ideas in text, drawing, or picture form to anel@grandecom.net or esperanza@esperanzacenter.org or drop by 922 San Pedro at the corner of Evergreen or call us at 228-0201. Also, if you have any links or resources, to artists, landscapers, contractors, etc. who are willing to lend a helping hand in giving the Esperanza entrance a fresh look, let us know. We will be accepting entries until the end of February.





Shirin Ebadi, 2003 Nobel Peace Prize Recipient "Islam, Human Rights, and Democracy."

Wednesday, February 1st @ 7:30 p.m. at Laurie Auditorium, Trinity University.

Contact 210.999.8201.

Free and open to the public.



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Call 210.228-0201 for times and schedule, TBA

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A literary reading
by local writers.

San Antonio Public Library
February 23, 2006 @ 6:00 pm

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with San Antonio organizations
including the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center.