

La Voz de Esperanza

SAN ANTONIO, TX · JUNE, 2007 · VOL. 20 ISSUE 5 ·



PRIDE MONTH ACTIVITIES JUNE 2007

• **¡Qué Queer! San Antonio! exhibit**
Opens: Thursday, June 14th
Reception @ 6 pm
@ Esperanza Peace & Justice Center

• **¡Gaytino! a solo performance with Dan Guerrero**
returns to the Esperanza Center:
Friday, June 15th @ 8 pm
Saturday, June 16th @ 8 pm
\$7 presale, \$10 at the door

• **Lalo Guerrero: The Original Chicano screening:**
Sunday, June 17th @ 3 pm
@ the Esperanza Center
Donations welcome!

And, in July, 2007...

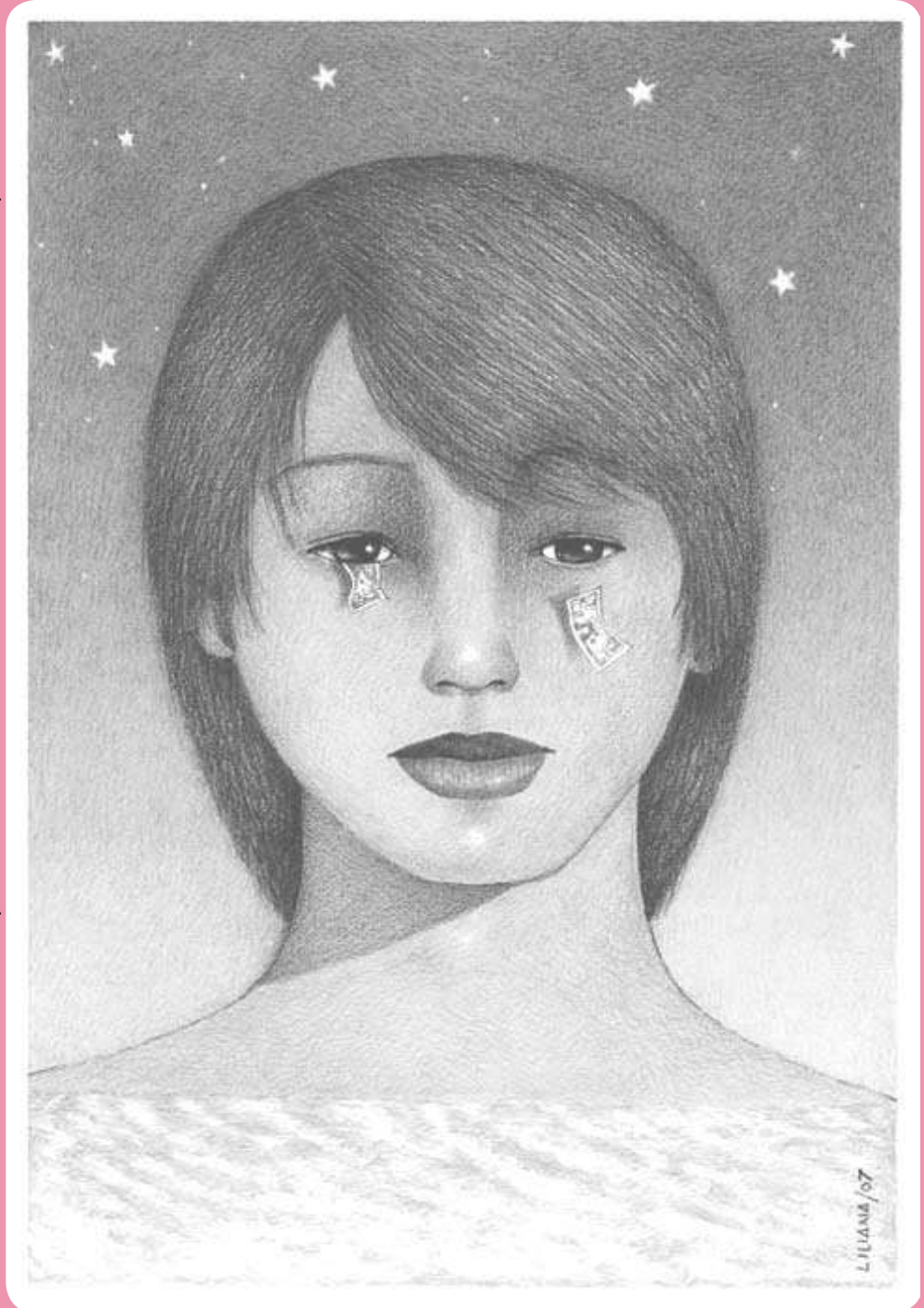
• **14th Cancer Party**
July 14, 2007
@ Common Ground, 150 W. Sunset

• **¡Qué Queer! San Antonio!**
Closing Reception: 6-8 pm
Friday, July 27th
@ Esperanza Peace & Justice Center
Exhibit ends: Friday, August 3rd

Coming in August, 2007!

Macondo in San Antonio
featuring Joy Harjo:
August 3rd
@ the Esperanza Center

Liliana Wilson,
A One Woman Art Exhibit
August 11th
@ the Esperanza Center



Muerte en la frontera by Liliana Wilson

La Voz de Esperanza

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

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Policy Statements:

We ask that articles be visionary, progressive, instructive, & thoughtful. Submissions must be literate & critical; not sexist, racist, homophobic, violent, or oppressive. Articles may be edited for length.

All letters in response to Esperanza activities or articles in La Voz will be considered for publication. Letters with intent to slander individuals or groups will not be published

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Esperanza Peace & Justice Center, Veinte Años 1987 - 2007 • 20 Years of Activism and Hope

In loving memory of Manuel Vela, February 8, 1925 to May 15, 2007

“Nuestra gente sufrió mucho”, he said when I showed him the 1940s photograph of Mexicanos standing in front of a shack of a home on the Westside of San Antonio. I was sharing my Mexican American history books with him so that he might understand my studies at the university.

Perhaps the suffering was one reason why it was difficult for my dad to talk about “en aquellos tiempos.” His story of growing sugarcane on his mother’s rancho, “the size of Rhode Island” in its heyday, is the only story I recorded. Now that he has passed, I wish that I had recorded more stories about his life.

That day, when dad finished looking at my books, he rose from the table where we were sitting and said, “I’m going inside. You finish your work.” He said it in a way that conveyed an understanding that what I was doing was very important.



Sugarcane

At Rancho San Jesus there were two crops of sugarcane every year, provided there was water for irrigation. When there was no water, there was no sugarcane. When Rio de San Javier flowed, my grandfather would fill the acequia, a canal used to store water to irrigate crops. The river flowed only sometimes, perhaps because the Mexican government controlled its flow.

The sugarcane was harvested by hired-hands who would cut it down with machetes. For those who liked it, the sugarcane could be chewed fresh to extract the sweet juices. To do this, the hard, outer-layer of the sugarcane was peeled with a knife so that it could be bit into and chewed. The fibrous core, called the gavaso, was then thrown out. Fresh sugarcane was also used as seed to grow more sugarcane.

The bulk of the sugarcane was processed using a mule-driven grinder that extracted the juice. The juice was boiled until thick and then transferred into barro, cone-shaped clay molds. The juice turned a dark brown when dry. This is what is called piloncillo or brown sugar. We also made a light brown sugar, but for the white sugar commonly used, the sugarcane must be refined further. I don’t know how that is done because we didn’t refine sugar at the rancho.

A reflection by Manuel Vela

Recorded and photographed by his daughter, Leticia Vela, on October 30, 2004

Editor’s note: Most sincere condolences from the Esperanza community to Leticia Vela, her mom, Lilia, who was married to Manuel for 59 years and the rest of the Vela family. Lety has been instrumental in bringing out the stories of the Westside in San Antonio since the publication of her article, *Los Courts*, which appeared in the July/August 2006 issue of *La Voz*.

ATTENTION VOZ READERS: If you have a correction you want to make on your mailing label please send it in to lavoz@esperanzacenter.org If you do not wish to continue on the mailing list for whatever reason please notify us as well. La Voz is provided as a courtesy to people on the mailing list of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center. **The subscription rate is now \$30 per year.** The cost of producing and mailing La Voz has substantially increased and we need your help to keep it afloat. To help, send in your subscriptions, sign up as a monthly donor, or send in a donation to the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center. Thank you. -GAR

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.

Esperanza Peace & Justice Center, Veinte Años 1987 - 2007 • 20 Years of Activism and Hope

LA DESPEDIDA-UTSA

by Maria Antonietta Berriozábal

Editor’s note: The following is a speech delivered by María Berriozábal at the University of Texas @ San Antonio downtown campus *Despedida* celebrating Chicano/Latino graduates of 2007 on May 12, 2007.

I am honored and grateful to be at my Alma Mater, UTSA celebrating your graduation in the remarkable way we do each year at *La Despedida*. In this way, we, as a UTSA community, and as a community at large throughout South Texas, provide a venue to celebrate not only the graduate but also the graduate’s familia, teachers and friends – all those who make this day possible. *La Despedida* is a way of celebrating the *cultura y comunidad* that feeds the soul of our graduates and is so responsible for their achievements.

De una manera muy sincera y especial quiero dar gracias a todos los familiares y amigas y amigos de los graduados que estan con nosotros esta noche. La Despedida los honra a Uds. tambien. Sin su apoyo este dia no fuera posible.

I thank the student leaders, faculty and administrators for continuing this unique tradition. And I thank you very much for making me a part of this UTSA event once again.

“The end of all education should surely be service to others.”
“The end of all knowledge should surely be service to others.”
“The end of all knowledge must be the building up of character.”

Knowledge. Service. Character. This is the manner in which César Chávez described his vision of education. This man who will go down in history as one of our great heroes was a man whose formal education had not been extensive. The values and knowledge that he used to change the lives of so many people for the better were based on his lived experience and wisdom. It was the suffering and needs of his community and the injustices, which he saw committed against workers that shaped his contribution to the world.

When we celebrate the life of César Chávez or other outstanding hombres y mujeres of our times – luminaries like Emma Tenayuca, or writer and educator Gloria Anzaldúa, or

Editorial

In this issue of La Voz we weave together graduations, an encuentro with Zapatistas and residents of colonia, Blanca Navidad, the complexities of a 25th anniversary court decision giving immigrant children the right to go to schools in the U. S. and the passing of a humble man, Juan Vela. To make the issue a bit more interesting, a look back at some queer history from 1987 is thrown in. What are the connections? What brings these seemingly disparate articles and communities together in La Voz de Esperanza?

The answer to these questions is multi-faceted but in my mind’s eye can be reduced to the desire to make this world a better one for our children and the generations of children to come. Juan Vela worked his entire life with the expectation of making a better life for his family, his children. Lety Vela, his daughter has recognized the value of her parents lives and has honored them by recovering stories of “aquellos tiempos.” Last summer in the July/August 2006 issue of La Voz she described her mother’s efforts to make a better life for her children living in the courts and then venturing out. In collecting stories of the Westside, we learned that gente who acquired small plots of land there would collect boards a little at a time until there were enough to build one wall of a home. People on the Westside struggled to survive much like what is described in the article on la colonia, Blanca Navidad.

Many of the families celebrating the graduation of a Latino/Chicano child, often the first graduate in the family from a college, have experienced what families in Blanca Navidad or the Westside experienced in growing up poor. At the core of seeking a better life is getting an education, whether institutional or simply as a result of being “bien educado,” knowing how to respect and treat each other with humanity. In reading about Plyler v. Doe one wonders what ethic our country has been built on when the question of whether all children have a right to go to schools here had to be established through the courts and is now being challenged, anew.

The Plyler article also brings up some interesting concepts to consider when talking about making this a better world for all. The concepts of “innocence” and “immutability” suggest that humanity is measurable and that only certain people are deserving of basic human rights including a home, basic services, education, etc. Thus, the articles become more and more connected as are the communities at the center of these articles, all exhibiting the desire to simply live and be respected fully for who we are. -GAR



María Antonietta Berriozabal with graduate, Dr. Lisa Cortez Walden

Martin Luther King, I wonder if there was a time when each of these leaders stopped to ask herself or himself: For what purpose am I going to spend my days? How am I going to use the gifts of my life – my intellect, my health, my energy – my Life?

In recent days I have thought MUCH of these things. For no matter what age we are as long as we have life there are options on how we use our time. Until the last minute of our lives we have the power to impact the lives of those around us. Of late, I have spent much time with people who are described as the old, old. People who have lived well into their 90’s. I am amazed and grateful at how even in the midst of illness and confusion that come from a very tired and frail body, the blessings and gifts that these individuals are able to impart to their family and those who visit or care for them are incredible. If people who are very ill or very old and vulnerable are still able to influence others simply by BEING, what does that say about the young with gifts of health, energy and time? The imparting of wisdom does not just belong to the old; it also belongs to the young. The world will never look the same as it does when one is young and this time must not be wasted. Graduation is a proper time to ask the

question: *How am I going to spend my days?* The emphasis here is on **HOW** I will live my life. One thing is what we choose to do another is **HOW** we do it. Graduates, how will you use this new time of your life?

The Class of 2007 whether of colleges and universities in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Europe or the United States are completing studies at a most critical time for all of humanity and for our planet. You graduates of UTSA join others throughout the world with challenges that long ago ceased to be local issues. Whether we are looking at business, science, or the humanities the complex problems of the world unite this Class of 2007 beyond borders:



2007 UTSA graduates: Elaine MicaElla Pérez, Fabiola Torralba, & Carla Gomez photos courtesy of Josie Mendez-Negrete

- Global **economies** today make it possible for a product to cross international borders efficiently, but this same economic and political system is not able to show the same respect and care for an individual who must also cross a border to follow a job.
- Vandana Shiva, Indian physicist and ecologist, and one of the great minds of today, writes: "An intolerance of diversity is the biggest threat to peace in our times; conversely, the cultivation of diversity is the most significant contribution to peace – peace with nature and between diverse peoples."

Yet, we see how taken to its broadest application; intolerance, lack of understanding and respect, and an abuse of power has our country engaged in a war like no other. Another President, John F. Kennedy, who inspired my generation to enter public engagement and service said the following in a speech before a graduating class in 1963: "*The United States, as the world knows, will never start a war. ...This generation of Americans has already had enough - more than enough - of war and hate and oppression. ...[But]We shall [also] do our part to build a world of peace where the weak are safe, and the strong are just.*"

And here 44 years later what kind of world peace do we enjoy? What is the role of our beloved country in this environment?

- Δ Here at home hate talk and hate crimes are on the increase.
- Δ And as we hear repeated often our generation of people living on this our Madre Tierra, Mother Earth, are the first to have the resources, technology and power to destroy what it took billions of years to evolve.
- Δ Speaking of challenges, within our own families and communities we see unfair distribution of resources and a continuing lack of opportunity particularly for the working class, poor and people of color. Our beloved San Antonio continues to grow in size and population yet our demographics do not reflect prosperity for all.
- Δ We have two cities existing side by side: one that enjoys progress and the other that is being left behind.

These are only a few problems of a whole litany that you know well. I cite these few today because it is my deep belief

that it is out of hearts and minds of men and women like those whom we honor today that solutions for these problems will come. I submit that the greatest strength that leaders like you will bring to our world is your lived experience of being people of the Borderlands – Las Fronteras - people who dwell in different worlds and walk easily from one to the other...that is what the world of today is. You are people who can be bridges that aid in communication and understanding on any of these difficult issues.

Bridges like César Chávez and Emma Tenayuca saw the pain and struggle of people around them and decided at a young age to use their voices to passionately advocate for those being abused by powerful economic structures. Gloria Anzaldúa's gifts of courage were her prolific writings from her personal experience of being a border walker. The academy never accepted her totally, yet, it is through the writings she left behind that generations to come will be educated and inspired on issues of race, gender, class and what it is to be called "different" and have to suffer for it. Martin Luther King's courage shone in his powerful oratory and his mastery in speaking truth to power and surfacing issues of civil rights that had long been silenced. His gift was opening the road of liberation not only for blacks but also for all disenfranchised people.

The common denominator in **HOW** they lived their lives was great courage, which was born out of a thirst for justice. I love the Spanish translation for the word Courage. It is Coraje which translated to English is Anger. This is what we need in our world today...a Holy Anger that does not hurt or hate. This is a Holy Anger for justice and for truth. It is a Holy Anger that begets compassion. It is a Holy Anger that says it is not right that so many people should suffer in this world. It is a Holy Anger that makes it possible to boldly state in the face of injustices and abuse: **It is wrong!** And only out of that spoken truth can change begin to happen.

So my wish for you graduates of today is that you find that Holy Anger in your hearts and use it as you travel your path in your chosen profession and your life. It will be an anger that will not hurt you. It will be an anger that will give you energy and life. It will be an anger that will not need its own rewards because the reward will be the knowledge that you are being true to yourself. It will be an anger that will accompany you like a friend when things are rough. It will be an anger that will be born out of love.

And my prayer today is that one day after a very long life you will know the incredible and deep satisfaction of simply saying: I served my fellow women and men. I did it joyfully and along the way I worked with others to create a vision of a world that is safe and free and I worked to make this vision a reality... and also along the way at least one other person's life was made fuller because I lived.

¡FELICITACIONES! CLASE DE DOS MIL SIETE, Y MUCHAS GRACIAS, QUE DIOS LOS BENDIGA.

Against Innocence: *Plyler v. Doe* at Twenty-Five



by Virginia Raymond

Plyler v. Doe was a momentous, concrete, and fragile 5-4 victory for immigrants and advocates of education. The Supreme Court's ruling on June 15, 1982, struck a Texas statute that effectively prevented undocumented children from attending public schools in Texas, or required them to pay tuition. All children, the Court said, regardless of immigration status, are entitled to a free public education. Undocumented immigrant children are entitled to attend school on the same basis as other children. *Plyler v. Doe* has enabled thousands of students to attend school over the past quarter-century.

This 25th anniversary, however, is not a moment for celebration. This is not a happy moment because immigrants are under attack from many quarters, and the constitutional bases for their few abstract rights are vulnerable. Simply asserting the moral righteousness of *Plyler v. Doe*, or the wisdom of the Court's decision, is not useful.

Derrick Bell has noticed that the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* evoked "an emotionally charged concoction of commendations and condemnations." This electric, polarized atmosphere had the effect of silencing the serious constructive criticism that anti-racist activists, scholars, and jurists might have offered.

[*Brown*] is 'often read with less fidelity by those who praise it than by those by whom it is condemned.'...Criticism, as we in the movement for minority rights have every reason to learn, is a synonym for neither cowardice nor capitulation. It may instead bring awareness, always the first step toward overcoming still another barrier in the struggle for racial equality (*Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma* 533, citations omitted).

As Richard Delgado wrote last year in response to the anniversary of *Hernández v. Texas*, celebrations dull our critical faculties, imply that we ought to be satisfied with what we have, and serve white ruling classes.

I offer my criticism of *Plyler v. Doe* in much the same spirit that Derrick Bell criticizes *Brown* in, and that Richard Delgado more recently critiques *Hernández v. Texas*: to move us forward in seeking justice. Hateful xenophobic currents in the public, legislative bodies, and executive branches along with ongoing rightward shifts in courts threaten the rights of undocumented children to attend public school. In such a climate it is more important than ever to face the inherent weaknesses in *Plyler's* logic, language, rhetorical appeals and holding.

Plyler v. Doe, as a judicial decision, was a disaster. *How can I say that?* *Plyler v. Doe*, like other judicial decisions, produces effects in at least three overlapping but distinct fora. Most obviously, court rulings affect the parties to the case, who are ordered to act or stop acting in particular ways.

Second, they circulate among legal professionals: courts, lawyers, legal scholars and other elites who are professionally committed to following jurisprudence.

Finally, judicial decisions also circulate broadly in public spheres: newspaper stories, editorials, television, radio, political debates, legislatures, school board meetings, classrooms, workplaces, neighborhood gatherings, religious sermons, and

family dinners.

It is in these second two realms – legal elites and public -- that *Plyler v. Doe* has done the most damage. Peter Gabel and Jay Feinman explain that

[j]udicial opinions 'work' as ideology by a rhetorical process in which oppressive practical norms are encoded as 'general rules' with ideological content; these 'rules' then serve as the basis for a logic ('legal reasoning') that supposedly determines the outcome of the lawsuit. A key social function of the opinion, however, is not to be found in the outcome and the use of state power which may follow from it, but in the rhetorical structure of the opinion itself, in the legitimization and reconstitution of the practical norm that occurs through the application of it in the form of a 'legal rule' ("Contract Law as Ideology" 507).

The specific outcome of *Plyler v. Doe* is to allow undocumented immigrant children the right to attend school on the same basis as other children. But the bases for the decision are troubling. The reason that these children are entitled to education, however, is that they are "innocent."

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled, in 1973, that the state of Texas was free to discriminate against low-income, Mexican American school children in the poorest school district on San Antonio's West Side. The Court's decision *San Antonio ISD v. Rodríguez* was a "death knell" to equal protection in two ways. First, it shut down any hope of obtaining economic justice through the federal courts when it ruled that it is not unconstitutional to discriminate against people on the basis of income. In other words, low-income people, although subject to invidious discrimination throughout U.S. history and despite their relative political powerlessness, will not as a group be protected by the Fifth or Fourteenth Amendments promises of equal protection. Second, the *Rodríguez* Court ruled that education is *not* a fundamental right guaranteed in or by the U.S. Constitution. Five members of the Supreme Court, in other words, said that the Constitution does not protect low-income people and it does not protect education, either.

Rodríguez came a month and a half after another 1973 Supreme Court case arising out of Texas, that is, *Roe v. Wade*. In *Roe*, the Court expanded the notion of individual rights, and -- this is critical -- did so by invoking *privacy* rather than women's equality. *Rodríguez* announced that the Court and the nation were retreating from the broad, national, public and social aspirations of the civil rights movement and the war on poverty. Many scholars, such as David Harvey and Fredric Jameson, and labor advocates see 1973 as a turning point in economic restructuring, both globally and within the United States.

Roe v. Wade and *San Antonio ISD v. Rodríguez*, both 5-4 decisions (marking a transition), signaled the re-emergence of "liberal" legal thought with a vengeance. During the 1970s we saw a rightward shift in the federal courts that provided the ideological basis for neoliberalism. The material changes taking place in the U.S. – including the flight of manufacturing from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and then to Mexico – both produced and were facilitated by an emergent legal ideology consistent with neoliberalism. Between about 1973 and 1982, a

structure of feeling that stressed personal motivations rather than effects, private morality rather than social justice, and individual “freedom” over public responsibilities manifested itself in many ways.

Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote a stirring dissent in *Rodríguez* in which he noted that those who defended Texas’ school funding scheme focused on the state’s efforts; those who sought equity focused on the *effects* of the current system.

The Court acknowledges that “substantial interdistrict disparities in school expenditures” exist in Texas. . . and that these disparities are “largely attributable to differences in the amounts of money collected through local property taxation.” . . . But instead of closely examining the seriousness of these disparities and the invidiousness of the Texas financing scheme, the Court undertakes an elaborate exploration of the efforts Texas has purportedly made to close the gaps between its districts in terms of levels of district wealth and resulting educational funding. Yet, however praiseworthy Texas’ equalizing efforts, *the issue in this case is not whether Texas is doing its best to ameliorate the worst features of a discriminatory scheme but, rather, whether the scheme itself is in fact unconstitutionally discriminatory in the face of the Fourteenth Amendment’s guarantee of equal protection of the laws. When the Texas financing scheme is taken as a whole, I do not think it can be doubted that it produces a discriminatory impact on substantial numbers of the school-age children of the State of Texas* (411 U.S. 72, emphasis supplied).

Justice Marshall’s observation was not only on point, but prophetic, as the courts began to dismiss racial discrimination claims, despite enormous evidence of massive discrimination and segregation, if the plaintiffs were unable to prove that the defendants had racist intentions. Plaintiffs proved harm, but the courts were mostly not interested in the effects of institutionalized racism. Defendants asserted the purity of their motives, and the courts grew reluctant to order structural changes when defendants were “innocent.”

The primacy of *intents* over *effects* was compounded by a turn to the private over the social. We see this turn toward selfishness everywhere, but perhaps especially in dominant discourse. In 1961, President Kennedy’s inaugural challenge to the U.S. was to “ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” Johnson called on the nation to conduct a War on Poverty and construct a Great Society. Carter asked for support for human rights. But in November 1980, Governor Ronald Reagan’s final question to the national audience as he concluded a debate with Jimmy Carter was “**Are you better off now**



Immigrant Rights March, May 1, 2007 in San Antonio

than you were four years ago?”

Since the early 1980s, this political and legal ideology has been the dominant one in the U.S. It is during this historical shift that the battle over undocumented immigrant children’s rights to education takes place.

Many people had assumed that public education was of enormous constitutional interest, particularly since *Brown v. Board of Education*, but in 1973 *Rodríguez* gave the green light to discrimination. In 1975, its next regular session, the Texas Legislature amended the Education Code to prevent a penny of state money going towards the education of undocumented children. Section § 21.031 required school districts either to exclude these children completely, or admit them only on a tuition basis. (Some undocumented immigrant parents, at enormous financial sacrifice, actually did pay tuition because *they* knew that education is fundamental.)

I do not know how many lawsuits people filed against the Texas law, a law that even the state Attorney General called “Texas at its worst.” At one point, there were at least seventeen legal challenges to the law pending in courts all across the state, from Brownsville to Dallas, Odessa in West Texas to Tyler in East Texas. While my paper focuses on litigation, I want to make clear that this litigation took place in the context of community organizing and people responding with a great range of other strategies. With different political perspectives and experiences, people from LULAC, the GI Forum, Catholic churches, educators, and Dallas businessmen, responded with political protest or by creating schools for the immigrant children (including, here in San Antonio, the Juan Diego Bicultural Institute) or finding private schools that would take these students in. Litigation was only one tool among many, as it should be.

Advocates for undocumented children challenged the Texas

law with two main arguments. One was that the law violated the doctrine of federal preemption: the regulation of immigration is solely a matter for the federal government. The second was whether equal protection applied, and, if so, what standard of review the courts ought to use in determining whether the statute was constitutional or not.

“Preemption” is shorthand for interrogating the proper distribution of powers between the federal and state governments. Immigration law has been a federal question since the eighteenth century. The federal courts considered whether the Texas Education Code unconstitutionally interfered with the federal government’s control of immigration. This is a really important question, but not my focus here, except to say that the oral argument was very tense and frustrating largely due a conflict about what the main issue was. The lawyers and many of the judges wanted to talk about preemption, while others, especially a very unhappy Justice Thurgood Marshall, wanted to hear about equal protection.

The second issue is whether barring undocumented children from public school violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. This question, in turn, was largely dependent on the proper standard of review.

If a classification is “suspect” – as racial classifications always are – then the courts will require the government to show that it has a *compelling interest* and that the classification is drawn as narrowly as it can be. Otherwise, courts would only require that the government state action be rational, that is, that the state is acting to pursue a *legitimate* state goal and the action bear a *reasonable relationship* to that goal.

Thus, both sides argued about whether the Texas law met the easiest test: was it “rational” and did it serve a legitimate state interest? Those who defended the law said that it was rational to want to preserve its limited funds to spend on educating citizens, legal permanent residents, and other people legally residing in the country. They also argued that it was rational to try to “stem the tide of illegal immigrants,” rather than encourage people to illegally enter the U.S. so that their children could attend public schools here. For the most part, advocates for the undocumented children said it was irrational for Texas to keep the children out of public schools. These advocates minimized the costs, or compared the costs of education to the taxes immigrants paid, or worried about future costs. And then, in the midst of an already loaded debate posing as an empirical dispute, advocates argued that it made no sense to punish children for something over which they had no control. *The kids hadn’t done anything wrong.*

The kids had not done anything wrong: in itself, an apparently benign assertion.

A large number of organizations filed briefs of *amici curae*, or “friends of the court.” In addition to MALDEF, which represented some of the children, the National Education Association (NEA), LULAC, the Edgewood School District, Mexican American Bar Association of Houston, American Jewish Committee, Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Texas Impact, American Immigration Lawyers Association, Legal Aid Society of San Francisco, Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights under Law, California State Bar Association, and American Friends Service Committee urged the Supreme Court to affirm appellate decisions striking the law.

Filing *amicus* briefs supporting the Texas law were the Tyler school district, several school districts in the Río Grande Valley, the Texas Association of School Boards, the Federation of Americans for Immigration Reform (FAIR), and the Pacific Legal Foundation, Mountain States Legal Foundation, and Legal Foundation of America. The latter three were right-wing

conservative “public interest” law firms that started in the 1970s.

In the specialized genre of appellate briefing, lawyers typically refer to the parties as appellants, appellees, plaintiff-appellees or appellants, intervenors, and other dry, abstract legal categories. Not so in *Plyler*. The Pacific Legal Foundation hammers the phrase “illegal aliens” *five times* in a single paragraph at the beginning of its brief, setting a belligerent tone that escalates. “Illegal alien” begins to sound good as these “friends of the court” argue that Texas has an interest in preventing “wrongdoers” and “criminals” with “unclean hands” from “enjoying the fruits” of their “crime” or “reaping the benefits.” Nothing in the Fourteenth Amendment requires the U.S. to assist “defiant illegal aliens who mock the inability of this country to enforce its laws.”

Richard Arnett, the Attorney General for the State of Texas, emphasized (as did some *amicus* briefs), that the law had been proposed by a Mexican American legislator, from Brownsville, on the Mexican border, as if all Mexican Americans were homogeneous and that any single legislator could represent all. Arnett argued that the law was not meant to discriminate against Mexican Americans, but to serve them by conserving limited education funds for use of “their own” students. Here the state was arguing, with the spirit of the times and newly dominant legal ideology, that intent was more important than effects. The Texas legislature, Arnett was arguing, was innocent of racial animus.

The briefs filed by National Education Association and the League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC) the Asian American Legal Defense Fund took a different path. They argued that immigration law is the principal mechanism through which the U.S. government practices racial discrimination against and racial dominance over Asian Americans. This argument not only avoids, but also repudiates the sanctimonious deference to immigration law and policy that is present in much of the other argument and in lower court decisions.

Given the court’s prior ruling in *Rodríguez* that education was not a fundamental right, and in the absence of a protected class, Texas’ funding scheme did not need to be wise or just or necessary, only rational. *Plyler v. Doe* posed a sharper question: “whether, consistent with the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, Texas may deny to undocumented school-age children the free public education that it provides to children who are citizens of the United States or legally admitted aliens” (*Plyler* 205). Could Texas entirely deny education to some children?

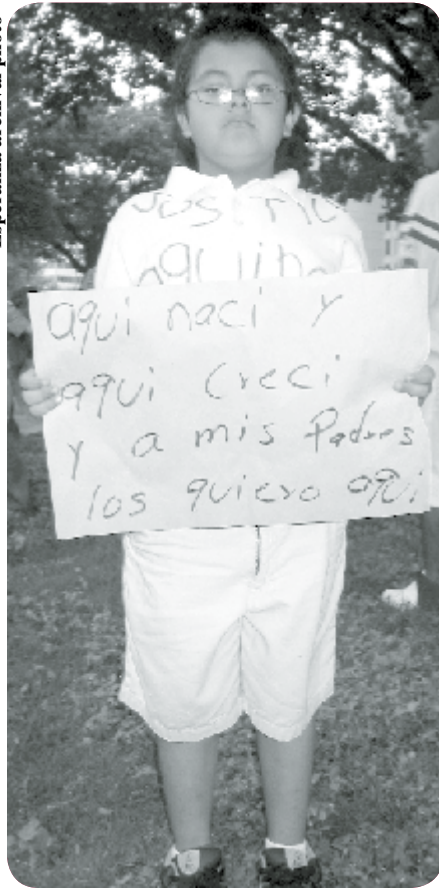
At a complete denial of education, the Supreme Court justices squirmed. Inferior education is one thing; no education at all is another. The close 5-4 majority shifted, and five justices told Texas that it could not completely shut the school doors on immigrant children. How did the advocates for immigrants eke out this close decision, given the *Rodríguez* precedent?

They did so in two ways. First, they returned to a pre-*Rodríguez* emphasis on the special place of education in a democratic society. Justice Brennan declared that public education is not a ‘right’ granted to individuals by the Constitution...But neither is it merely some governmental ‘benefit’ indistinguishable from other forms of social welfare legislation. Both the importance of education in maintaining our basic institutions, and the lasting impact of its deprivation on the life of the child, mark the distinction...[E]ducation provides the basic tools by which individuals might lead economically productive lives to the benefit of us all...[E]ducation has a fundamental role in maintaining the fabric of our society...[221]



Esperanza Center archival photo





Marshall continued to insist that education is a fundamental right. Second, the Court emphasized the innocence of the children, while not going as far as to make children a “protected class.”

Enhancing the status of education and the status of undocumented children, the Court created an intermediate standard of review. Justice Brennan, writing for the majority, reasoned that:

If the State is to deny a discrete group of innocent children the free public education that it offers to other children residing within its borders, that denial must be justified by a showing that it furthers

some substantial state interest. No such showing was made here.

Justice Brennan, for the majority, *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202, 230 (1982) (my emphasis).

They judged the Texas law not on the rational basis test, but not under strict scrutiny either. Texas law had to be something more than rational.

“Innocence” is the key political term in the legal ruling in which it ought to have no place. This presence should not come as a complete surprise.

Innocence has always lurked in the basement/foundation of equal protection, through the quite disturbing criterion of “immutability.” In this argument, courts have held that one reason racial discrimination is intolerable is because people don’t choose their race. In other words, you can’t *blame* someone for being Black. The implication, of course, is that difference – from a white straight U.S. born literate affluent non-disabled English-speaking male – is an unfortunate condition, one that no one would *choose*. The immutability argument is one reason why liberals fret about “sexual orientation” versus “sexual preference.” The “compassionate” and condescending argument is actually coercive: that if a person *can’t help* being queer, they should not be punished for it. But if they choose to be different, they can be ostracized or punished for “perversity.”

The rhetoric of innocence used in *Plyler* is fraught with trouble both in narrow constitutional terms and in a broader political sense.

Trading on the ambiguous notion of “innocence” to argue that *some* people are worthy of human rights, we necessarily imply that some other group of people are less worthy, and perhaps *not* deserving of human rights. If immigrant children are “innocent,” how are we viewing their parents and other adults?

The rhetoric of “innocent children” fed its opposite: a murky

specter of sophisticated, savvy, and immoral ADULT immigrants who purposely manipulate U.S. laws and practices for personal pecuniary gain. The children didn’t break the law; their parents did. Bad parents, innocent kids. This logic, of course, echoed the public debate around abortion, in which non-innocent, knowing women are pitted against the innocent fetus or unborn.

Even without hate-mongering against immigrants in the manner of the Pacific Legal Foundation and others’ *amicus* briefs, *Plyler v. Doe* reinforces the notion that undocumented immigrants may be treated badly. Children are an *exception* to the broader category of undocumented immigrants.

Plyler does not disturb, and in fact reinforces, notions of personal guilt and innocence. Children are deemed “innocent,” and therefore worthy of receiving education. If education is dependent on worth or merit, then education is not a right, but a privilege. Stated another way, there is no *right* to education for undocumented “aliens.” Children are an exception to the rule that undocumented “aliens” will not be served. (We should not mistake exceptions for rights. *In fact, making the exception actually strengthens the rule* that undocumented immigrants are not entitled to equal protection of the laws, and indeed, should and can be punished for the “crimes” of entering, remaining, or working in the U.S. without the permission of the federal government. Undocumented kids won the right to go to school, but their parents, families, communities and future adult selves lost. We see the hate speech against immigrants all around us.

The invocation of “innocent children” as especially worthy people would, if taken seriously, empty the 14th Amendment of responsibility towards those groups of people that have historically borne the effects of discrimination. The entire thrust of equal protection is to guarantee fundamental rights to members of racial or ethnic groups who have been ostracized, disparaged, discriminated against and horrifically treated in U.S. history.

The phrase “innocent children” introduces or reintroduces the dangerous concept of differential value and differential worthiness of human beings. The invocation of “innocent children” --- more worthy subjects -- thus threatens to completely undermine the entire *raison d’être* of equal protection, to pull the rug out from the entire structure. If the *Plyler* court had to resort



Immigrant Rights March, May 1, 2007 in San Antonio

to this extra-constitutional rhetoric, it had reached the end: the exhaustion of equal protection.

We do not need the Constitution to protect those people deemed “worthy” by the majority or dominant. Rather, the Constitution exists to protect the unpopular, the scorned, the demonized and denigrated. If equal protection is contingent on the Supreme Court thinking a person is “deserving” then equal protection no longer exists. “Rights” that depend on a person proving or being judged worthy are not rights at all, but privileges distributed at the state’s discretion. At that point, we do not live under the rule of law, but autocracy. We should be particularly worried for young brown men and women who live under what Carl Gutiérrez-Jones calls “broad accusations of criminality.”

Finally, *Plyler v. Doe* is so weak that it does not even guarantee what it purports to. The opinion closes with the statement that if Texas (or any state) wants to deprive immigrant children of education, it must show a “substantial interest.” The statement invites governments to show better evidence, especially under changed conditions, of their strong interest in excluding children.

What is to prevent a state from claiming that a larger population of undocumented immigrants, a precarious financial situation, and increased education costs together make for a “compelling interest” in excluding one group of children from public school? If the question comes down to a factual debate amongst economists, the constitutional protection that *Plyler* now provides is frail and unreliable. There is little to prevent the Supreme Court from deferring to a state’s claim of “substantial interest.” In fact, there is every reason to believe that because of more right wing judges on the court, increased costs, greater numbers of immigrants, that Texas could make an argument today that it had a “substantial interest” in keeping undocumented immigrants out of public schools because of costs.

What is to be done?

1) Take over the terms of the debate.

Images of “innocent children” who “should not be punished” for the illegal acts of their parents too readily evoke their opposite: xenophobic portrayals of undocumented Mexican immigrants as bad actors who *should* be punished for “sneaking” in the United States for ill-gotten gains and vaguely referenced “criminal” behavior. Short term, utilitarian rhetoric cedes moral ground to the anti-immigrant right.

With what principled and rigorous arguments might we successfully repel challenges to *Plyler’s* promise of education for all, including immigrants?

2) Insist that education is a fundamental right.

As Justice Thurgood Marshall’s magnificent concurrence in *Plyler* suggests, the Court and the nation as a whole should declare that education is a fundamental right, a civil right, a human right, and the United States should then make good on its promise.

With majestic clarity, Justice Marshall reiterated in *Plyler v. Doe* his forceful opinion in *Rodríguez* that education is a fundamental right. Because of that Justice Marshall did not need to argue for the special worthiness of these particular plaintiffs. We must **insist** that education be recognized as a fundamental right within the U.S. Constitution, as it is in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948.

3) Acknowledge the history and ongoing role of racism in immigration.

The National Education Association, LULAC, and Asian

American Legal Defense Fund got it right. In challenging one unjust law, these advocates did not speak sanctimoniously or obsequiously praise immigration laws. Rather, they told the historical truth from their particular experiences.



4) Don’t leave the arguments or the public rhetoric to the lawyers.

The constitutional law framework constrains what lawyers can argue, both formally and substantively. Even if lawyers are making a particular argument because they have to, educators, activists, scholars, students and parents, should not rely on narrow legal rhetoric that *always*, invariably, distorts what people want to express.

5) Work in coalitions

Estevan T. Flores writes that

It was the successful linking of Chicanos, Mexican Americans, and the Mexican American population that provided for the pooling of resources and talent necessary to mount a statewide campaign against §21.031 of the Texas Education Code. The campaign involved the development of seventeen lawsuits filed across the state. It also involved the historical, demographical, and historical research brought to bear in the trial (sic) itself. And finally, the campaign forged links between the undocumented population in a number of Texas cities, and the Chicano population which sought to defend the immigrant child.

At a national level, coalitions involved Mexican Americans, educators, Asian Americans, Jews, and a variety of civil rights organizations.

To argue for the “innocent” is always a tempting argument. It has a lot of emotional appeal and is often successful, in narrow terms. But “innocence” is a vague term with many meanings. We are non-innocent when we know, when we plan, when we act as protagonists in our own lives. And “innocent” is a term that is always in the eyes of someone else. To argue for the innocent is always to leave someone out. We should resist this necessarily exclusive argument. Abandon innocence.

Editor’s note: This is a short version of a longer work that Virginia Raymond would be happy to share with those interested. Full citations for this article can also be requested at <virginiaraymond@mail.utexas.edu>.



Gloria Ramirez, retired teacher, meets with parents and ex-students at the Immigrant Rights March, May 1, 2007 in San Antonio

Blanca Navidad, un encuentro entre colonias y caracoles

escrito con la colaboración de Laura Codina, Jessica Guerrero, Amanda Haas, y Araceli Herrera

El diez de mayo, día de las madres en Mexico, la gente de la Blanca Navidad, Nuevo Laredo, MX recibieron a tres comandantes Zapatistas de la 6ª delegación del EZLN de Chiapas para celebrar, por fin, la llegada de agua potable a su colonia. Se unieron las luchas de la mujer Zapatista de los caracoles y la lucha de las valientes, nuevas luchadoras de Blanca Navidad para que así naciera un nuevo caracol en el norte de Mexico.

La lucha de la colonia Blanca Navidad comenzó el 22 de diciembre 2004, cuando una dueña de terrenos y algunas personas interesadas en comprarse un espacio para hacerse sus casitas llegaron al lugar donde muy pronto construirían un hogar. Ese invierno había nevado y todo el terreno estaba cubierto de blanco. Entonces, la dueña nombró la colonia que se iniciaba, Blanca Navidad. Poco a poco se desarrolló la colonia hasta que habían unas 800 familias instaladas en este vecindario.

La colonia Blanca Navidad queda al borde de la ciudad de Nuevo Laredo, MX, cerca de la Universidad Tecnológica. Esta ciudad se estira en diferentes direcciones por el impacto de la inmigración y el

comercio internacional. Las familias que llegan a construir una vida en las colonias de Nuevo Laredo vienen de todas partes de Mexico y Latino America, muchas veces regresando de intentos frustrados de cruzar a los EEUU. A la colonia Blanca Navidad, como a otras, ha llegado gente que simplemente quieren crear un hogar para sus familias. Dice la Sra. Joaquina, una de las residentes originarias de la Blanca Navidad, "Nosotros necesitamos (casa) no para nosotros, pero para los hijos".

Un año después de su inicio, en el 2005, servicios del agua y de la luz todavía no habían llegado a esta colonia. Cuando los habitantes iban hacer sus pagos mensuales al central, no les aceptaban el pago porque no se reconocía Blanca Navidad como colonia registrada con el gobierno municipal. Se rumoraba que la dueña de los terrenos de "la Blanca" era PRI-ista y que les vendió los lotes baratos a la gente para comprar sus votos. También se figura que comprometió a gente en ese día nevoso de diciembre mas bien para que limpiaran el area y luego lo dejaran listo para la introducción de un desarrollo económico mas lucrativo. Proyectos como reservas de casas pequeñas, mal hechas y construidas por fraccionadores han aumentado la presión por deshacerse de las colonias autoconstruidas por la gente. (Las personas que compran estas casas, hacen los pagos

a los fraccionadores a través de descuentos de sus sueldos de maquiladoras en el area.)

El primer intento del desalojo de la colonia Blanca Navidad se ejecutó a las once de la mañana, el 2 de febrero 2006. Se supone que ordenes vinieron del municipio porque usaron maquinas destructivas como las que han partido en pedazos a Palestina en años pasados y actualmente. Se instalaron policías impidiendo entrada y salida a la colonia en dos sitios. Niños y gente atrapados en sus casas no encontraban salida y madres y vecinos queriendo ir por ellos no lograban entrar. Los policías operando la cerrada repartían botellas de agua entre ellos, refrescándose para aguantar su asignada posición mientras residentes, que ni acceso al agua potable tenían, observaban en terror como aplastaban su vecindario. Después de lo que sucedió, hubieron mas cerraduras que amenazaban con derrumbes de casas y misteriosas quemaduras de casas al azar. La comunidad de Blanca Navidad se organizó para resistir estas amenazas de desalojo y seguir la lucha por tener el agua en su comunidad. Establecieron una vigilancia comunitaria

de 24 horas, por un mes, tomando turnos entre los residentes para guardar la seguridad de sus casas.

Esta reprimación psicológica ha durado mas de un año y ha provocado el miedo en la gente y ha dejado a niños traumatizados. Desde el desalojo en febrero 2006, la población de Blanca Navidad se ha disminuido a unas 500 familias. A pesar de esto, la comunidad de la colonia Blanca Navidad sigue luchando y creciendo, juntos comenzando a alcanzar sus metas. Bajo el liderazgo de gente que surge de la misma comunidad, se ha forjado una lucha para el agua, se ha construido un centro médico y también un sitio comunal donde se reúnen los residentes para planificar sus esfuerzos.

Martha Ojeda, directora de la Coalición por Justicia en las Maquiladoras, coordinó un encuentro entre los Zapatistas y los de "la Blanca" para que juntos celebraran en su triunfo de haber conseguido el agua para su comunidad y se apoyaran en sus luchas. Ojeda también invitó a organizaciones de Tejas, al otro lado del Rio Bravo. El sábado, 12 de mayo, 2007 buena gente de Houston, Austin, y de San Antonio llegaron a la colonia Blanca Navidad en anticipación de convivir con la gente de la colonia y las comandantes e intercambiar detalles de luchas semejantes en comunidades fronterizas. Se ofrecieron



Residents of Blanca Navidad welcomed us into their homes.

expresiones de solidaridad y propuestas para apoyo entre las comunidades representadas.

Aparentemente, las mujeres son las organizadoras principales de la lucha de la colonia y han sido reconocidas por su misma comunidad como representantes de la voz colectiva de la Blanca Navidad. Ellas expresaron las necesidades y los planes por avanzamiento de la colonia mientras les agradecieron la visita y el intercambio con las Comandantes Miriam y Eucaria y el Comandante Zebedeo de Chiapas. Invitaron a todos presentes a participar en pintar un mural en la pared del nuevo dispensario de la colonia y ofrecieron organizar un intercambio con los caracoles sureños Zapatistas para aprender mas sobre las medicinas populares. Otros planes que se van estableciendo en los comités de mujeres de la colonia incluyen el abrir una tortillería para venderles tortillas a las colonias cercanas y establecer una guadería y escuela para los niños, ya que ahorita el autobus toma mas de treinta minutos para llegar a la escuela mas cercana. Incluso, las organizadoras de "la Blanca" reconocen la importancia de la diversión y anunciaron planes de formar un equipo femenino de fútbol soccer.

Las compañeras del Centro Esperanza de San Antonio, Texas, Araceli Herrera, Laura Codina, Amanda Haas y Jessica O. Guerrero participamos en la gran plática comunal y luego pasamos la tarde con la gente amable de la Blanca Navidad, quienes nos llevaron a recorrer todo el terreno de la colonia. Nos mostraron sus casas y nos contaron como fueron construyendolas pieza por pieza de acuerdo a lo que juntaban de lo que otros se deshacían. Así también nos han contado las sabias



Commandante Miriam speaks at the Encuentro.



Araceli, Amanda and Laura with children of Blanca Navidad in front of the mural.

The colonia Blanca Navidad was established just outside of Nuevo Laredo in December of 2004. It wasn't until Mother's Day weekend of this year (2007) however that Blanca Navidad won the fight to get water piped into their community. Refusal of basic services like water, electricity, and sewage was intended to force the residents out of the colonia, making room for corporate development in this fast-growing area. Despite violent attempts to clear the area, the majority of the colonia's families insist on their right to remain in this place where they have established their homes.

On May 12th, an event was held in Blanca Navidad at which the residents of the colonia exchanged stories of struggle and plans for the future with representatives from organizations in San Antonio, Houston, and Austin. Also present were three Zapatista commandantes who had traveled from Chiapas to participate in the exchange and learn more about the struggle of the people of Blanca Navidad. The children of the community joined with those who had traveled from out of town to paint a mural on the side of the newly-built "Casa de Salud," intended to be used as a medical center for the colonia. To find out more about the colonia or the May 12th event in Blanca Navidad, you can call the Esperanza Center at 210.228.0201 or e-mail esperanza@esperanzacenter.org (Photos courtesy of Laura Codina.)

ancianas del Westside en San Antonio cuando

comparten sus historias sobre el inicio de sus vidas en esta comunidad. Aquí, en San Antonio, la historia de gente pobre incluye también la lucha por los servicios básicos, por los derechos laborales y por la dignidad de vivir en casas humildes y orgullosas que se sostienen dentro de una comunidad, resistiendo la invasión de la cultura consumidora.

A través de esos momentos fueron evidentes los detalles similares de distintas luchas. Cuando la boca escondida de la Comandante Miriam brotó una canción escrita al tiro en español (que no es su lengua nativa), y cuando oímos la historia de casas planchadas por el mismo desprecio que hay en otras tierras lejanas es como vivimos la obra del Centro Esperanza, que reconoce la conexión entre el arte y la política, y valoriza la belleza dentro del proceso de organizar y coplar intereses y metas comunitarias. En este encuentro y en otros intercambios diarios, vemos como juntas, borrando fronteras y cruzando vías, avanzamos y construimos un mundo nuevo.

-Este verano, habrán muchos viajes de vacaciones, de estudio, etc que quizás los lleve por el rumbo de la Blanca Navidad. Si acaso llegan a dar un viaje por ayá, favor de avisarnos para mandar saludos y quizás llevar algunos materiales que les sean útiles a la Buena Gente de la Blanca Navidad. Para ponerse en contacto con nosotras llame al Centro Esperanza al 210/228-0201 or envíe carta por email a esperanza@esperanzacenter.org





Primer Encuentro de Lesbianas Feministas Latinoamericanas y Caribeñas in Cuernavaca, Mexico in 1987* -Photo courtesy of Lydia Otero

HACE VEINTE AÑOS

by Gloria A. Ramirez

(tidbits of San Antonio queer history from 1987)

In the same year that the *Esperanza Peace and Justice Center* was born, the lesbian gay community of San Antonio was activating locally and globally. What follows is a quick glance at a few historic queer events taking place in 1987:

- The *Lesbiana Latina Retreat* with Latina lesbians from throughout Texas at Stonehaven Ranch occurred on 1987 in San Marcos, Texas. In December 1986, Lety Gomez, Graciela Sánchez Ramírez met at Los Padrinos in San Antonio and conceptualized the retreat. The **LLRC (Latina Lesbian Retreat Committee)** comprised of twelve Latina lesbian representatives from Austin, San Antonio, Houston and Dallas was formed to plan the 1987 retreat and subsequent retreats in 1988 and 1989. The **LLR** later, **ELLAS**, was coordinated by Ramirez out of San Antonio in its existence. Later, ELLAS remained an organization. The **Gay Lesbian** organization, wanted to increase and sponsored the **Latina Lesbian Lesbian Retreat** was a forerunner of the *Texas Lesbian Conference* which was first held in 1988.

- The *Alamo Human Rights Committee* held a political forum with cocktails on June 19, 1987 for Gay Pride Month. It was a gay political advocacy organization and forerunner of SALGA and other gay organizations.

- The *3rd Annual Gay Pride Parade* took place on June 21st in

San Antonio on N. Main from Crockett Park at Cypress followed by the *4th annual Gay Pride Picnic* in San Pedro Park. The **LLRC** sold fruit kabobs, aguas frescas and cascarones at the picnic. The **LLRC** which became **ELLAS of San Antonio** adopted the *Primer Encuentro* into a large felt banner used in 1987 and in 1993.



performed at Guadalupe Plaza in a free singing performance June 24, 1987.

Sisterfire, an open-air 2 day, multi-cultural women's festival encampment from June 27-28, 1987 with Alice Walker, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Castleberry & Dupree, among others took place in Washington, D.C. It was the 5th anniversary of this festival where connections were made by Graciela and Gloria with *Tr y Crema* to play at a later date **Esperanza Center**. The concept for *Mujercanto* was modeled after *Sisterfire*.

- The *National NOW Conference* was held at the Franklin Plaza Hotel in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from July 17-19, 1987.

- The *12th Annual Michigan Womyn's Festival* was held in Hart, Michigan from August 12-16, 1987. San Antonio lesbians including Martha Prentiss were in attendance and attended for several years thereafter. The festival is now international and continues to this date.



The *Gay Lesbian Tejano Conference II* was held September 5th/6th in 1987 at the Sheraton Hotel in Austin, Texas.

- **Pope John Paul II** visited San Antonio on September 19, 1987.

- The **Texas NOW State Convention** was held September 25-27, 1987.

- The *National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights* was held on October 11, 1987. Various groups from San Antonio attended the March. Activities included an exhibit of *The AIDS Memorial Project ("The Quilt")* on the Capitol Mall and a non-sectarian union ceremony, *The Wedding* held on October 10, 1987.



- The *Primer Encuentro de Lesbianas Feministas Latinoamericanas y Caribeñas* brought Latina lesbians together from the Americas and the Caribbean in Cuernavaca, Mexico on October 14-17, 1987. Participants from San Antonio included Gloria Ramirez, Dina Flores, and Graciela Sánchez who was in film school in San Antonio del los Baños, Cuba (among

others). Chicana lesbians attending ultimately were part of an international network, *La Red*.



- The *Jezebel* women's bar on Wurzbach Rd. was the site of Tuesday night discussion groups on topics of interest to the queer community. The LLRC and ELLAS ultimately collaborated with the Jezebel on fundraisers. The Esperanza Center also collaborated on Tuesday night discussions held weekly. The Jezebel also sponsored the publication of the *Women's Community Journal* which later became *Womanspace*. Police raids on the Jezebel were not uncommon and owner, Kay Ford ultimately moved to a larger space off of Callaghan called the **Circle Entertainment and Cultural Arts Center** where programming with performers like Kate Clinton and authors like Jo Ann Loulan were to take place. Tuesday Night discussion groups continued.

- The premiere issue of the small publication, *ALTERNATIVES* by publisher/editor, Lole J. Charles was in December of 1986. The established gay publication of the time was *The Calendar* edited by Michael Stevens with an editorial staff that included Graciela Sánchez and subsequently, Gloria Ramírez. In 1987,

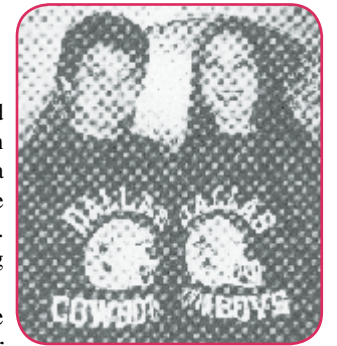
ELLAS also had its own publication called **ELLAS DICEN** edited by Gloria Ramirez.

* Pictured in the Encuentro group picture is Graciela Sánchez, standing 4th from the left. Other Latina lesbians in the picture include Lydia Otero, Yvonne Yarbo Bejerano, Tatiana de la Tierra, Laura Aguilar, and Juanita Diaz-Cotto among others. To help us identify other lesbians pictured at this historic event, please send an email to lavoz@esperanzacenter.org

night on the town

by Lole

Reminisce



Editor's note: This article appeared in the first issue of *Alternatives* in December of 1986. Linda and Sulema were the owners of the Reminisce located on Fredricksburg Rd. facing St. Ann's Catholic Church. It closed along with many other bars of the time.

Even though the Reminisce opened in October 1984, many people are not aware of its existence. This quaint bar is located in a building built perhaps in the early 1900s. Its high ceiling definitely reminds you of its origin-during the good old days. When I first walked in this bar, I was reminded of the old drugstore where my high school friends and I would hang out on Saturday afternoons. When you first walk in you cross the very small dance floor, then you are faced with an elongated room that has about six huge booths to the left and the bar is to the right, with about 12 bar stools. You find a nice jukebox full of oldies (music from the late 50s and early 60s) and a wide variety of Mexican dancing music, i.e. cumbias and polkas. For a change of pace, three disco records are available. At first you might not feel very comfortable, but take my word after your first drink, you will have relaxed and started to notice the different "ambiente" and it might be contagious. Before you realize it, your "gritos" are just as loud as everyone else's.

The Reminisce attracts people of all different walks of life. You can meet the professional, as well as the non-professional woman. The bar hosts a pool tournament for the members of the Bexar County 8-Ball Association every Tuesday and Wednesday nights.

Some things that are important to note about this northside bar [Fredricksburg Rd. inside I-H 10] is that there is a private parking lot located in the rear of the building, and I.D.'s are definitely required at all times. Never a cover charge. Beer, wine-coolers and set-ups are the fare, reminiscent of the good old days?!

Editor's note: For more on San Antonio's Queer history, attend the opening of:

¡Que Queer! San Antonio!

an exhibition of art, photos & mementos of San Antonio's lesbian, gay, bisexual, Two-Spirit, transgender & queer communities.

Opening reception: June 14, 2007 at 6 pm

@ The Esperanza Peace & Justice Center
922 San Pedro in San Antonio, Texas
Call 210/228-0201 or esperanza@esperanzacenter.org

community meetings

Amnesty Int'l #127 meets 4th Thursdays, 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 Meetings on 1st Tuesdays at First Presbyterian Church, 404N. Alamo, Rm 302 at 6 pm.

Parents/Friends of Lesbians/Gays (PFLAG) meets the 1st Thursdays at 7pm at the Resource Center, 121 W. Woodlawn. Call 655-2383.

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

The Rape Crisis Center is located at 7500 US Hwy 90 W., Building 2 in San Antonio. 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 classes on Tuesdays/Thursdays at 7pm, Sundays at 11:30 am. 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 SA meets 2nd Mondays, 7 pm @ Barnes & Noble, San Pedro Crossing.

Solidarity: Peer Support for Mental Health Consumers, meets 1st & 3rd Saturdays at 10:30 am @ Travis Park United Methodist Church, Rm 210. Call 734-7527.

S.N.A.P. (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests) meets on the 2nd Saturday of each month at 1 pm at 1443 S. St. Mary's. Call 725-8329 or 621-2177.

Voice for Animals meets the last Saturday at 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@tokyo.or call 320.7561

The Metropolitan Community Church of SA (MCCSA), 611 East Myrtle has non-denominational Christian services and Sunday School every Sunday at 10:30 AM. Call: 599-9289.

The Solidarity Support Group meets Monday thru Friday at 5802 S. Presa. For more call Janet @ 582-8776 or Leo @ 436-8018x307.

Stonewall Democrats of SA meets the 3rd Mondays at 7pm at Grady's Barbecue, 6510 San Pedro. Call 494-7442

World Can't Wait meets on Wednesdays at 7 pm at the Esperanza Center; contact sanantonio@worldcantwait.org

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

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

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)

- State Employee Charitable Campaign
- 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 Community Shares of Texas 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.

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 10th of each month.

CONJUREPRODUCTIONS presents **THE LOVE CONJURE/BLUES** text installation, a multi media production that includes a LIVE narration by author, Sharon Bridgforth with support from filmmaker, Jen Simmons and composer Helga Davis among others. It will take place at The Off Center, 2211-A Hidalgo in Austin, Texas. Performances scheduled are: JUNE 15th at 7pm, OPENING NIGHT PERFORMANCE/PARTY for \$15; JUNE 16 & 17 at 2pm & 7pm with sliding scale fee of \$8-\$15 and JUNE 21, 22 & 23 at 7pm with SS fee of \$8-\$15. Check: <http://loveconjureblues.com>

You're invited to **Kings N Things' Fifth Birthday Party** on Saturday, June 16 2007, doors open at 9pm, show at 10pm. At Red 7 in Austin, 611 E. 7th St., on the patio stage. All of your favorite Austin drag kings, queens, and their friends will be there. Admission is \$10 with \$5-\$7 sliding scale for youth under 21 and students. Contact www.kingsnthings.org for more information.

Support the **IFCO/Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba** this July - End the Blockade! **IFCO/Pastors for Peace** are building for the largest possible **US-Cuba Friendshipment Caravan** in July of 2007. To join the caravan within the U.S. or into Mexico and on to Cuba, contact cucaravan@igc.org Phone 212-926-5757 to make contributions or check www.pastorsforpeace.org for specifics. IFCO has 501(c)3 status so donations are tax-deductible.

Soapstone, a writing retreat for women is currently accepting applications for 2008 residences. Applications postmarked between July 1 and August 1, 2007 will be accepted for residencies in 2008. For specific information about **Soapstone** or to download an application, go to: <http://www.soapstone.org>

This July, **San Anto Cultural Arts** will celebrate its 10-year anniversary operating as a non-profit. A celebration is scheduled for Saturday July 14, 2007

from 6 pm to midnight at Beethoven Hall (King William, Pereida and Alamo). Among those featured at the celebration will be **Henry Zimmerle y su Conjunto San Antonio** and classic spins by DJ Jay Lopez!

MALCS 2007 will be in Minnesota from August 2-4 at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul campus. The theme this year is "Among Women, Between Nations," symbolizing both the intimacy and the sociopolitical complexity of our identities, relationships, and affiliations-between spaces and across borders. We will make a conscious effort to address issues particular to indigenous women's communities, as well as the transnational realities of Chicana/ Latina lives. Go to www.malcs.net or contact: malcs2007@umn.edu or Dr. Edén Torres, torre007@umn.edu

Join in solidarity with other wonderful mujeres from el valle y todo Tejas in organizing **Mujerfest 2007**, a day of workshops, music, film, poetry, and art. **Mujerfest 2007: This Bridge we Call Home** will take place on July 28th at the Mercedes Civic Center, in the lower Rio Grande Valley. Get info at www.caferevolucion.org/mujerfestinfo.html or contact: noemi.mtz@gmail.com

Cafe Revolución Productions is accepting submissions for the first zine, **This Bridge we call Home: Finding Gloria**, devoted to la Mera Nepantlera. A zine created by the folks she influenced; from the place she grew up in, the borderlands. How her writing helped shape Chicana feminism, created a new consciousness and gave voice to her generation and future generations and how this allowed others to find their voice and articulate through their bordered tongues will be part of the focus. Send submissions & questions to: Lina Suarez, suapri@yahoo.com or Noemi Martinez, noemi.mtz@gmail.com

Study Abroad Programs in Mexico for the Fall 2007 include the Juarez-

Chihuahua City-Chiapas program: Sept. 8 - Dec. 14. Check: www.mexicosolidarity.org/studyabroad/apply or write to msn@mexicosolidarity.org



The PARTY is Back! The 14th Cancer Party

7 pm-midnight @ Common Ground, 150 W. Sunset (near Sunset @ Broadway)

\$10 admission, proceeds benefit

- **The Esperanza Center**
- **The Women's Resource Center & S A L I R (San Antonio Lesbians Improving Relations)**

Make a tax-deductible donation.

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

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

- Enclosed is a donation of
- _____ \$1000
 - _____ \$500
 - _____ \$250
 - _____ \$100
 - _____ \$50
 - _____ \$25
 - _____ \$30 La Voz subscription / \$100 Institutions
 - _____ \$10
 - _____ other \$ _____

I would like to volunteer!

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone Number _____

for more info call 210.228.0201

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

Lalo Guerrero: The Original Chicano Free Documentary Film Screening



followed by plática with his son, Dan Guerrero
Sunday, June 17, 3pm @ Esperanza Center
922 San Pedro, 210.228.0201

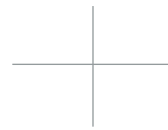
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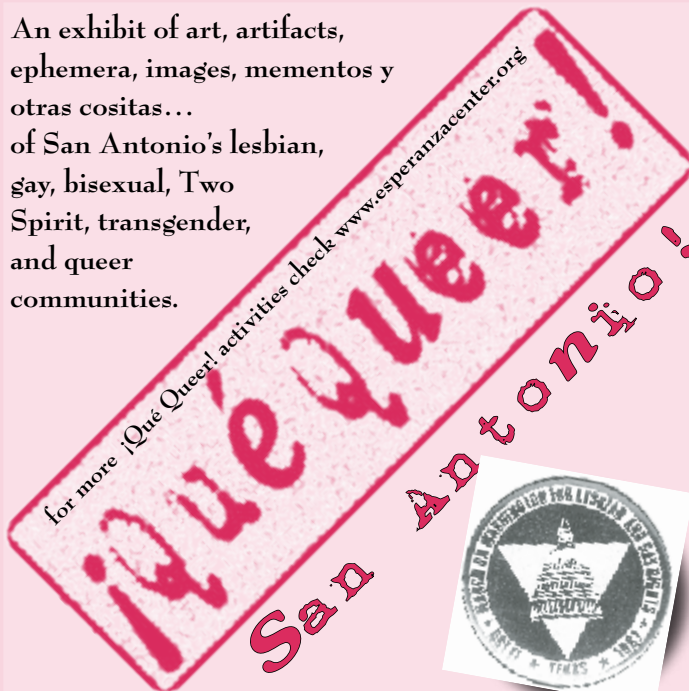
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ephemera, images, mementos y
otras cositas...
of San Antonio's lesbian,
gay, bisexual, Two
Spirit, transgender,
and queer
communities.



Opening Celebration:

Thursday, June 14, 2007 @ 6pm
On exhibit through August 3rd
at the Esperanza Center

¡Gaytino!

a solo performance by **Dan Guerrero**
con música, of course

Friday & Saturday,
June 15-16, 8pm
Tickets: pre-sale \$7,
\$10 at the door



Call Esperanza Center
at 210.228.0201
check www.gaytino.com or
www.esperanzacenter.org