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# TAPESTRY

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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY, KINGSVILLE  
WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES JOURNAL

## Foreword

Tapestry—"a piece of thick textile fabric with pictures or designs formed by weaving colored weft threads or by embroidering on canvas, used as a wall hanging or furniture covering; used in reference to an intricate or complex combination of things or sequence of events as in 'a tapestry of cultures, races, and customs.'"

This inaugural issue to Tapestry is indeed a weaving of textures, of stories, and of lives. In conjunction with the Women and Gender Studies Program at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, this journal celebrates and explores the stories and lives of the people who inhabit the geographic region of South Texas. Its contributors are students and faculty members of Texas A&M University-Kingsville as well as community members. For many, this is their first foray into publishing their work. The stories, memoirs, poetry they have individually created, come together to weave stories of relationships, of families, grandmothers, fathers, friends, children. Doing so, they display the rich mosaics of the ways that lives touch other lives, the ways they inspire, influence, even disturb those around them. These stories tell us also of pain, pride, determination, love, and survival. And they celebrate the strength of women, whether they are someone's Ama or the iconic figures that haunt our imaginations. Crafting art out of clay, paint, and words they tell us what the eye sees, what the heart feels in ways that are sure to touch the readers of this volume.

**Dr. Susan Roberson**

Professor of English  
Assistant Dean, College of Arts and Sciences  
Interim Women and Gender Studies Director

# Cover Page Artist: Santa Barraza

## MFA, Texas A&M University-Kingsville



A native of Kingsville, Texas, Santa Contreras Barraza is a contemporary Chicana/Tejana artist who is a Professor of Art at Texas A&M University at Kingsville. She formerly taught at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Penn State University at University Park, and La Roche College in Pittsburgh. She has also taught in Study Abroad programs at the Benito Juarez School of Visual Arts in Oaxaca, Mexico, University of Graz in Austria, and University of Alcala at de Henares, Spain. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in 1975 and her Master of Fine Arts in 1982 from the University of Texas at Austin.

Her artwork has been widely exhibited in the United States, Mexico, Italy, Spain, Germany, and Argentina. Her vita reflects a career replete with awards, appearances and lectures, exhibitions, and publications. Her artwork is in the permanent collections of private collectors and several institutions, including the Museum of Texas Tech University, Mexican Museum in San Francisco, Del Mar College, Fondo del Sol Museum, South Texas Museum, Olin Museum at Bates College, the Hispanic/Latino Archives of the Tomas Ybarra Fausto Collection at the Smithsonian Institution at Washington DC, University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany, and Center for Interdisciplinary Studies Research of the University of Bielefeld, Germany, and the University of Alcala de Henares, Spain.

Her artwork has been exhibited in the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum in Chicago, Austin Arts Museum, Albuquerque Museum, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Bronx Museum, Wright Art Gallery in Los Angeles, Intar Latin American Gallery in New York City, Kohler Art Museum in Soboygen, Wisconsin, National Gallery of American Art of the Smithsonian, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Modern Museum of Art in Mexico City, Santo Domingo Museum of Art in Oaxaca, Mexico, Museum of Print in Mexico City, Centro Cultural de la Villa Madrid in Spain, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies Research of the University of Bielefeld, Germany, Casa de America of Madrid, Spain, among others. From December 8, 2012 through May 19, 2013, her artwork was exhibited in the “Women Shaping Texas” exhibition that opened

at the Bullock Texas State History Museum in Austin. In June 22 through July 30, 2014, Casa de America in Madrid, Spain featured her artwork as a solo artist.

Most recently she exhibited in the “Arte y Tradicion de la Frontera: the US –Mexico Borderlands in the Works of Santa Barraza and Carmen Lomas Garza” at the Educational and Cultural Center of Texas A&M University of San Antonio. This year she is participating in a group print “Border Crossing” exhibition at the Art Museum of La Salle University of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

In 2001 Texas A & M University Press published the book, *Santa Barraza: Artist of the Borderlands*, which received the annual Southwest Book Award from the Border Regional Library Association in 2002. In 2016 the University of Texas Press will be featuring her artwork in the new publication, *Entre Guadalupe y Malinche: Tejanas in Literature and Art* edited by Hernandez-Avila and Cantu.

In 2008, she received the Women Caucus for Art Presidential Award, affiliated with the National College Art Association. In that same year, she was also awarded the Heroes for Children’s Award by the State of Texas Board of Education. Among many awards received by Barraza are a Recognition Award for Contribution in the Arts from National Chicanos in Higher Education; the Reader’s Digest-Lila Wallace Grant, Professional Achievement Award from the Women of Color Association, 2008 Women’s Caucus for Art Mid-Career Achievement, 2008 Heroes for Children Award by the State of Texas Board of Education, 2012 Suenos Cultura y Vida Recipient by LULAC Corpus Christi, and 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award by Mexic-Arte Museum of Austin.

The art on the cover and the following art is reproduced with the specific consent of the artist, Santa Barraza:





*Codex of la Cosecha*  
Santa Barraza



*Codex de la Cosecha*  
Santa Barraza



*Lydia Mendoza's Canto a la Virgen*

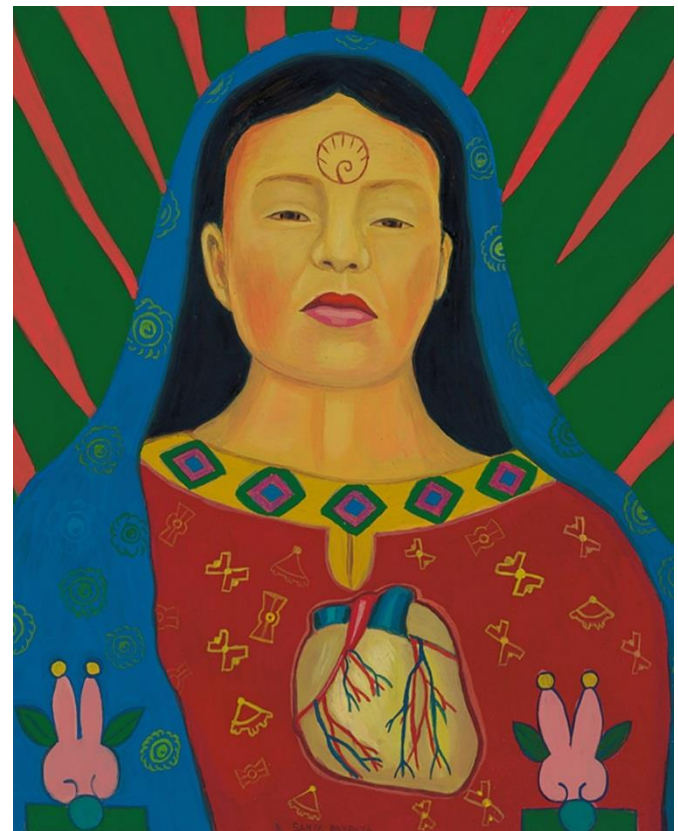
Santa Barraza



*Mujeres de las Americas*  
Santa Barraza



*Retablo of Ema Tenayucca*  
Santa Barraza



*Retablo Virgen con Corazon*  
Santa Barraza





*Retablo Virgen con Corazon*  
Santa Barraza



*Una Frida*  
Santa Barraza



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# Michael Page

## *The Life of Bridget V. Page*

Bridget Page, Bridget Vinson at the time, was born October 31, 1967 in Queens, NY. Bridget was the youngest of five children, with a nineteen-year age gap between herself and her oldest brother. Her father was a commander in the U.S. Navy serving as a chaplain, so she was forced to move from place to place every two years relocating all across the nation, but mostly along the east coast. Since being born she has moved from Queens, NY to Bethesda, MD to Grand Prairie, TX to Pensacola, FL to Camp Lejeune, NC and back to Grand Prairie, TX when she reached the fourth grade and stayed until she eventually graduated from South Grand Prairie High School. Due to all the moving in her early life, she never made true friends at that important age in her life. This was an obstacle that she had to face growing up and to prevent this from ever happening to me and my siblings, she lived in the same house in Kennedale, TX for twenty-five years until I eventually graduated so that I may make long term friends that I grew up with. I greatly appreciated that and it has helped me to succeed by making good relationships with many people in my life.

Bridget had to face many adversities and obstacles at an early age. Besides all of the constant moving and not being able to make close friends, Bridget was born with an extra air passage between the nasal and mouth cavity which caused her to have a major speech impediment. To fix this problem, she was put into speech therapy for ten years which eventually fixed her impediment by teaching her to project her voice. By learning how to project her voice, she has become a regular in the community plays and musicals where her projection is greatly admired. My mom has shown me that even in the worst of situations that if you keep a positive attitude, you can overcome almost any obstacle. It is said that I am very optimistic just like my mother, which is why we both get along with so many people. Her optimism instilled in me has helped me to make so many relationships and figure out problems without over stressing. Being able to not over stress is a very beneficial tool here at the university in order to succeed.

Bridget graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) with a Bachelor of Science and Nursing in 1988. She used this degree to pursue many jobs in the nursing field such as working in the Neonatal ICU, Plasma Donation Center, and Occupational Health where she resides today. She has worked in Occupational Health for over 26 years and has an official



occupational health nurse specialist certification, which only 20% of occupational health nurses have. She has also just recently graduated from UTA in 2015 with a Masters in Healthcare Administration. She has also stood in as the President of The North Texas Association of Occupational Health Nurses for the last four years and prior to that stood in as the Treasurer for three years. That organization encompasses the entire top part of Texas including Oklahoma and parts of Louisiana. She has done all of these things while balancing a job that is over 40 hours a week and family life. She is the poster child for determination and hard work. This drives me to work just as hard so that I may reach the accomplishments that she has. Also she graduated with a 4.0 GPA so it gives me the incentive that there is no excuse of me not to do good in classes if she can work 40+ hours a week, go to school, and still have time to be with me and manage a 4.0 GPA. This is a major motivator for me here at the university. Her words of wisdom is to make sure to use the time that you have free to do something, because you can always find something to do to better yourself.

My mother Bridget married my father Tom in 1990, where they gave birth to three children, Amanda in 1992, Michael in 1996, and Spencer in 2003. She also became a grandmother in August of 2014 to Makenzie Grace. Bridget's love for her husband and kids has shown me how a real person is supposed to be treated and loved. Her kindness has reached the hearts of many, including one individual other than myself. As a younger nurse working in the Neonatal ICU, she had spotted that this one particular baby had an extremely rare condition when other professionals had not. The baby had EB, which is a disorder that if any contact with anything touches him, he would blister up leaving behind scar tissue. My mother had seen this in two other cases at a different hospital a month earlier, so she set up the families so that they could have a support group and immediately took action in the procedures to take care of the baby. Ten years later at a different hospital when Bridget had moved to occupational health, this lady came in and continuously stared at her before the lady received her standard employee testing. The lady came back a week later and pronounced that my mother used to have her maiden name of Vinson instead of the present name Page, and explained that she had been the mother of the baby boy that my mother had taken care of. Then a little boy covered in scar tissue went up to my mom and gave her a huge hug and thanked her for saving his life.

My mother loves to fish. By growing up on the east coast, fishing was instilled into everyday life. She has influenced me to make fishing apart of my everyday life. Fishing is a way of relaxation and past time that provides an outlet to have fun without getting into the troubles of our everyday society. Bridget has taken me fishing since before I could walk, so it is a natural to

me. My mother has influenced me greatly in the outdoors and is a main contributor to my pursuit for a job in the outdoors dealing with wildlife. She has made me the person I am today, and I have enjoyed every fishing trip that we have shared all over the country.

## **James Bartkowiak**

### *My Mother, Shannon Bartkowiak*

My mother was born Shannon Waters on June 4, 1971 in Kingsville, Texas to Cora and James Waters. She graduated from H.M. King high school in 1989 and shortly after moved to Austin, Texas. In Austin she waited tables while attending Austin Community College for a year before dropping out to date my father. She moved to Corpus Christi, Texas where she and my father started their lives together. The two married in July of 1995 and my mother gave birth to me two years later. In May of 2001 she opened her own business a small boutique where she spends all her days.

As I already stated our lives crossed on July 31, 1997 the day I was born. My mother inspires me in many ways but the main three are her independent attitude, loving heart, and her perseverance. My mother is the most independent person that I know, no she is not a single mother like most would classify as independent. My mother is independent in the aspect that she never has and never will ask anyone for help. This motivates me by showing me that no matter what I can accomplish anything. Another great trait of my mother is her loving heart. No matter what happens she is always looking to see the better in someone or the situation. This attribute shows me that no matter what I must always remain optimistic as she does. The third and final attribute of my mother is her perseverance no matter what life throws in her path she always finds a way to overcome the obstacle, showing me that I can do the same.

I will use all of my mothers' inspiration to help me graduate from this university, the only true success. If I am down on my luck and seem to be stuck in a rut I know that like my mother I can do anything on my own. If someone makes me mad or does not treat me right I will forgive them with a loving heart just like my mother. If life throws an obstacle in my path of life I will be able to overcome that obstacle no matter how large, just like my mother.

I received the inspiration that all humans require from my mother Shannon Bartkowiak. Without my mothers' inspiration I would not be half of the person I am today.

# **Lauralee Garza Guzman**

## *Receta: Grandmother and Tia Rica's Cookies*

Dedicated to the memory of my abuela Guadalupe Alvarez and my Tia Rica

I've been making these cookies since I was about 11. My grandmother had my Tia Rica's cookbook (I think it was an old Betty Crocker or something like that) and while looking at these recipes the chocolate chip cookie one caught my eye. So my grandmother bought me the ingredients and they were such a big hit! Since then I've been the designated baker. I always remember my aunts and uncles coming over for coffee and having cookies while they chatted.

2 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 tsp. Baking soda

1/2 tsp. Salt

3/4 cup unsalted butter, melted

1 cup packed brown sugar

1/2 cup white sugar

1 tsp. vanilla extract

1/2 tbsl. Butter flavor

1 egg

1 egg yolk

2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 325. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper.

Mix, flour, baking soda and salt in a bowl and set aside.

In another cream together melted butter, brown sugar and white sugar until blended. Beat in vanilla, butter flavor, egg and egg yolk until light and creamy. Gradually mix the dry ingredients into the sugar mixture until just blended. Stir in the chocolate chips by hand using a wooden spoon. Drop cookie dough 1/4 cup at a time (I use a large ice cream scoop) onto cookie sheets. Make sure they are about 3 inches apart. They are big cookies!

Bake for 15 to 17 minutes. I usually do 16. Cool on baking sheets before transferring to a wire rack.

# Piedad Ymbert

## *Receta: Capirotada*

- 2 Piloncillos
- 2 Cinnamon Sticks, 4-inches long
- 2 whole cloves
- 4 cups of water
- 1 loaf of day old bread
- 1 cup raisins or 1 small bag of prunes
- 1 cup pecans
- 4 cups of shredded cheese or 1 pkg of cheese slices (16)



### Instructions

- 1 Preheat oven to 350°F.
- 2 In a medium pan, mix 3 cups of water and the piloncillo. Bring to boil.
- 3 In a medium pan, mix 1 cup of water with the cinnamon sticks and cloves. Bring to boil.
- 4 You can boil all of the ingredients together, but I like the piloncillo by itself.
- 5 After the mixtures boil, turn on the heat and let the mixtures sit for 5-10 minutes.
- 6 Strain the mixtures and set them aside.
- 7 In a large baking dish begin to layer the ingredients:  
Layer the bread slices, followed by raisins, pecans, and cheese. Continue until the last layer of cheese is placed. Then pour the piloncillo and the cinnamon liquids over the whole dish.
8. Bake at 300 degrees for 30 minutes until cheese is melted.

A variation is to use pan francés and let it soak in milk 5-10 minutes before layering it.





# Ariana Barrera

## *Receta: Calabaza con Pollo*

I remember having Calabaza con Pollo as a little girl when my grandma would make it and how much I enjoyed it. I wanted to recreate that for my family. 10 years ago I asked my mom how to make calabaza con pollo. She gave me a recipe and then I turned around and asked my younger sister how she made hers. Using both their best ideas and adding my own touches over the years have made this dish a favorite. Its time consuming but absolutely worth it.

### Ingredients:

8 chicken thighs/legs (BONE IN)  
1 large calabaza squash (cubed)  
2 small yellow squash (sliced)  
8 ears of unshucked corn  
Half a large onion, chopped coarsely  
2 teaspoons minced garlic  
2 teaspoons cumin powder  
4 Roma tomatoes, cubed  
1 can tomato sauce 8 oz.  
Salt and pepper to taste



Begin by removing and discarding the skin from the chicken thighs. Leave the bone in. In a large pot, add the thighs, garlic, cumin and cover with water. Cook over medium heat until chicken is thoroughly cooked, about 30 minutes.

While the chicken is cooking, shuck the corn and remove the silk. Rinse the corn thoroughly, then boil it separately from the chicken for 10 minutes. When done, remove the kernels from the cob with a knife. Do not discard this water yet. When the chicken is done, strain out any froth or particles from the broth. Add the corn kernels and two cups of the corn water to the chicken and broth. Add the tomato sauce, onion and tomatoes, and salt and pepper. Simmer for 15 minutes.

(I like to do a taste test before I add the squash to make sure the salt and spices are to my liking.)

Add the yellow squash and after 5 minutes, add the calabaza. Continue to simmer until all the squash is soft, about ten minutes. Serve hot.

# Josie Soliz

## *Receta: El Relleno de Mi Abuela Chelo*

The first Thanksgiving after my marriage (I had my first daughter by then), my mother-in-law taught me how to make stuffing. Everyone loved it. Since then, I always make it for Thanksgiving and Christmas.

### Ingredients for Cornbread

- 1 bag cornmeal
- 1 bag flour
- 1 c. milk
- 1 tsp. salt
- 3 eggs
- 1 stick of butter

### Ingredients for Stuffing

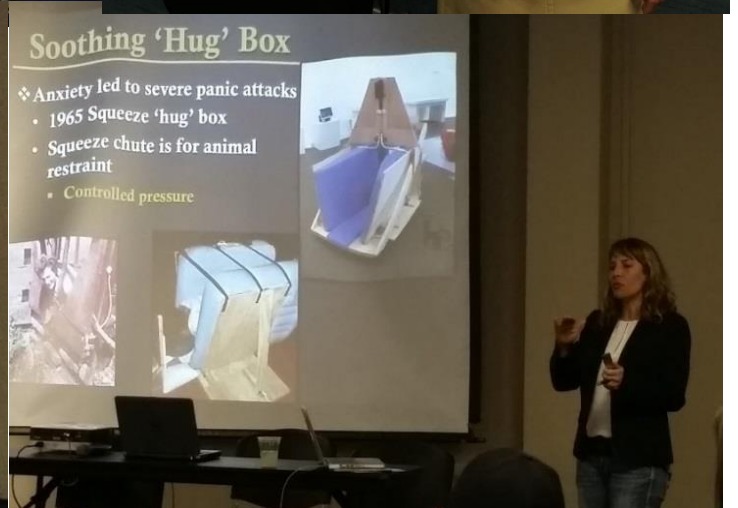
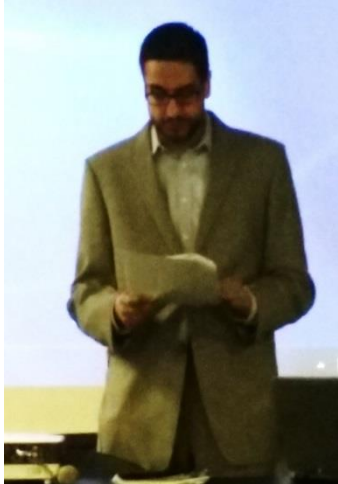
- 1 bag of bread crumbs
- 3 tbsp. onion powder
- 3 tbsp. garlic powder
- 4 tsp. Poultry Seasoning
- 2 large Cans of Cream of Chicken
- 1 stick of butter
- 3 celery stalks (minced)
- 1 small onion (minced)
- 1 box Stove Top Stuffing



Follow the recipe for cornbread on the back of the bag of cornmeal. Once the corn bread is baked, crumble it up finely and mix with the bag of bread crumbs. Mix one box of Stove Top Stuffing with 3 tbsp. onion powder, 3 tbsp. garlic powder, 4 tsp. Poultry Seasoning into the cornbread. Add in the 2 large cans of Cream of Chicken into the cornbread. Warm 1 stick of butter in another pan. Then sauté the onions and the celery. Mix everything into one pan with the cornbread, and knead the contents. Place it into the oven at 350° until browned.

# Women and Gender Studies {WGST} STUDIES

*Women and  
Gender Studies  
Symposium  
March 3, 2016*



**Women and Gender Studies Symposium**

# Kaina Martinez

## *Olympic Runner*

Many see me as an athlete, a sister, a great aunt, a Garifuna girl (indigenous group mixture of Arawak and Carib) and I can go on, but for me I am just a phenomenal young woman who like many women out there; we conquer the most unthinkable, and yet we stand. Being



born into the household of a single mother of three was not fun. Being raised by three strong women my mom, grand aunt and later my grandmother surely was interestingly unbearable at times. They all have a different interesting personality which surely has created something unique within me. Mom was a woman of more work and less talk, so even when she is not around, I was compelled to create the best me. My grand aunt believes in equality and hard work. My grandmothers, who later become a part of my life, believed in gender roles.

For many years I craved my mother's attention, but it was hard to receive. She was always in the field working, making sure food was on the table and necessities of life were met. Mom's demeanor was outstanding; it speaks to me even when she is not around. Though, I received my grand aunt's attention it was not as I would like to.

My grandmother never fails to see things from a cultural point of view, and she thoroughly believed in gender roles; we never see eye to eye because I just never believed that the difference in sex or gender should have a specific role.

My grand aunt believed that I should never depend on a man and that I should always challenge myself to do anything a man can do. I used to hear her all the time; "biting my ears." She used to make me read my books instead of TV. She would repeatedly say; "work hard and make your hard working mother proud." I was filled with disgust at first. However, I later found pleasure in learning to be independent and travelling the world through books. My curiosity to visit those places and embracing culture started to develop as well. Though these women instill great values within; my life still felt like something was missing.

I never really had the privilege of a male figure growing up and, most of my younger years I spent being angry with my biological father because he was never present in my life.



However though, I had to learn to live by observing and using the teachings of the trio of my life. I believe it increased my determination to break barriers..... Yes, it may have made me strong, but that missing element was felt so heavy to embrace. I later dug into sports, using it as a veil to cover my hurt and to beat my anger.

In 1999-2000 I was part of the St. Alphonsus RC School, making history. We were the first Primary school to win the 4 national Primary school sporting events. Being the Most Valuable Player in basketball and Softball, I earned two high school scholarships because of doing well in school and sports and never repeating a year of my 4years in high school; it was just unfortunately the scholarship didn't fully went through. Struggling to meet ends at time, became frustrating. I covered my frustration with smiles and being great at what I do until I could not do any more. As I speak it still felt yesterday; I am slowly starting to drift away from myself. The access of help was so hard to acquire.

I later planned to rid myself of the breath of life. I felt no one cared; it didn't matter how hard I tried things it was always an uncontrollable battle. It was a gloomy class day, and I couldn't wait for the buzzer to ring. When it did I came out as a normal child and then went behind the school where no one was to end my life, but I could not. It was like going into a trance and back out with the blade in my hands and tears falling and a positive voice talking. I stood up and I promised myself that no matter how hard life becomes I will go over the hurdles and keep climbing barriers.

Before my high school graduation, I received the best gift. I didn't need to pay my bills to graduate because of my achievement as an athlete and a good student. My expenses were paid by the school. Not knowing who would pay for a post-secondary education, I was determined to go for a degree. Blindly I started with little money thinking it would help..... From knocking on different family member's door to sacrificing lunch money for room rental to leaving semesters to work and going back. Part time jobs were not accessible for anyone. Nevertheless I finished even though I choose never to walk up for my degree in Business Administration

Due to the experiences I had acquired whilst reaching to grasp my goals and dreams I had been compelled to serve and give back even where I have not received. Life should be more about changing lives, wherever we can and living our lives to the fullest because sometimes we are the only hope for another to reach his or her dreams or goals. In 2011 I challenged myself to join the armed force of my country, and, though quitting crossed the mind, I was determine and persistent to remain courageous to make not only the transformation of a civilian to a soldier, but most of all to learn that transformation brings a better you. As well as it is an honor to serve our

people. Being distraught by how sports is looked upon in my country I decided to make a difference. Instead of forever being angry.

In 2011 I founded a community project named Kaina Martinez Children Track And Field Camp Games (KMCTFCG), yet to become a registered NGO. The goal of KMCTFCG is to use sports as a catalyst to help children make a choice and make a change within our community. I believe that when we go beyond our limitation there lies success, but greater is achieved when you give a hand.

Since I can be used as a model, changes are possible within my community, I use that image to help make a child grow into the best young man or woman he or she can become by being actively involved. With the help of the few who sees this vision, we have been capable to inspire at least one child within our community each year.

Like we all know, life can be challenging but every time it tries to knock me down I remind myself how blessed I am and that I must suck it up and move forward. After all, the greatest success requires us to keep jumping over many hurdles, leaping over mountains and breaking barriers, without ever thinking you are a loser when you fail. When life becomes more challenging I see myself never quitting even when quitting crosses the mind. Due to my courage, upbringing and determination in life I became capable of overcoming all the seemingly unbearable obstacles. The obstacle I thought was unbreakable has brought closure to the little girl who wanted to be a professional athlete by reaching the world's most anticipated games- the Olympics.

Yes the road was a rocky and a curvy one too, but in 2012 I became an Olympian after 10



years of being in the game and basically training myself. I became the first Belizean female to make it to another round. It was an honor to serve my country but more fulfilling to know that not only did my determination, persistence in training myself and accepting little training ideas and helped when I receive it; but knowing my faith being my main driver has help me reach what my

natural eyes became unbearable to see.

I hope to one day have a youth foundation where I can continue to help change the lives of young people who are determined to reach beyond. I also look forward to continue to serve others wherever I am. I feel that life is more fulfilling when you give it your all. That for me leaves a sense of personal satisfaction.

## Melissa Soliz

### *Grandma*

Dedicated to Consuelo C. Soliz

She always told me her stories. Me, an awkward teenager kneeling at her bed and she running her fingers through my curls and reminiscing about the old days when she was young caress and these stories that she gifted me. I felt so safe there in her home, in her room with the smell of tortillas and bath powder. She kept the powder on her cajon. She always kept it right between the wooden jewelry box and the olive oil that she used to bless and pray over us with. I always left her house smelling of food, powder and oil. Such is the smell of a blessed child.



Kneeling by her bed like a child saying her nightly prayers, I'd watch her play her crossword puzzles, sew embroidery and at the same time she'd regress into a day when her legs moved to songs like *In the Mood* and *Fascination*. She always sang that song to me, "*It was fascination.....*" I can still hear her voice in my memory and see her face the way her nostrils would flare with every lucky note that was able to touch off her lips as it spun from her mouth.

"Was that like your rock and roll in those days, Grandma?"

"Que es rock and roll, mija? Yo no se." She'd always ask me questions like that. When she learned a new word she wanted it defined and used in a sentence and then she would ask me for a thorough example of how, where and when it was used. With her second grade education, Grandma was always trying to learn more. Every new word was our classroom, and I was the teacher. She taught me so much more than I could have ever taught her.

"No, mija. It was good music. The kind of music that made you feel like you were floating on the air, and he would hold your hands and you just spin." She would screech in delight as though she was back in the dance hall actually holding his hands and feeling the security of his arms holding her up as she took in the music and counted off the dance steps. Her arms framed as though she was locked with her imaginary dance partner's arms... 1, 2, 3.... and her eyes closed she'd finish humming the song to me with such a view of serenity and pure contentment on her face. When she opened her eyes to wake to the harsh reality of her room with its pink curtains and white bed sheets the expression on her face disappeared into the air like powder.

"Ay, mija! Quidado! Don't spill el talcum del cajon!" And, she'd lift herself off her bed to move it out of my way. If that powder fell to the floor that would surely be the end of the powder, and she and I would have to attempt to pick up every granule of it with her vacuum sweeper that she refused to trade in for a modern day vacuum. Usually, in the morning, she vacuum swept the block of carpet she laid over years and years of worn, pale wooden floor that my grandfather had nailed down when he built the house for her. For all of us. Had I dropped that powder, she would have had to perform the same tedious sweeping she does every morning when she has the most energy.

"Get on the bed, love! It is very bad for you to be on your knees! Remember that your Tia Maria used to do that a lot and she got bolas on her knees! You're going to hurt your knees and then you're not going to be able to walk and be in a wheelchair like her."

"No she didn't Grandma. You just tell me that to scare me! Tia Maria still walks!"

"Como que no, guerca? She would kneel to pray for hours at the Catholic Church, and her knees estaban con bolas. Y duelen!"

Her hands silky as snow would open the green alcohol with an avocado seed in it, pour some into her own hand and touch over her own knee as she told me of Tia Maria. I had heard the Tia Maria tale several times before while I liked to kneel by my grandmother's bed, but never did I believe my grandmother about the bola knees. Tia Maria's knees had always looked fine to me. When she came to visit, she wasn't in a wheelchair. She walked well, and she was pretty healthy for her age so I didn't buy the bola knees story.



"But, Grandma, the boards will fall if I get on! They always fall" Three too-short boards held up the box spring. Every time we were on the bed together, I caused the box spring to slip off the boards and fall through, and every time we would both scream.

"Ya tienes susto de mi cama."

"No, it's not susto. I'm just too big for it. I'm going to break it, and you'll have to sleep on the floor. "

"Ay, mija! How am I going to sleep on the floor? Get on! Andale! Vamonos! If it falls, it falls, and we pick up the boards. Hurry up, I said."

Slowly, I put one leg on the bed and as gently as I could, I laid my body of bricks down. Squuuueeeak.....

"Ay, it's gonna break! Grandma, it's gonna break! I can feel the boards moving!"

"It's not going to break, muchachita!"

Through all my reluctance, the bed squeaking and squawking in agony and my fear, I was laying in the pink pond of lotion, crosswords, powder, Bible verse and love. "This is what it's like up here." Squeak! All the while I was thinking to myself, 'Don't get too comfortable on here, girl. These boards are going to go.' They go every time you attempt this. Squeezing my ass cheeks together I laid my head back onto the bed, and all of the tension from kneeling on the floor slipped far down my spine and out through the bottoms of my feet like bubbles.

"You see, love? It's not broken!"

"Not yet!"

"No te procupes! Don't worry, hijita!"

There was the humming of that song again. "*It was fascinatiition...*"

"I bet you looked beautiful, Grandma. What would you wear? Who would you go with?" I looked up at her with a smile of pride like when everyone clapped for me, Spelling Bee Champ in Ms. Pugh's 5th grade class.

"Ay, Sugar, I was poor. I remember I would work at the laundry mat, and I would make twenty five cents a week. Can you believe that? Woooo hooo.....twenty five cents, mijita!"

Just the fact that she made her twenty five cents a week washing, folding and ironing clothes, counting the days to go out to a dance in hopes of seeing my grandfather there actually melted my heart. My grandfather had two brothers, and the three of them would go to the weekly event together in hopes of grabbing onto a dance partner and stepping the night away. The three of them worked at the laundry mat with Grandma and her two sisters. That's where my grandparents initially met as they sweat over ring washers and ironed nice, straight creases in the clothes of rich white folks in our small town. Later she discussed with me how she took such pride in sewing the curtains for the local bank and had side sewing jobs for the owner of the bank. I didn't take much pride in that at all but grandma was proud of what she and her family had given to this town even if it was in their own small way. She believed that the soil and money of this town was worked through our people and we made this town successful even if she had to go to the alley on Kleberg Street to order a hamburger from the local soda shop, she knew her ancestors were the reason those gringos knew how to cook.

My grandfather had her from the moment she laid eyes on him. He was tall, dark and handsome. A strong face and lanky body, he stood a few inches taller than her and that was just enough height between them to make her feel safe in his arms where she secretly dreamed she would be someday. He would stare at her from afar and her sisters would giggle and she would only respond with an ugly face or stick out her tongue at him and his brothers would return the giggles. She never gave into his smiles or winks and she'd pretend that he wasn't walking two feet behind her on the way to the dance hall as her sisters taunted her that he was right there.

"There's Juan, Connie!"

"Ya callesen! I don't care if he's there! Let him be there! He's free to be there isn't he?"

"Oh, Connie, estas bien terqua!"

Her sisters knew that my grandpa liked her, but my grandmother was not easy to get and she had a lot of pride.

"But, Grandma! Why didn't you talk to him?"

"Oh, no! It wasn't that easy. I wasn't going to give him the satisfaction of talking to me. He had to work for it. Plus, I was scared. Yes, I was scared, but nobody knew it because I was a great actress and I would bite my lip and my tongue."

Mexican kids her age lined up the dance hall. My grandpa and his brothers in line with

the boys; grandma and her sisters in line with the girls, he'd stare at her from across the hall which her sisters never left unnoticed.

With much reluctance, each boy would walk his way towards a potential dance partner and ask her to dance. My grandpa knew if he asked Grandma he'd get shot down like so many times before, but he also knew he wasn't going to give up. He'd ask her, not so reluctantly, because my grandpa wasn't shy, if she wanted to dance with him and she'd gladly, stubbornly say no. It wasn't going to be that easy, manito!

"So you wouldn't dance, Grandma?"

"Oh, como que no? I'd dance with other boys all night long and it worked!"

"What worked?"

"It made your Grandpa so mad, he married me!"

## **Melissa Soliz**

### *Chiquita*

Dedicated to the memory of Panchita Cabrera

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"Oh, como que no? I'd dance with other boys all night long, and it worked!"

"What worked?"

"It made your Grandpa so mad, he married me!"

She pulled the drapes back off the window where the blind had already been lifted that morning to let in the sunshine. I saw the dust falling from the curtain, flying around like little spirits. Grandma did that every morning.

After my parent's divorce, my brother, father and I moved in with Grandma. Although it was uncomfortable and I complained about it sometimes, I had the privilege of sleeping on the



floor on a mat next to my grandmother's bed. The hard wooden floor was my bedroom, my writing room, my private time, my phone booth, my homework desk and my little corner and escape into my grandmother's world. Her stories were my peace, and they brought me comfort. I fell asleep to them, I cried about them, I got to know my grandmother through her stories, and we became best friends. I considered myself rich. I still do. How many kids can say that they became writers because they slept on the floor next to their Grandmother's bed and listened to story after story from her and knew that they had to write them down one day?

"Light is good for our health. It gives us vitamins that we need, makes our nails and hair grow," she would say.

Always humming a song, she drew flowers and wrote out her various grandchildren's names out on paper and sometimes even on her pink blanket.

"Grandma, how many brothers and sisters do you have?" I asked a question I had asked so many times before.

"I have five sisters and one brother."

"Did you all have to share everything?" I asked my grandmother.

"Yes, como que no. Our dresses, our shoes, everything. Our parents couldn't afford to buy us very much because we only depended on the little bit of money daddy got with his veteran's check and what we brought home from the laundry mat where we worked and gave to mom. Apa had already lost his sight by then so he couldn't work. We had to work to help my parents."

"Wait, Grandma! You said you had five sisters? I thought you only had four. Who am I missing? There's Tias Fina, Julia, Chayo and Marina, right? Who am I missing?"

"There was also our baby sister. She was named after mother. Her name was Francisca too, but we called her Chiquita because she was the baby of the family. My mom was very surprised when she got pregnant with her, because she thought she was too old to have children. She was only nine years old when she was killed."

"You had a little sister that was killed, Grandma? I didn't even know you had another sister?"

My grandmother had shared almost everything with me. She had never told me that she had a younger sister who had been killed in our neighborhood, where we played every day and

every night in the same streets. With the same long ago neighbor's grandchildren. Everything was safe in our streets.

"She was mama's baby. Mama was very protective of her. Pobre, Chiquita. She didn't have a chance of surviving. She was too skinny and too small like skin and bones. It just happened suddenly, and the whole neighborhood went silent that night. You could only hear the crying of the chicharas in the trees and the squeaking of the truck as it passed us like a distant memory in the night."

"How did she get killed, Grandma? You don't have to tell me if you don't want to. Or, look! Write it down if it's too hard to say!"

My adolescent mind told me that it would be easier to write it down. I handed her a piece of paper and a pen to express herself as I had done so many times in my life in journals and diaries. It was the best form of release for me so maybe it would help my grandma too. Today when I think of giving her a pen and a paper, I know she was humoring me. My grandmother was a strong woman. She could've told me, but she liked the idea of writing it down. She loved to write, just like me.

Her shaking hand took the pen and she laid the paper down onto her Bible for backing and wrote down '*she was hit by a truck.*' I read it, and my heart sunk like stones; I realized how hard it must have been on my entire family to lose their sister, daughter, cousin and friend and to watch her die there on our street.

I thought of my own sisters, both younger than me. My heart dropped in my chest, and I felt like holding my Grandma and telling her that I was sorry for her pain, but I was in such disbelief and froze like the moras on the trees in winter.

"She was hit by a truck right in front of our house. Ay, hija, it was ugly. Bien feyo! Ay estaba Chiquita in the street muerta. She wasn't moving, and we all just stood there like statues until we realized what had happened. Those boys killed our Chiquita."

"On our street!? Right here on Lee Street she was killed? But, how, Grandma? Was she not looking both ways?"

"We always played outside with our friends like you all play outside today with Joe y Tone y los muchachos. Chiquita was only nine years old so we all watched after her for my mother while she cooked or cleaned the house. That night mama was very busy washing dishes because we had just had dinner. We were all outside talking with our friends and running around. I remember that night like it was yesterday. I can still smell the aroma of neighbors cooking

tortillas that snuck out through the telas. It was a bit windy that night so the caliche was picked up with the wind and would land on our legs, arms and faces like tiny fleas making us itch.”

“Were they drunk, Grandma? Did they do it on purpose? I just don’t understand how this could happen.”

In a simple sentence, “she was killed by a truck,” my grandma had given me a picture of a great aunt I didn’t know; her little sister, only nine, the baby of the family, skinny and frail, hit by a truck right before everyone’s very eyes. Hit by a truck while everyone—the neighbors, her friends, our ancestors watched as she lay bleeding to death in the street.

“Oh, no, mija. You settle down and I will tell you the whole story.”

“Ok, Grandma.”

I climbed on top of her bed where there was such comfort and such love. The pillow I laid my head on lingering with the scent of lotion, powder and perfumes. My legs always hanged off the bed because I was so tall, but still, I felt such ease with Grandma laying there in the bed where my father was born.

“They were neighborhood boys that we knew all our lives and for weeks they had been working on that old truck. The oldest boy was going to fix it so he could drive it, but for weeks they couldn’t get the damn truck to start.

It happened a long time ago, mijita. We mourned then, but since then, I know that Chiquita is with God. I don’t cry anymore. I can’t help to wonder what she would have been like had she not been gone.”

“I bet she would’ve been just like you, Grandma. She would have been pretty and nice to her grandchildren like you are to us.”

“Ay, que linda que eres, mi Muneca. You may be right, but I am far from being pretty.”

“Grandma, you’re beautiful. That’s where I get my good looks from.” We both broke into laughter.

“Ok, Grandma, go ahead!”

I quietly sat, listening to my grandmother’s words. Skinny lil’ Panchita who they called Chiquita, named after her mother and my great grandmother Francisca. She must have been special having been named after her own mother: the baby.

“As I was saying, those boys had been working on that truck for a very long time y nunca queria prender la pinche troca. Ay, mija, excuse my language. But, that fateful night, the truck started. No one noticed at first that it began to roll down the street, and the boy behind the

wheel steered while the other two boys yelled and warned everyone to move out of the way. All the kids cleared the way fast. We all looked around, looking and looking for my little sister, but we couldn't find her. And, just at that moment, when we were frantically searching for her, we heard the truck crash."

"I yelled at my sisters, 'donde esta Chiquitaaaaa!?"

"The truck ran over Chiquita, Grandma?" I said in shock with tears filling my eyes.

"Yes, mi amor, our poor little Chiquita in the street, dead. One of my other sisters, I can't remember which one ran in the house and told mother that Chiquita had been hit by the truck."

"Ama, matadon a Chiquita! Ama, por favor, ven con migo! They ran over Chiquita with the truck and she's laying in the street!"

"Ay, que dices, nina? Let's go see what you're talking about. Surely you're wrong! Donde esta, mi Chiquita?"

"My mother screamed so loud I could hear her from outside. 'Ay, ay viene mami.' I told my sisters and the neighborhood kids. We tried so hard to keep our composure so mom wouldn't go into shock. We stood there waiting for mama's reaction and with heavy steps she walked fast to where we were.

"But, as hard as we tried to keep it together, by the time my mother came out of the house, we had all started to cry because of the realization that our sister was gone. Our little sister that we were supposed to be responsible for was dead. Right in front of our eyes she had been taken. With Lee Street looking on, the pavement sucked the blood out of my poor sister and we felt to blame.

"Mr. Torres from down the street had heard all the commotion and came outside to see what had happened. He saw that Chiquita laid in the road motionless and he went up to her and felt for a pulse but felt only the wind blowing and taking Chiquita's soul with it.

"He lifted my sister's little body slowly with respect and gentleness and turned around and began to carry her to our front porch towards my mother."

"Just then my mother opened the door and met Mr. Torres halfway.

"He was going to lay Chiquita's little body in mom's arms. 'Su Chiquita, Senora Cabrera.' Mr. Torres said solemnly.

"Like my sister's soul in the wind had gone through mom and pushed her body into mine, she fainted into my arms. With all my might, I tried to hold her up. She was heavy for me, and I thought that it must have been her body filling with tears, pain and sorrow for my dead sister."

“Ama!” I heard someone scream behind me.

“I yelled for someone to help me. ‘Ayudame! No puedo.’ I needed someone to grab my mom because I didn’t want her to fall on the ground and I couldn’t hold her any longer.”

Just then Mom came to. She was shaky, in shock but ok. She looked like they had pulled her heart out of her chest and never gave it back. Her face was pale white. Bien blanca, blanca mi mamita.

“Then my father came out of the house and wondered what the commotion was about. He was laying down after having had dinner.”

“‘Que paso!? Dime que paso!?’ My father wanted to know what happened. As I have told you before, he was

blinded in the war and couldn’t see his way. He guided himself to where we were with his walking stick and finally reached us and my mother.”

My mom told him, “Matadon a Chiquita, Viejo! And she sobbed into his chest.”

“Que? Matadon a quien?” my dad answered.

“Papa, they killed Chiquita with the truck, Daddy.” I cried.”

“Chiquita? Chiquita?” he yelled out to my sister like he saw her with his blind eyes.

“Chiquita is dead, Daddy! My sister’s scream still sticks in my head.”

“Just then Mr. Torres placed Chiquita into Daddy’s arms. My dad’s cane fell to the floor banging the caliche on which my sister’s blood spilled making it her home forever.”



# Melissa Soliz

## *Getting Them to the Altar on Time*

July 28, 2015

IN COORDINATION WITH SPECTRUM, TAMUK NOW AND WGST

# LOVE OUT LOUD

CELEBRATING MARRIAGE EQUALITY

COME JOIN US AS WE CELEBRATE THE  
SUPREME COURT'S RULING FOR  
SAME-SEX MARRIAGE.

"RIGHTS ARE WON ONLY BY THOSE WHO MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD."  
-HARVEY MILK

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 2015  
3 - 5PM  
@ THE TAMUK PAVILION



On June 26, 2015, the Marriage Equality Act was passed. I knew so many friends who wanted to marry but couldn't because they were part of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community. When the law was passed, I was so happy and so proud to be part of this history. While conservatives imagined that it would be doomsday, thousands of LGBT persons celebrated in the streets and in their homes because the day had finally come. Meanwhile, so many small-minded people in small-minded towns spewed their hate. My close friend

LouAnn Alvarez and her partner Sandy Gonzalez had been planning for some time to get married whether or not the law was passed. LouAnn mentioned to me how she wanted to be married by the same Justice of the Peace (Esequiel "Cheque" De La Paz) that married her parents. It had always been her wish.

I remember being at the TAMUK NOW, SPECTRUM and WGST Celebration for the Supreme Court's Decision on Gay Marriage, *Love out Loud*. I waved my rainbow flag spread. I wasn't embarrassed or scared or ashamed. I was proud, fighting next to my human gay brothers and sisters for their right to marry. My good friend LouAnn Alvarez Gonzalez appeared in Corpus Christi Caller Times. TAMUK kids stopped by and asked what the organization was all about. Equality.

It's about equality. Isn't this whole "game" about equality? Over this past weekend, I saw "ugly" at the ugliest I've ever seen it. That type of hatred before my very eyes. I was undecided. Do I get up and go or do I fight and stay where I have the right to be? It took all of what was in me to chill and not go off for Ray, for Louann, for a lot of my friends and for the men who loved me when no one else would, for my cousin Eryk, for my aunt and uncle. I could feel an angel or



some sort or power figure leading me NOT to do the wrong thing, but to stay cool, calm and collected the way Jesus would have. Forgive your haters!

Love yourself because Jesus loves you; forgive them because he loves them as well. I wish I could erase hate. I wish I could make words stop at the tips of someone's lips so that they don't go to the heart of a loved one. I wish I had the power to educate everyone and to make them understand the differences in people and the love we should all have for each other no matter what we are because Jesus would have loved us if he were here and he loves us in spirit. It's not even that hard to understand but a lot of people make it so complicated. God is watching. I guess that is how I will end this. God sees us all and he sees our sins. The sins "we" don't have the right to judge in everyone else. Hold your neighbor's hand, smile at them no matter what or who they may be. God bless us all. It's time for change and more education.

Even while America rallies and cheers the strides of our nation, there are those that continue to persecute and oppress. The decisions of our local judges are no different than the attempted poll taxes whites instituted at the end of slavery to continue to silence the voices of the freed men and women! Let them have their bigotry! Today we celebrate love, freedom and the struggle!

But the local headlines read: “Judges decline to marry same-sex couple” *Kingsville Record*. Several days after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriage bans were unconstitutional.

Little did we know that the JP, who was a family friend, had stated in the local newspaper that he would only be willing to marriage a gay or lesbian couple under the condition that he “raise his marriage fee for gay or lesbian couples by as much as two or three times his current \$125 fee to \$300 or \$400” [Later he decided to not marry them at all] (“Judges Decline to Marry Same-Sex Couples” *Kingsville Record* July 1, 2015). Likewise, when the act passed, many other justices of the peace in Kingsville either outright refused. I was so disappointed. Having known him since I worked at the Kleberg courthouse, always looked up to him. I always thought he was

## Kleberg County marks two firsts for same-sex couples in its history

By Tim Acosta  
tacosta@king-ranch.com

A local citizen presided over the first same-sex marriage in Kleberg County's history last week, while Pct. 3 Justice of the Peace Christopher Lee became the first elected official to officiate such a ceremony on Wednesday.

Melissa Soliz, a citizen of Kingsville, made history when she officiated the first same-sex marriage in Kleberg County since the U.S. Supreme Court's June 26 ruling that legalized such ceremonies around the nation. Soliz married Sandy Gonzalez, 43, and Lou Ann Escobedo, 36, the evening of July 27 during a small ceremony in Kingsville. The couple has been together for two years, Escobedo said, and had been planning to get married since last year.

“That's amazing to me,” Escobedo said of learning that she and her wife were the first same-sex couple to get married in Kleberg County. Escobedo said she planned to take her wife's last name, adding that the couple decided to wed last week after picking up their marriage license on June 23. A friend of theirs paid for their license as a wedding gift, she said, and Escobedo's son gave her away at the ceremony. Escobedo said having her mother at (See Weddings, Page 9A)



Above, Melissa Soliz, center, officiates a wedding ceremony for Lou Ann Escobedo, left, and Sandy Gonzalez in Kingsville. The newlyweds on Monday became the first same-sex couple to marry in Kleberg County's history. (Submitted photo)

a great example to the Hispanic community. Now he was another example of hate. My friend cried and expressed her feelings to me. I consoled her and tried to be a good friend.

I remember Raymond ranting about how unfair and unconstitutional this judge was being. It was charging a poll tax, the idea that he would charge a same-sex couple more for the job than he would heterosexual couples.

I felt my heart break for my friends and I felt the sadness turn to fuel and fire within me. I



Sandy Gonzalez and LouAnn Alvarez Gonzalez, first same-sex couple married in Kleberg County after TAMUK NOW, WGST Advocacy assisted in the attainment of a Marriage License from the state of Texas.

decided something had to be done. Then I decided that I had to do something. I couldn't sit by anymore! I could no longer wait for someone else to correct these civil injustices. The Supreme Court voted my friends the right to be married. What we needed was someone to officially marry them.

A couple of days later, I saw that my friend Aaron Davis had received her Ordained Minister Certificate. I asked her where she received it from; she said online. I went to the site and filled out the application. With just three words I accepted the charge gladly: Fuck You, Sir. So I went online and got ordained as a legal minister so I could officiate the marriage of my dear

friends, Sandy Gonzalez and LouAnn Alvarez Gonzalez. We got the license from the state of Texas and they planned the wedding. It was a blessed day which I will never forget and I am so grateful to have been allowed to play a role in this moment in the lives of my friends and the change of history for this community.

# empty miles

A Short Story by  
Jimmy Willden

She was sleeping when I left her. I should feel sorry, I'm sure. But, with all this adrenaline pumping through my veins, I'm not in any state to really try. So, instead, here I am: foot to the pedal, pedal to the metal – watching the world become a blur outside the windows of my transport to a better life. I've been calculating how long I've known I was going to leave. Two, three year's maybe. How many times had I laid awake next to her, watching her breathe, just thinking: "Oh how you'll scream when you wake up and I'm not here." Of course, I would still be there morning after morning when she would open her eyes. It took until tonight. I figured after all the years of mental preparation, I'd be ready. Forty miles out of the city limits, I'm still not sure.

The world beyond my vehicle is dark, only what's directly in front of my headlights is visible. Each second passes, and I'm seeing a new part of the world I've never seen before. I always told Ellie I wanted to travel. I just wanted to pack our bags and head to some far off place, like Egypt. Something inside of me has always driven me to want to take a plane to the farthest corner of the world, just to see what it was like. Call it adventurism. Call it seeking danger, and excitement and just wanting to live the hell out of my life. Call it all of that rolled into one. So here I am, fifty-five miles out of anywhere remotely close to home, and I'm wondering where I'm heading to – considering I haven't been anywhere this far out of town since I was a child, and back then I just slept the trip away, anyway.

At eighty miles per hour you watch as your life begins to time travel, leaving the past behind so fast, the future's approaching and the only way to stop it is to slam on the breaks. But I don't want to. Ninety miles per hour and this is when you realize that no one really cares what you think. To them, you're just a blur. Call it, I don't know, relativity. At one hundred miles per hour, that's when you hear the ding. You've been so lost in your own mind that you haven't even taken the time to realize you've forgotten to fill up. You're running out of gas, and you're seventy miles deep into the middle of nowhere. And by you, of course, I mean me. I slam my fists against the steering wheel and shriek the adult word for manure into the night that's trapped inside my car. I look at the gas meter and begin to calculate how far I've got before my car begins to do the putter putter and I'm standing on the side of the road with my thumb held out

into the wind like some sort of idiot's flag.

The little meter is reading just above the red line. I have a semi-used car, and by semi I mean a couple of years old. It's a 2012 Ford Mustang, and it's red, of course. I just realized that I failed to mention earlier that this is Ellie's car. I stole it. I know, I know, shame on me. But that's not the point. What I'm getting at is that she never once realized how badly she's needed an oil change, a new air filter, fuel filter and whatever else. So the gas is going quicker than it should, and I'm slamming the steering wheel again.

Eighty miles into the world beyond my apartment, I come to the conclusion that I can maybe go another ten, twenty miles before that gas is drained completely. Even the fumes won't save me here. My eyes dart up, squinting into the darkness beyond the glass of my windshield, trying to find some sort of sign that some sort of Podunk town is somewhere close to the vicinity of my current problem. A mile passes and nothing. Two miles pass – nothing. Time traveling into a future where I'm out of gas is not how I pictured this going, at all. I figured maybe make it out of the state and get drunk in some bar for the first time in five years. Five years – has it been that long already? The ding sounds again, and that little annoying light shaped like a miniature gas pump turns on, and suddenly I find my eyes drawn to it, like a flame. The road somehow seems less important than this little light that's telling me I'm soon to be SOL.

The world falls out of focus, as the miniature gas pump light mocks my very existence. It screams at me, *FEED ME*. It pleads with me, *FEED ME NOW!* I look up just in time to see that the road is curving. I spin the wheel, and almost lose control of my time machine (you know, Ellie's car). My heart nearly explodes in my chest from the sudden fearful surprise. After I steady the car, I try to regain my own composure. I take a deep breath and notice my body is shaking. Eighty five miles deep, I finally see a bright green sign off in the darkness, just beginning to be illuminated by the headlights of Ellie's car. I squint my eyes to read the sign before it's even close enough to be read. The letters are just mush. Finally the mush begins to take shape, and the words begin to focus in and register within my brain. I read the sign. *Gas Station, Next Exit – 10 Mi.*

Ten miles. Ten miles? Can I make it, I'm not sure. My leg begins to shake nervously. I tap the steering wheel as if I'm a drummer. I decide I need to take control of the situation. Look at all possible scenarios. You know, if this happens – I'll do that about it. If that happens, I'll do this for it. Okay, so if I run out of gas. What can I do? This little voice from somewhere inside me, it says: *Call Ellie*. If I call Ellie, she'll know I stole her car. She'll know I was trying to leave her. She'll wake up and see that my clothes are gone, see that her car is gone. *She'll still come and*

*get you.* That's true. Ellie is that type of person. I may not exactly be happy with her, but she'll do anything to help anyone out, especially someone she believes she loves. Even if she hates you, she'll save you. She'll..... I feel the first putter putter from the car. It feels like the car is coughing, and I find myself almost feeling sorry for it. I'm almost feeling guilty that I'm causing it pain. I see another green sign flash in the light of my headlights. I try to read the sign just before it passes, but can only grasp – 2 Mi.

I can make it. *Come on, buddy. You can do it.* The car can hear me speaking to it, I'm sure. I pat the dashboard, rub it a little, *I know you can make it.* Finally, I see the exit approaching off in the distance. I exhale a sigh of relief. I take my foot off the gas, and Ellie's car begins to slow, from ninety to eighty; seventy to sixty; sixty to fifty miles per hour. The exit is just ahead, and I turn on the right blinker. I see yellow flashing off into the wilderness beyond the road. Ellie's car takes the off ramp, and I'm now on the feeder road. Her car putter putters again, and my eyes search frantically for the bright lights of a gas station, somewhere, anywhere. But I find them, nowhere. The road just seems to stretch on forever, without any sign of anything to do with a gas station, let alone – civilization.

After a long, long mile of fighting with my foot not to press the gas pedal (afraid to waste what little fuel is left) I come up to an intersection. A battered old, dented STOP sign stands all alone. I look down the cross street only to see that it is deserted, and that there is absolutely nothing in either direction of the nothing I am already in. I begin to cry in worry and fear. I'm such a baby when it comes to things like being stranded. The country, to me, is like a foreign land, an alien world where, if I did ever happen to come across someone, they would speak some sort of language I could never comprehend. They would practice crazy voodoo culture, and want to cut out my spleen and maybe eat it. All of this is rushing through my brain as I realize that the inevitable is approaching. The car is soon running out gas, and there is nothing I can do about it. I take the turn onto this new deserted road, and putter putter into the void.

I begin to frantically look for somewhere, or someone, to place blame for the situation I am in. Naturally, Ellie comes to mind. *Ellie*, I think, *If only you would have just let me be.* Always wanting more than what she had, always telling me that just sitting and doing nothing with my life was such a waste of time. Always telling me to find a job, clean the house, TURN OFF THE TV, and just do something productive. *Ellie*, I say, so sadly, *we could have been happy. This is all your fault.* So what that five years ago my book was rejected and I stopped writing. I always thought that it was coincidence that Ellie walked into my life just at the time when my life before her, the life I considered just so me, was collapsing down all around me. So what. I

needed someone to take my mind off the death of my creativity, and Ellie was there.

Five years, and she's so in love, but I know: She's disappointed that she ended up with such a bum as me. I know this, because I'm disappointed I've become the bum I guess I was destined to be. Putter putter, the car is running out of breath, my foot hovering over the gas pedal, not pushing it down – the car basically holding its breath. Then there's one last gasp, and Ellie's car coughs, coughs and dies. I've time traveled far into the future of my life. Here, I am alone. Here...here I am forced to deal with my shortcomings. I climb out of Ellie's dead car, and stand in the cold air of open country. I hear crickets chirping everywhere around me. I hear the wind whistling through the trees whose leaves are about to begin to change color. I hear all of this, but somehow I contribute it to being nothing more than complete silence. I shiver; the air is so bitter. I rub my hands together in a vain attempt to bring warmth back into my life. It's been gone so long anyway, I doubt that I'll even recognize it if it ever did come back.

With my numb fingers, I fish into one of my pant pockets. I pull out a silver contraption, no bigger than the palm of my hand. My cheap, pay-as-you-go cell phone. No contracts here. I flip it open and begin to scroll through the digital phone book on my screen. Name after name, after name. *Dad – calls me a disappointment. Next. Ellie – let's not go there. Mom – is sleeping. Shouldn't wake her.* Ninety miles deep into the middle of nowhere and I find that my phone book is basically empty – void of friends. Only mom and dad and Ellie. I'm, like, such a loner. If I call Ellie, I'll have to tell her why I took her car, and why I left her in the first place. This will not be a pretty conversation. In fact, I was hoping I would never have to have the conversation. Why? Because, it deals with things I'm not ready to deal with. I flip my phone closed. I lean against Ellie's dead car, and just think. Why did I steal her car?

I can't answer that with a real good answer, just yet. I know I do have a perfectly good car of my own (even though the CD player is busted), so there is no real reason for me to have taken her car. But I did. *Deal with it, Ellie.* I pace around the pavement of the desolate road for a while, trying to figure out what to do next. Finally, I flip my phone open again, and press speed dial 2. *Dad.* The phone rings a couple times as I try and picture my Dad's room, all dark and cramped. I imagine my dad cursing any word that comes to him, as he fumbles around his room half naked trying to find the phone he always forgets to put back onto his charger. I hear a click, and a dry, sleepy voice comes through the speaker of my miniature wanna-be phone: "What is it." "Hey Dad." A cough and then Dad says: "What do you want." "I ran out of gas." My dad, so full of love and compassion, says: "And what do you want me to do about it?" I hadn't really thought of that. I am ninety miles away from anyone, anyway. Calling them, what good does it

do me here? I'm pretty sure most people are too lazy to get up at three in the morning to drive nearly a hundred miles to help someone who was too lazy to fill up their car with gas anyway. I know this, but still I called Dad.

"I don't know. I just thought I'd let you know." "Where are you?" Dad asks, pretending to give a damn. "I'm not sure. I left about an hour and a half ago, I was speeding. The freeway was empty, whatever. I ran out of gas." "How many times have I told you to keep your tank full? If you're going on a road trip, never let your tank fall under half." "Thanks Dad. Yeah, well, I sort of screwed that whole concept up, didn't I?" "You sure as hell did." A moment passes, as I rub my hands together, again trying to bring the flame of life back into them. My Dad clears the mucus that has built up since he fell asleep four hours ago and says to me: "Where's Ellie?" "Asleep. Back at the apartment." "You left her there?" Oh no. A parental lecture was brewing, and I could feel it. "Yes." "She's such a sweet girl, Ricky. How could you leave her?"

After all she's done for you. You repay her by throwing it all back into her face and leaving. Granted, you did run out of gas. Take that as a sign, son. Karma is a bitch." I hang up on him. Now, there's only Mom left, and then there's Ellie. I call Mom. The phone rings once, then, twice, then three times. Then I stop paying attention. My mind drifts off into the woods beyond the road, as the phone continues to ring into my ear. In the distance, in the darkness between the trees, I swear to you, I think I see eyes staring back at me. I shiver, not sure if it's from the wind or from the fear. I flip my phone closed, yet once again. And sigh. Now there's only Ellie left. I press speed dial 1 and lift the phone to my ear. And that's when I hear a loud, obnoxious BEEP. I quickly pull the phone away from my ear, and look at it. I see the message "*Battery Low*" flash on the screen only once before the screen itself goes blank.

I'm all alone in the middle of nowhere ninety miles from somewhere. Ellie's car is dead, all out of gas – and now my phone is dead, all out of life. My dad was right. Karma is a bitch. I find myself looking back out at the woods, all ominous – with those eyes. I swear I see them, reflected in the cold fall moonlight, staring back at me. Sort of mesmerized, I take a couple steps towards the woods, not really knowing why. That's when I hear it. A low grunt, followed by a low, prolonged growl. It's coming from the woods. I just know so well that the growl belongs to the owner of the eyes. And now, still mesmerized, I see the eyes coming closer, closer, towards me. I am now paralyzed, standing in the middle of the road. I hear twigs cracking, foliage rustling, as the owner of the eyes approaches ever so closer to me from the woods. Then, suddenly, the thing leaps from the woods at me, and I scream. I scream so loud, I forget that I am a man.



I'm running back to Ellie's car, as the thing chases me from somewhere behind me. I know it is close because I can hear it, growling. But now, not only growling – but barking. With so much anger and violence, I know this thing with eyes could tear me apart. Not looking back, I lunge for the car door. I tear it open, and throw myself inside. I slam the door shut. And then, only then, do I raise my own eyes to look out the window. There, just about a foot away from Ellie's dead car, is a large animal of some sort, all covered in white fur and fangs hanging from its mouth, pacing back and forth, growling and grunting. Still, it has its eyes fixed on mine. I reach up, and lock the door. After a few moments, the thing with the eyes and the fangs retreats back into the woods, and again I am alone. I close my eyes, just now realizing how tired I have become. I welcome the slumber of my sleep, letting it engulf me completely. There's a pat pat noise somewhere, almost like knocking. My eyes begin to twitch, as the noise begins to pull me back to consciousness. The pat pat does its job, and my eyes open – crusted over with sleep. I wipe them and look out the window to find a State Trooper standing beside Ellie's dead car.

He's hunched over, looking through the driver's side door, at me. Through the glass, I hear his muffled voice: "Doze off there a little, did you?" I open the door, nodding my head, "Yes, officer." I step out to be greeted by early morning light and early morning humidity. The cold dry air of last night is gone, replaced by the rebirth of day. The sky is pink with the sun just beginning to come up from the grounds of Earth. The State Trooper looks at me, all serious, and tells me, "You know the state frowns upon people pulling over to sleep on the side of the road." "Actually, I ran out of gas, been here all night." The State Trooper frowns, "There's a gas station a quarter mile back. You could have walked." I look back, searching for the gas station. Faintly, off in the distance, I see a small sign swinging on its hinges, simply stating in weatherworn red painted letters: *Gas*. "Thank you, Officer," I say. He nods toward his vehicle, "Get in, I'll give you a lift." The drive to the gas station is awkward, at best. I've always despised the police, and I don't even know why.

Probably because of the hundreds of traffic tickets I've accumulated over the years, and have yet to pay. I'm sure there's a warrant out for my arrest, but I tend to just pretend that those letters I get in the mail are not addressed to me. Finally, his car pulls up in front of the gas station, and the State Trooper looks at me, all pity in his eyes, "Need anything else?" "No, sir." I get out of the car. The State Trooper nods his head, and pulls off onto the road. I take a moment to observe the country road. In the low morning light, I'm already realizing it's not as desolate as I originally thought. I groan. Then I tread, so heavy-footed, into the gas station. The clerk nods at

me, with a grin. I nod back, and begin to search the shelves for a gas container. I find one, all red and yellow and plastic, shoved off in a back corner of the store. I grab it and place it on the counter for the clerk to ring up.

The clerk, with glasses that cover three fourths of his face, he says: “Run out of gas?” I nod, “Yeah. Last night. Got lost looking for this place.” “Yeah, it’s kind of hard to find us out here in the middle of nowhere.” *Was that sarcasm?* “You got a pay phone?” I ask. The clerk grins, “Out back.” So now I’m standing here, staring at the pay phone. I know I should call Ellie. I know she woke up this morning, screaming. But I also know she’s crying and worried sick about me. She did believe she loved me. For a while, I too tried to believe that love existed between us. *Ellie, I’m so sorry.* If I could just not be such a coward and pick up the phone, put in my seventy five cents and just call her – maybe...I don’t know, maybe I’ll not feel as guilty. But I can’t. I’m not ready to deal with it.

I walk off, the gas container in my hand. I feel as though I might be getting a little high from the bitter aroma leaking from it. One foot after the other, toward Ellie’s dead car a quarter mile back. I figure, I’ll get back on the road, and see where I end up. I still haven’t figured out why I stole her car. I might, eventually – but I think it deals too much with the root of our problems for me to even explore the notion that this simple (or not so simple, however you look at it) act of stealing Ellie’s car may actually define our relationship better than either of us ever could in our own words. I don’t want to think about that, not yet. This has got to be the longest walk of my life, my feet growing heavier with each step. I know it’s the guilt, plaguing my very existence, but I’m still trying to ignore it.

The world, to me, is a better place when you ignore the part of you that is flawed. Of course, that’s the part that everyone else sees, believe it or not. Finally, Ellie’s dead car sits before, me. I pour the gas into the tank, with the help of the little flimsy funnel that’s attached to my brand new yellow and red and plastic container. And then I get into her car, put the key into the ignition, and turn. The cough, coughs. And then, nothing. I turn the ignition again. Cough – cough, and the rumble of life roars through Ellie’s car, now not dead. I exhale a long breath of relief and begin to drive. Ten miles an hour, and everything looks similar. You can see yourself in the world that’s just beginning to blur.

Twenty, thirty, forty miles per hour and for you, time in your car seems to slow, while everything outside your vehicle speeds up. You can barely glimpse the yellow median lines one by one. They are, like everything else, melding together into the blur of the universe. Fifty, sixty, seventy miles per hour and this is when you realize you’re time traveling again. This time, so

fast, the past is heading right for you. It's time you've got to deal with it. You've got to, just to see what happens, good or bad, right or wrong. Eighty, ninety, one hundred miles per hour, and everything beyond you and your thoughts doesn't exist. You had your night of fun, all messed up with karma bitching at you. Now maybe – just maybe – it's time for you to go home. And by you, of course, I mean me.

**Jimmy Willden** is a Full-time Singer/Performer, Corpus Christi — *Freelance*  
July 2014 – PRESENT: Perform and record original and cover music around the Coastal Bend area and beyond. Toured the Eastern half of the U.S. in June 2015. Radio airplay across the nation and in the U.K.

## Octavio Quintanilla

### *Loneliness*

Octavio Quintanilla

As a boy, I'd climb trees,  
reach into nests birds

would leave unattended.  
I'd fill my hand

with small eggs, and often  
one or two hatchlings

would stare at me  
from behind the sprigs.

There were times I wanted  
to take them home,

keep them as my own,  
raise them, imagined their beaks

would one day open  
to call me, "Father."

Previously published in *Arcadia*

# *Gift*

Octavio Quintanilla

For Christmas you give your father  
three hundred dollars to buy dentures.

Toothless, he must now suck meat,  
juice it up with saliva, grind it

with pinkish jaws till it's ready  
for swallowing.

He'll go across the border,  
to Mexico, where it's cheapest,

but more dangerous.  
You tell him how young boys will follow,

beg to shine his shoes,  
how some men hack up dogs as training

for human dismemberment.  
Los encajuelados, he grunts,

referring to bodies concealed  
in car trunks, the disappeared,

lucky to be found by their smell.  
He knows all about it.

But your father is old-school.  
Too macho to believe in threats.

Too macho for bratty mocosos  
to keep him from crossing over  
and getting his new teeth.

Previously published in *Midway Journal*

*Dog Hanging*  
Octavio Quintanilla

The dog we tried to hang  
knew who I was.  
I say *we* because even though I didn't pull  
the rope,  
I was there.  
Something secret in me  
wanted the thing done,  
and the same secret thing  
wanted the rope to break.  
No way we could define grace  
standing there, shades within  
the shades of trees.  
Our chests too small to contain  
all we felt.  
So it poured out of us,  
into the ground, for the wind  
to carry like ribbons of silt.  
And how do you apologize  
to the wind?  
The syllables, how far will they travel  
and in what branch  
will they get stuck?  
What animal will mistake them  
for leaves and sniff and bite down  
into nothing?  
All we had left was the clear white jaw  
of the afternoon  
and a dog's fear too heavy  
for an eight year-old to lift.  
So we let it go,  
and it let us go,  
and we headed to the shallow river  
to cool our feet,  
throw rocks at our reflections.

Previously published in San Antonio Express-News

Octavio Quintanilla is the author of the poetry collection, *If I Go Missing* (Slough Press, 2014).  
He teaches at the MA/MFA program at Our Lady of the Lake University.

# Priscilla M. Hernandez

## *I Wish You'd Stop Growing*

A beauty, by far, you came into Earth.  
A memory never to be forgot.  
A baby boy on the day of your birth  
Brought me a love that could never be bought.

With you came many worries and struggles,  
But anything, I'd sacrifice for you  
I did not mind that you brought me troubles,  
As long as I had my baby boy too

And so, every day that I watch you grow  
You take little things and make them seem gold.  
Like crawling to me when I called you so,  
And getting your first tooth at nine months old.

Although I cannot wait to watch you grow  
I wish you'd stop and go a little slow

# Raymond Garcia III

## *Lady with the Broken Hands*

“When can we take the casts off?”  
Shattered, bound, and constricted  
She rubs the casts against each other  
As though they were manacles.  
Her cotton white dress now glows dull yellow  
Like a stray jacket in dusty sunlight.  
She can taste the metallic blood from the  
Corner of her bruised mouth; the blood drawn  
By the pounding fists of her lover.

She pretends the tears running down  
Her face are beads of sweat  
From a hot, steamy emergency room.  
I will cry for you, my sister.

# Ernesto Alvarez III

## *Manitas De Miel*

Manitos de Miel

Hay se quedo el harina

Hecho polvo en el fondo de un altar

La sal y pimienta no se hablan

El agua se dio cuenta que ya no estas

Las tortillas se han hechos obstinidos

Rectangulos y torcidos

Porque el palote esta en huelga

Y “Basta!” dice la comida

Hacen falta sus manitas de miel

Dedos de experiencia y su modo de ser

Faltan su suspiros haciendo que hacer

Su tarjeta de la vida y su receta del placer

## *Receta: Tortillas*

(All amounts are Approximations)

4c All-Purpose Flour

1 tsp Salt

2 tsp baking powder

2 tsp. lard

1 ½ c Water

1. Combine flour, salt and baking powder in a bowl.
2. Cut lard into the dry ingredients until a fine crumble is made, resembling fine oatmeal.
3. Add water until the dough comes together.
4. Knead the dough until smooth and elastic.
5. Separate into individual balls of dough.
6. Cook on a hot skillet or comal until golden brown.

Note: Tortillas should bubble up during cooking

## *Headless Chickens and the Process of Change*



Kingsville can get.

It's like math. When holidays are celebrated, nostalgia for things past is necessarily a part. It usually takes the form of stories of a relative, usually deceased, and how they used to do it. This year was no different. I was reminded of a time when my mom would house and kill chickens. No joke. I suppose one conjures this being done on a ranch or at least a large acre of land, no! *This was urban fowl butchery*, or as urban as

It was when we lived on Warren Street and we had a garage. On this occasion my mother acquired about 8 or 10 chickens which she kept there. The process by which she killed them is what makes the story so infamous. She would take hold of the unfortunate hen, grab a firm hold



of its neck and proceed to violently twist and turn the body until the head ripped off. The bird would then run wildly and chaotically around the yard until, finally, the thing would collapse onto the ground; nerves still twitching from raging against the dying of its delicious light. Needless to say, we kids were amazed (disgusted?). It was the closest thing to ranch life that I had experienced. There even arose a legend among us, that with the blood dripping from the severed head, my mom would make a cross on the ground; and it is there that the chicken would finally rest.

She would then proceeded to pull the feathers off and cook the bird accordingly, usually for "Noodles." (a kind of chicken-n-dumplings but with long strands of noodle-think tagliatelle. Very popular in my family.) This type of thing didn't happen often and this was one particularly memorable occasion (and there may have been more, like the time a pig was gutted, again, in our garage-different house. but that's another story). I now realize that it was the last vestiges of ranch life, preserved in my mother but lost to me and my siblings. It is almost inconceivable that any of us would go through this process. Even if we wanted "freshly killed" chicken, we would likely find other means of getting it. It is indicative of changing times; from rural to urban living, from ranch life to city life. Put sociologically, a time of acculturation.

The process of change is nothing new. Focusing on South Texas, one can see the process of change quite clearly. If we were to apply a generic periodization scheme (a fancy term historians use to place things into understandable chunks of time, i.e. Reconstruction, Dark Ages etc) we see that the indigenous period gave way to a colonial period which gave way to an autonomous republic which, ultimately, gave way to statehood into the "American colossus."

It is one thing to acknowledge (even understand) broad historical change and quite another thing to see it worked out in our daily lives. It's a reminder that not all change is sweeping and chaotic. Most changes in life takes place even beyond our awareness, while we're busy living. It is the small incremental changes that have the most lasting effect for our lives; changes as a result of decisions made and behaviors unlearned, like our willingness to remember an event such as the headless chickens running about our yard but not our willingness to practice it.

I end with a quote from Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), that Jesuit historian who opened China for us Westerners, because I think it is appropriate to the topic at hand. It reminds us that we make and change history on a daily basis!

*It often happens that those who live at a later time are unable to grasp the point at which the great undertakings or actions of this world had their origin. And I, constantly seeking*

*the reasons for this phenomenon, could find no answer than this, namely that all things (including those that at last come to triumph mightily) are at their beginnings so small and faint in outline that one cannot easily convince oneself that from them will grow matters of great moment* -Historia, Fonti Ricciane

## **Dr. Patricia Reinhardt**

### *I Forgot*

February 22, 2016

Not to get old  
I forgot not  
To bare yellow teeth  
I forgot not to grow  
Liver spots cysts tumors  
I forgot not to speak  
Talking too long & suddenly loud  
Not to  
Sing a song out of tune  
I forgot not to laugh with the cackle of a crone

I forgot not to groan when arising from a chair

I forgot not to bend over in that singular way  
When retrieving one of the many things I've lost

Once or was it twice I dropped a cell phone  
Down an elevator shaft

I forgot so much  
To have teeth, eyes, taste, no gas, to stay smooth  
Sit up straight, not to choke or sag or fag out  
At noon  
I've done them one and all but you think

That you will not  
So sorry I already said this?  
Oh.  
I forgot

# Cynthia (Cynda) Garza

## *Mobile for Movies*

Some like to drive. Luna likes to walk. She lives a block from a 5-lane street in her mid-sized town. She prefers to walk rather than drive to her Dollar Store and to her coffee shop and to her movie theater. She likes to walk to the theater in the afternoon, usually once a week, maybe more often, to catch a matinee. Walking keeps her costs down, a concern due to her modest inheritance, helps her maintain her health and keeps her carbon footprint down.

Life was sweetly boring until about 6 months ago when Luna was yet again walking to the theater. She tripped over a crack in the cement near her South Texas home, fell, broke her ankle, underwent surgery and developed a staph infection. After taking her antibiotics as directed and after taking narcotics until constipation caused her pain, Luna consulted her doctor who suggested some medications which Luna did not want to take long term, so she asked about yoga. Some of her friends raved about it, about how it helped them recover from surgeries. They had found it to be a lifestyle, not just physical therapy. An opportunity to join her friends? Doctor Salinas said that yoga would help her oxygenate her ankle and in time give her strength and flexibility, but she would prefer that Luna started practicing yoga in the water. Luna chose to go land yoga classes.

Yoga helped. All the oxygen she sucked in during yoga practice helped her oxygenate her ankle so that her bone merged more quickly than expected. And all the turning and flexing and pointing and scrunching increased her flexibility of a pinned and bolted ankle. And the yoga classes gave Luna another opportunity to see some of her friends and to make new ones before and after class in the juice room at the gym. She started feeling more accepting of her leg. Noticing, not judging, as her instructor suggested. ☺

Sooner than anyone expected, her doctor scheduled surgery to remove Luna's pin and bolts. After surgery, the doctor pointed out to Luna that the staph would stay in her bone as blood has difficulty getting in the ossified bone cells. Dr. Salinas waited for Luna to ask a question of -how-. Luna always wants to know -how-. True to her nature, Luna asked how she could best heal her bone. Just keep doing what you're doing in yoga, and consider exercising in the pool, doing some yoga exercise and eventually jogging in the water. Just keep oxygenating.

Now Luna now finds daily life manageable. She can do some of her housework with thought and care. What she could not do for herself, others would do either as a favor or for a fee. She wants more. Maybe speed walking competitively may never again be an option but regular ole walking and talking and errand-running could be things she could do later. In time, jogging in water would serve an alternative exercise. The doctor had really wanted Luna to start in the pool, something Luna decided against in favor of joining friends at yoga. Instead of parading her unseemly scar (Yes, she knew she was noticing and judging. Luna prefers having a pool in her backyard as it might be fun to host pool parties when stronger and more flexible. She might have JD, her sometimes-lover, put up an above-the-ground pool with a sturdy ladder and deck. He's a contractor. He can do it, and she would make it worth his while.

After gaining some balance and strength in yoga, Luna finds herself getting restless. Good news: The desire to move shows that she's getting better ☺.....She wants to move, to take a walk. Uhhmm.....Walking.....Just the possibility of walking to the movie theater down the block from her house thrills. Maybe a good chick flick might be just the thing. Movies as Medicine. She should write a book about that. Ahhh, that's too many thoughts. Back to walking to the theater.....

Luna had for several years walked down her neighborhood block, crossed the five-lane street (sometimes ran), cut through the parking lot and bypassed the box office as she had already downloaded her movie tickets, and walked straight up to the ticket clerk. It took her 8 minutes if she went by herself. It took her 12 minutes if her younger sister, Jenny, still a kid, slowed her down. Sister or no sister, injured ankle or no injured ankle, Luna was determined to walk to the movie theater the next day. A new chick flick had arrived, -California Cyclers-, a kind of combination of *Thelma & Louise* and *The Calendar Girls*. This movie will be better because this movie is about a true story, like -Calendar Girls- 🙏

Armed with her determination, Luna made a plan. She downloaded the tickets, packed a snack, picked out her toughest pair of jeans and a tank top and an over shirt. She packed her shoulder bag with a snack. She put a water bottle in the fridge to cool overnight.

Then Luna did something that answered the *how* question: How to walk that long way and be safe. The walk was short when she had full mobility but would be longer when she had an injured ankle. Not only long but also dangerous. The walk would be more dangerous now that she had to walk with crutches, not run, across the five-lane road. Luna came up with a plan that same afternoon.

First, she needed to make herself more visible to traffic. She made a flag to stick out of her shirt to show above her head. She removed the flag and stick from her bike from when she was still a kid, the bike her kid sister Jenny used when visiting. She glued the stick part of the flag between two tank tops so that she could use the orange flag on top of the stick to get drivers' attention as she crossed the road. Late in the evening, she glued and then stitched around the stick to better help the flag stay in place.

Second, she needed a way to make herself heard if she fell and couldn't reach her phone--like last time. Luna rummaged through her cardstock stash where she found a large bright yellow, another bright color to make her more visible. Rolling up the cardstock, Luna fashioned a megaphone. Luna used her awl from her craft toolbox to press two small holes opposite each other at the neck so that she could run some cord through the two holes and around her neck. Aha: A megaphone necklace. Flag and Megaphone done.

When she fell and broke her ankle, she had dropped her handbag and broke her phone. Thank goodness her neighbor had been working in his yard and helped by calling 911. Thinking about her journey tomorrow.... Wearing a high-flying orange flag to announce her presence and having a makeshift megaphone to announce her any need for help made her feel more comfortable, less anxious about her journey. Luna felt more confident that she would be seen as she walked across the street or fell on the street. She was excited and anxious about her plan. It had to work, or else....And the "or elses" that could happen to her body loomed large. After fretting for a while, Luna found sleep possible after a little praying and after making a decision to let God cement the plan. If the plan needed altering, she would just know it in the morning.

Morning came. Time to get ready. Luna made sure her movie ticket and snack were in her bag. She grabbed the chilled water bottle and stuffed it in her over-sized shoulder bag. She assessed her double tank top. The glue and stitching should hold. After putting on her tank top with the flag flying over it, she realized that the over shirt couldn't be a pullover which would break the flagstick. She had to take time to find a clean button-up shirt. Shirt chosen.

Luna struggled to get into the double tank tops without damaging the stick. If it bent too much, the stick would not hold up the flag. She could feel herself get frustrated with the tank top, so she stopped getting dressed, made herself go through an abbreviated feeling patch: tearing up her eyes and stomping her feet and putting her hands on face and saying some words in Anglo-Saxon. She decided to be up to the challenge. Luna stood beside her bed, placed the tank tops on her bed so that she was seeing the backside of the tanks. She slid into her

shirt, using the friction of the bed and her elbows to get into the shirt, pulling the back of the tanks down her back. Success 🤩

With clothes on and flag intact and bag packed, Luna thought she would grab her shoulder bag and crutches and go. Drats! That long walk with the dangerous part of walking across the five-lane road meant that having a flag on her back and a purse hanging from her shoulder while walking on crutches was just too much. Luna decided to just carry her keys, ticket and snack money in her jeans pockets.

Time to go. To physically make it to Movie Theater, Luna would have to stay focused. Lock the door. Walk down the street. Sit on the corner to breathe for a minute. Cross the five-lane street. Only a few cars. There's a gap in the traffic from her left. Into the middle lane. Now the traffic from right side gaps. Now the parking lot. Really tired now. A quick lean on a light post. Now on the sidewalk of the theater. The doors are heavy. Some nice boy holds the door open. She thanks the boy, hoping her voice is kind and not stressed. She sits on a bench inside. She breathes for a few minutes. She walks to ticket clerk stand. Yea no clerk to slow her down by tearing her ticket. She bypasses the bench in the hallway of movie theaters.

Luna walks into the movie. It has started, but just. She plops down into a seat far to the right side, so that maybe no one will complain about her flag. She hears someone let out a very small sigh and move to see the screen better. She is here. No snack. Good movie. Maybe this will be the last movie at the theater until she can walk better. For now, she makes the best of the time while the movie. She finds the movie worth the effort. Though, lol, it would be nice to be able to swim across a swimming pool to get the movie theater.

As Luna rests on her sofa later that evening, she feels her bone and muscles both exhausted and charged by the exercise. She keeps replaying the movie in her mind. The strength and determination of the small women's bicycling group to travel from Woodland to Sacramento to support the Breasty Broads bike ride to fight against breast cancer wowed Luna. The small women's bicycling group joined up in support of one of their friends who was having a part of her breast removed the following week. In the movie's epilogue, the audience finds out that their friend, Abbie, fought off cancer at age of 30. Surely, Luna thought, she could walk down a street, cross a street, cross a parking lot, and enter a theater with a funny flag and with several sit downs/lean one as needed. A lot easier than bicycling those many miles like those California chicks did. A lot easier than the fear and heartbreak of breast cancer. Thank you -California Cyclers-. Thank you for carrying the message of hope and strength. May Abbie remain in good



health all the days of her life. The highest and best in me recognizes and honors the highest and best in Abbie and her friends: Namaste 🙏



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# Maria R. Gonzales

## *Narrative*



The early childhood (age 4) picture was taken after we (The Family) had gone to deliver Christmas gifts and goodie bags to the children in Mexico. I cropped it from a family picture.



This picture was taken at my Sweet 16 party held in Del Rio, Texas

I was born and raised in a region of Texas that was rich in culture, the San Felipe clear water springs, and a beautiful lake called, “Amistad Lake.” The town was small with a big heart and home to a diverse range of residents and interesting occupations. The dominant political party that controlled the area was the Democratic Party. In this region of West Texas the inhabitants were deeply family-orientated and held conservative views.

The economy that sustained the region was the fertile lands that yielded an abundance of crops and the lake that brought tourism to the area. In addition, the lake brought anglers that fished the biggest Texas bass that the lake offered. The cattle that the ranchers raised also brought in national rodeos and exposure to the region. To add, the farmers raised famous sheep whose wool contributed to the trade with the global community. The economy of the region also thrived due to the military base located in the outskirts of the town.

This part of Texas consisted of a town connecting to smaller rural towns. The big and vast

land that enclosed the region where I grew up was full of caverns and mountains. The sunsets were breathtaking. The weather at times was rough during the summer months due to the tornadic activity that most rain showers or thunderstorms produced in the area. In addition, the region also attracted many Hollywood directors to film movies due to the western feel of the town.

The area I called my hometown was a rural town with an urban feel to the region. The weather of the region consisted of hot desert heat days and cool nights due to the breeze from the lake that engulfed the town. The population of the region consisted of Mexican –Americans, Anglos, African-Americans and a small percentage of American Indians. The residents of the area also had deep religious and conservative views. The Anglos were mainly in control at the city, state and county level in the town. The means of transportation in and out of town was mainly by car, buses and train.

The town also had undeveloped rough terrain areas in the region and a colorful history of having the most notorious hanging judge in Texas history as a resident of the region. To add, the rural town was mainly a family-oriented town that cared deeply for the children. Most of the population walked to creeks that were located near their neighborhood and at times were able to dive into the clear and cool water on hot summer days. The town also hosted Easter celebrations. The celebrations were held at the beautiful parks that were located in the town.

The townspeople were mainly middle-to-low working class. The sub-society that made up most of the region was the middle class. The low social economic status was due to the high percentage of migrant workers that lived in the Mexican-American barrios. The barrios were mostly inhabited by the recent immigrants from the Mexican town located across the border from the town where I grew up. The upper-middle class of the region consisted of the Anglo residents due to the job opportunities that were not afforded to the African-American, Mexican-Americans and American Indians of the region. In addition, during the 1950's the train tracks, social class, race and social position divided the two school districts located in the town. In some instances, military, Mexican-American and African-American children were enrolled in private parochial Catholic schools to avoid discrimination.

The majority of residents that resided in the region were mainly fair skin due to the intermarriages between the American –Indians and the Spaniards. The Spaniards settled the region before the inception of the Mexican-American War. In addition, the town was named after one of the battles during the Mexican-American war, San Felipe Del Rio. As mentioned before, the Anglos were the majority influence in the region with deep conservative views. To add, many of the military Anglos married the Mexican-Americans and retired in the region to raise their

families due to the Mayberry feel of the town. The attire of the townspeople was mainly Americana. In some of the Mexican-American barrios, some young men dressed in a Pacheco style. In the Anglo neighborhoods, most of the young men dressed like the actor, James Dean. Furthermore, most of the culture clothing was displayed during culture programs provided by the civic and private celebrations.

The residents enjoyed mostly hunting, water recreations and sports events and joining different sports leagues that the city offered. Every Friday night, most of the residents would attend the local football games to support the school district. The residents were of average height and different body frames. In addition, the most obvious characteristic of the residents including the military base population was the value system in place when it came to protecting and raising close knit family ties and traditional values.

The residents of the town enjoyed traveling to nearby historical towns by bus and private



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transportation. The region was fertile for hunting and had a great assortment of comfort food that the land provided. The town held annual parades of friendship and partnership with the Mexican city that was located across the Texas border. Most of the townspeople enjoyed celebrating the birth of American by hosting patriotic parades and attending festive functions at the local military base, such as airshows arts and crafts, and enjoyed the food provided by base personal. The people that lived in the region also hosted traditional Mexican festivities, such as Cinco de Mayo and El Grito de Dolores. The African-American day of celebration was always held on June 19th. The Juneteenth festivities revolved around the Martin Luther king speech and his deep

ideals of equality for all the people. The dominant sub-group of the region was the Mexican-American culture with a little bit of country flavor.

The Christian religion was the dominant subgroup in the region. In addition, in some of the Mexican-American barrios there was an abundance of Curanderos and Mexican herbal stores. As aforementioned, the area that provided me with rearing and influenced my adult years was deeply rooted in traditional family values, acceptance of all races, tolerance, loving, caring

for all people, and at times hateful bigotry.

I am in the final step of walking towards the doctoral degree in Bilingual Education. I told you where I came from, but I must now say that I was diagnosed as being Dyslexic and even though I am not a conventional reader, I never allowed the difference in how my brain functions to keep me from attaining and expressing knowledge. I figured out new paths for my own learning and never gave up on myself.

## **Jenni Vinson**

### Narrative



This is the only picture of me that exists before my teen years. Photos were simply not a part of our society. This photo was taken at a carnival when I was about 10 months old.

It is not enough to have a gifted mind. The things the mind absorbs as knowledge must be evaluated in order for an assessment and a value to be assigned to knowledge and to the person who possesses it. What good would the Theory of Relativity be to the world if Einstein had never uttered it? The world would be dark if Edison had not applied his mind to the development of the light bulb and so many would have perished if so many others had not shared the contents of their minds with the scientific world to develop vaccines and medications. There is more to come from the funds of knowledge the world is amassing, and it takes courage to try, fail and try again in order for people to stand up and take their place within the mosaic, seamless quilt that comprises humanity. I am a small, colorful patch on that human quilt. I was designed and ordained to be sewn into this pattern.

Abandoned as a baby, I never knew the love of my birth mother, but I was loved, nurtured and carved as if I had come into the world as a block of alabaster. Over time and with care, my

grandparents, Ama and Apa, chiseled away the rough edges and then began to apply the finishing, polishing that would help me be what was within – a musician, an artist, a writer, a gardener and a caretaker. Why would one so impoverished, uneducated and so limited be instilled with so much? It is a cosmic question that may be answered by the universe's need for balance. I certainly cannot question the rational for what occurred; I simply accepted that my mind and my hands would be busy, and I had much to learn. I would wake up in the morning and roll away the palate on the floor of my grandparent's room and take my breakfast taco out into the yard to enjoy as I played. My day was spent in playful observation of how the garden grew and what Ama did to help it along.

After the rain, the play took the form of art. Mud became clay, and low relief sculptures were created and sun-dried for my very own studio. My hands could make the mud take the shape of dogs, cats, plants and the faces of my beloved Ama and Apa. Mud mixed with twigs, leaves, marbles and bottle caps became environmental art projects which came and went as the sun and rain saw fit. I held no crayons, no pencils or pens. I spoke only the finest, most refined, educated language, Ama's Spanish. She had been a successful business woman, and she insisted on a standard, carefully correcting my speech. Everything I learned entered into my mind in Spanish. Every song I sang, every story I made up, every story told to me, every television show I watched, and every kindness or harshness I uttered was in Spanish.

I embraced education even when it tried to push me away. I learned the quiet, gentle humility that it takes to sit in the corner of the world and absorb what was not meant for me. I read what the world wrote and listened to what the world performed and studied what the world created. I learned from the masters of writing, art and music. I began to attempt to apply their techniques and refine my own skills and passions. I learned to love what my mind had stored and how the skills made my play so varied, creative and beautiful, full of sounds, sights, colors and shapes. Learning never left the realm of play for me. Even writing and research is the task of putting together puzzle pieces for the creation of a full image to be studied.

I instilled this method of learning, always in a self-sheltered environment on myself and on my children, because the world is harsh and there are too many who would keep us from attaining as much as we need to fulfill who we are meant to be, so if we play and we appear as if we are only playing, we sit still and quiet and take what we need. My hands have held the shaking hands of my children who feared being told they were not good enough, as musicians, artists or writers, themselves. They eventually let go of my hands and embraced their own strength. All three have hands that proclaim, create, and perform far better than I do. They are

much stronger, taller and more polished alabaster than I am. This is as it should be.

My hands held Ama's hand as she drew her last breath and had been by her to comfort her as she grew weaker. My hands spilled silty dirt onto her grave and planted flowers into her



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stone vases. This has been the most noble work these hands have done, loving and caretaking- expressing the full humanity I have attained. I extended my hands to my birth mother and stayed by her until she passed. I have buried my face in my hands often, of late. I have let them catch my tears, since I have been accepted my role in caretaking of my youngest daughter. Everything my mind has absorbed has come in handy as I have walked alongside this brave and precious young woman. There are things these hands cannot fix, but I will not stop trying. She can count on me to be strong and caring. My children and I will grow as old together as we can. We will leave our marks on this world with our words and our voices

and our  
names. We,

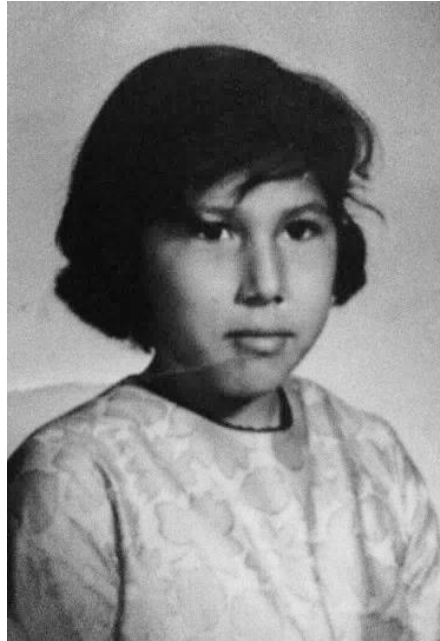
who once sat quietly in a corner of the world so that no one would take notice of us, now, stand firmly, confident in who we are and what we have to offer.

There is still so much to do. There are wines to be developed, vineyards to be tended, orchards to be planted, fruits to be harvested, paintings to be placed onto canvases, songs to be sung and hands to be touched. Why was one so lowly given so much? I do not know, but I am so grateful for the opportunities I have been afforded by these gifts placed into my hands.

As a baby, Ama made my  
diapers and dresses out of the  
fabric the flour came in. So,  
thanks to education, I've gone  
from flour sacks to Oscar  
DeLaRenta, Evan Piccone and  
Louis Vuitton.

# Piedad Ymbert

## *Narrative*



My formative years between the ages of 4 and 10 were spent in La Cuarenta, one of the oldest barrios in Corpus Christi, Texas. Corpus Christi with its green, flat lands, salty breeze winds and miles and miles of beach was postcard perfect. Our barrio was located in the Southwestern outskirts of town, in the industrial section and on the poor side of the railroad tracks.

The enjoyment of the cultural region of Corpus Christi was reserved for the tourist and the affluent. Its palm-tree lined shoreline boasted beaches, beautiful parks, T-Heads and L-Head marinas and entertainment centers. Across the bridge lay an even bigger and better beach where people parked their cars and walked right into the water. North Beach was a tourist attraction which reflected the city's slogan of a Sparkling City by the Sea. The summer brought with it a continuous playground filled with music, laughter, and fun. The business section was divided into two-parts, an uptown and a downtown. The uptown was lined with tall office buildings and hotels with a tunnel that ran underground and provided hotel guests a sheltered passage to the downtown area. Downtown was full of shops, restaurants and more tall buildings, and it led to the seawall and the waterfront.

Corpus was a paradise whose fruits and pleasures were to be had by its affluent citizens, and tourists, while we the poor just sat on the fringes and watched.

The urban Mexican-American barrio, La Cuarenta which was Corpus' version of



California's Sleepy Lagoon was the place where during a rumble 40 Pachucos were killed. La Cuarenta was bordered by two busy intersections, Agnes and Baldwin. Our community was self-reliant. It contained two neighborhood corner stores, a plumbing parts shop and four churches. Agnes or Highway 44 was lined with businesses on both sides of the street. Businesses such as drive-in restaurant/bar, a pharmacy, a paper plant, a bottling company, a mattress company and paint manufacturing company, several salvage yards, an auto parts yard and even a hub cap yard could be found on Agnes. The railroad ran parallel to Agnes and its whistle marked the beginning and the end of each workday. The smells of chemicals filled the air. The only smell stronger than that was the smell of clean earth after a rain shower.

There were two elementary schools of equal distance from our house and a junior high school adjacent to one of those elementary schools. The high school was across the tracks in the Anglo section of town. Baldwin, the other street, was two blocks north from my house, and it had several cantinas, a bakery, restaurants, a meat market, a washeteria, dry-cleaners, a used car lot, two filling stations, a Sno-Ball stand and Drs. Hector P. and Cleotilde Garcia's clinic. The clinic also had a pharmacy, but it was always so crowded that we always went to Oscar's pharmacy on Agnes. The Greyhound bus made daily stops at Oscar's drugstore every day of the week and the downtown area was only 15 minutes away via the bus routes which stopped at every corner every 15 minutes.

Even the library's Bookmobile came to our neighborhood every other Saturday morning. During the summer our neighborhood was visited by traveling church buses that would invite us in to hear the Word of God and to make small arts and crafts projects that reinforced God's plan of salvation. The candy man with his glass encased cart would make periodic trips, selling Mexican candy, such as leche quemada, dulces de calabaza, camote, y de coco. Mr. Johnson would also make his daily rounds in his horse-led stainless steel cart, selling ice-cream, yelling at us if we went near his horse.

During the early summer days while it was till dark outside you could hear the big cargo trucks with tall wooden crates built-in picking up the piscadores (crop pickers). In the evening, you could hear their return with cries of "¡Sandias baratas-tres por un dolar!" or whatever crop they had harvested such as pepinos or elotes. The cotton-picker trucks quietly stopped just long enough for the young men to swoop down from their tall wooden sides.

During the day neighbors waved or greeted each other while they did their outside chores such as weeding, hanging or taking down laundry while children played outside. People walked to and from the bus stop and stores. Smells from the kitchens filled the air, especially the smell

of beans and tortillas. But once the men returned from work, all outdoor activity stopped and everyone remained inside. During the summer days, neighbors could be seen sitting on their front porches or in their backyards enjoying a cool drink, a cold treat or just enjoying the coolness of the day. While everyone knew each other, socializing was only done between the women and the children. Men just acknowledged each other with a nod of the head or a wave of the hand.

Almost everyone on my street owned or was buying their homes. There were rows of rental houses on Pine and Lou, the two cross streets from my street. All of the moms on our street were stay-at-home moms. A retired couple lived next door to us. They were raising their divorced daughter's children, Los Güeros and another pair of older grandsons, who were in junior and high school. One unwed daughter and her young son still lived at home with them. She was the only woman who worked outside the home and would take the bus to and from work. All of the men on our block worked at blue collar jobs with the auto mechanic sometimes working out of his home.

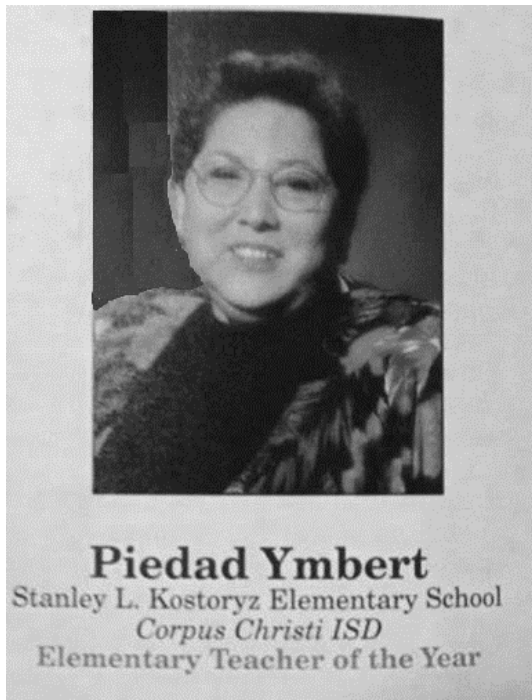
Most of the neighbors had anywhere from 5-9 children. The social class status ranged from upper-lower to lower-middle. The residents that lived in the rental houses never stayed long enough for one to get to know them. Only two families in the neighborhood had phones or televisions. While everyone else had wringer washers and hung their wash to dry, the auto mechanic's wife had an automatic washer and dryer and an air-conditioned home. However, there was never any social interaction between her and any of the other women in our neighborhood. Loud music could always be heard coming from her house and she could be seen walking around in shorts, which was considered scandalous. Simona, even had a beauty mark tattooed on her face.

Everyone in the neighborhood had one car. Women took the bus to run their errands or simply walked using strollers or children's wagons to carry groceries or goods and umbrellas to help protect them from the sun. Taxis were summoned only in times of emergencies. A special taxi service for out-of-town travel to San Antonio, the Valley, Laredo or other near-by cities could be arranged by calling a driver and placing a request. As soon as he had enough people making the same destination, the passengers would be contacted, and they would wait for the honk and off they would go. Spanish was the language of the community, and English was only spoken at school. My parents and the single mom were the youngest parents in the whole neighborhood.

Hispanics come in all colors. The elderly couple and all of their descendants were güeros

y rubios con ojos borrados. All the other neighbors were brown skinned with dark hair and dark colored eyes. The mechanic was tall, thin, and wore his dark, straight hair greased back with tattoos on both arms. One neighbor had short, tight-curved hair, while his wife had long, kinky hair with streaks of white hair. Both were dark skinned. Their boys were dark-skinned, but not as dark as their mom whom people referred to as La Negra. Their daughters, lighter in complexion had big dark eyes and long wavy hair. My own family was no exception. My mom was darker than my father, whose exposed arms and legs were milky white. Two of my sisters were dark-skinned with dark eyes and two others were light-skinned with light brown eyes. I was neither dark nor light skinned, but *aperlada*, like my mom.

Every time someone in my old neighborhood made special Mexican treats such as *caldo*, *menudo*, *tamales*, *buñuelos* or *pan de polvo*, little samples were sent to neighbors. The visits



between neighbors were infrequent. Moms would use their children as messengers and couriers. Death or illness in a family would result in meals being taken to the family. Many times when someone was ill, neighbors would take turns in cleaning the house or taking care of any younger children. Neighbors were more than just friends. They were extended families when they were needed.

Almost every home had a little garden of the essential home-grown *hierbitas* such as lemon grass, mint, chamomile, and the very popular *aloe vera*. Warm teas and salves were the answer to all of our ailments. Spider webs would be used to help

coagulate the blood in cuts or scrapes. were also cured by the placement of a into the ear and then lighting the top part cone to release the bad air.

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Ear aches  
paper cone  
of the

El Mal de Ojo was always on someone's lips. If someone admired a personal article such as a bracelet or ring, the object should be touched to prevent something bad happening to it. The same held true for people. A complement paid to a baby or child should be accompanied by the touching of the face or head for fear that the child may take ill or even die. Body cleansings with the egg rub or broom sweeping were frequently done, along with the *curar de susto*. For more

serious ailments or problems, a curandera was often consulted. Doctor visits would be made only if the home remedies or the curandera did not bring the desired results.

Catholicism was the only religion in my old neighborhood. La Capilla de Guadalupe was two blocks from my home, and my sister and I always attended the first mass. Most of the other kids went with their families to the second or third mass or attended other bigger Catholic churches. Doña Lolita, the neighborhood matriarch provided Spanish Catechism classes beginning at age 5 while the nuns provided English only classes for children no younger than 7. It was not uncommon to see nuns making door to door visits in our neighborhood collecting money, canned goods and sometimes articles for raffles or prizes to use for the church fairs or bingos. They never left empty-handed. Fridays were always no-meat days and even our school served grilled cheese sandwiches or vegetable soup on Fridays. Attending the Protestant bus was okay because it wasn't considered church. Religion was never discussed just accepted as part of our daily lives. Whether they were practicing or not, everyone was Catholic, except my Dad.

**Jenni Vinson (2015)**



*Sunrise between Ben Bailey and Manning Hall*

# Piedad Ymbert

## *El Cuento*

As is the custom among Hispanic families, the lessons of life are taught through folklore, legends and stories. During my childhood, my mother was usually the storyteller, but as my sisters and I grew older, my father took over the role of storyteller. My mother's cuentos usually focused on discouraging certain behavior, while my father's stories dealt with life's lessons. While I have come across some of my mother's cuentos, I have yet to hear or read about the majority of them. My father's stories may or may not be original, but I have yet to come across them anywhere else. Both of my parents' cuentos and stories were told as if they had really happened to someone they knew or to one of their relatives or their relatives' acquaintances. The stories always came across as authentic and real with the exception of one which is why this story and its message has remained with me for over 50 years. My father shared this story with me while I was a junior in high school. The story was relayed in Spanish; I suppose my father felt I needed a reminder of my roots and my identity. The second story is one my mother told and one I loved and later found a semblance between it and Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree* and Grimm's *Hansel and Gretel*.

## *El Burro Entre Caballos*

Había un rancho que tenía caballos y burros.

El rancho también tenía un hijo quien ama con toda su vida.

Una mañana cuando el rancho y su hijo caminaban por el rancho inspeccionando los corrales de los animales, encontraron que una de las burras había dado luz a un burrito.

El niño se enamoró del burrito y tan pronto como fue posible el burrito fue puesto con los caballos y mas cerca de la casa para que fuera mas fácil para que el niño lo visitara a veces mas de dos o tres veces al día.

El niño cepillaba el burrito todos los días, le daba de comer, y habla con el burrito todos los días. Como el burrito siempre estaba con los caballos, comía lo que comían los caballos y nunca jamás volvió con los burros, el burrito pensó que el también era caballo.

Y como el niño le daba al burrito mas atención que a los otros caballos el burrito muy pronto pensó que el era el mejor entre todos los caballos.

Un día el ranchero pido que los caballos y los burros se pusieran apacentar. Como el burrito no estaba acostumbrado de estar entre los burros no los reconoció y se quedo entre los caballos. Cuando el burrito vio a los burros comento a uno de los caballos-mira que animales tan extraños- El caballo solo le contesto—es que tú no te haz visto- El burrito no entendió lo que quiso decir el caballo y siguió comiendo.

Un poco mas tarde, el burrito dijo en voz alta-¡Yo soy el caballo más guapo que todos! Al oír esto, uno de los caballos le dijo-Tu mi amigo vives entre nosotros, los caballos. Comes lo que comemos nosotros los caballos. El niño te trata muy bien, mejor que nos trata a nosotros, pero tu mi amigo no eres un caballo. ¡Tu, mi amigo eres un burro! El burrito solo se rió, pensado -que caballos tan celosos.-

Al fin del día los animales fueron encaminados a sus corrales. En eso lleo el niño y unos de sus compañeros. A ver a los animales, uno de los niños grito con entusiasmo- -¡Mira, mira! ¡El burro no siguió los otros burros sino esta entre los caballos! ¡El burro piensa que es un caballo!

La moraleja de este cuento es,-No seas como el burrito. El vivir entre los caballos no cambiara lo que eres—un burro. A si tú mi hija. No importa donde te encuentres nunca olvides quien eres, porque si te olvidas siempre habrá alguien quien te recordará quien eres y de donde viniste.

As told to Piedad Ymbert by her dad, Reynaldo Franco

# Mario Acevedo



*Divine Motherhood*  
Print

Medium: Wood Carving for



# Lorenzo Garcia



*Diana the Riveter*

Medium: Wood Carving for Print



# Dustin Sewell



*The One I Lean On*

Medium: Wood Carving for Print

# Maya Izabella Iniguez

## Photo Journal of Northern Africa

Two years ago I travelled to Northern Africa to study the influences of Christian Spanish culture in Morocco, and African culture in Andalusian Spain.

I vividly recall the striking imagery of women in burkas covered from head to toe, merchants selling in open air venues, the aromas of fresh mint tea, coffee, couscous, dates, cured olives, and cured leather permeating the corridors of the Moroccan medina. In contrast, modern Seville looms with glass, metal buildings, and metros worming through its concrete streets while Moorish castles and towers serve as reminders of an African legacy.

The first photo was taken from the roof of the Seville Cathedral in Seville, Spain. The rock frame forms a window to the city, making entire skyline visible from the incredible height at the top of the cathedral. The view in person is absolutely breathtaking, a mixture of the allure and magic that is Seville, Spain.

The second photo depicts a hallway and doors leading into the homes of families residing in Chefchaouen, Morocco. I was captivated by the cerulean blue color that seemed to coat almost every building in the quaint rural town. The color originally used to signify which areas belonged to the Jews living in Chefchaouen, is now used to decorate and distinctly characterize this jewel of a town.

In the third photograph, it is again of Chefchaouen. I often catch myself remembering the clear blue skies from the photograph, and the matching blue-painted edifices. The incredible colors, both in the sky and on the ground, are perhaps why the city of Chefchaouen is dubbed “The Blue City,” a picturesque place I was fortunate enough to witness firsthand.



*Seville Cathedral*





*Chefchaouen, Morocco*



*Chefchaouen, Morocco Blue Skies*



## Fulden Sara-Wissinger

My heritage is European mixed with Byzantine and Seljuk-Ottoman Culture. I grew up in Istanbul, a cosmopolitan melting pot with 15 million souls. In the broadest sense Byzantium, Constantinople, Istanbul bridges the Mystical East and the Pragmatic West. As a person of mixed culture, I am fascinated by other cultures. Living in one of the world's most exotic cultural crossroads created in me a delight for such diversity and a hunger to venture into the world to

experience ever more.

I attempt to reflect this in my work by fusing together visual elements that have opposing qualities thus creating harmony out of dissonance. Circumstance dictated that I live in a very controlled closed environment for much of the time. With two working parents, no close relatives and few friends I spent much of my time alone overlooking the magic below, the chaotic jostle of customs, cultures and religions rubbing against each other.

Some of my most vivid memories are of emerging from my sheltered home to walk hand in hand with my parents through Istanbul's world famous Bazaars. I became swiped up in the sensual soup of sights, smells and sounds, a magical world far removed from my seven story perch. It has taken quite some time and living half a world away for me to realize just how profoundly this dichotomy has shaped me.

After a decade working as a graphic designer I decided to turn my visual skills toward exploring what I am about and how my past has affected me. Quite by accident and very much to my surprise, I found myself gravitating to clay.

For me clay most directly captures fluid energy while requiring patient methodical manipulation. This in itself stands as a metaphor for the East West push and pull of Istanbul. I prefer to make wall pieces that use my 2D sensibilities. My pieces mix motifs from past cultural references with my graphic design background. Thus a strong graphic style tends to produce focus on crisp geometry, which then is mingled with the Arabesque fluidity of "Turkish Calligraphy." Strong texture against clean edges creates a sense of tension. I view this juxtaposition of rigid geometry and animated organic as a metaphor for the interplay of opposing forces that enlivens Turkish Culture.





Fulden Sara Wissinger, Capadoccia Series I&II, Earthenware Ceramics, Decals, mix media, 2016

*Capadoccia Series I & II*



Fulden Sara Wissinger, Sultan Mahmud A, Earthenware Ceramics, Decals, mix media, 2016

*Sultan Mahmud A*

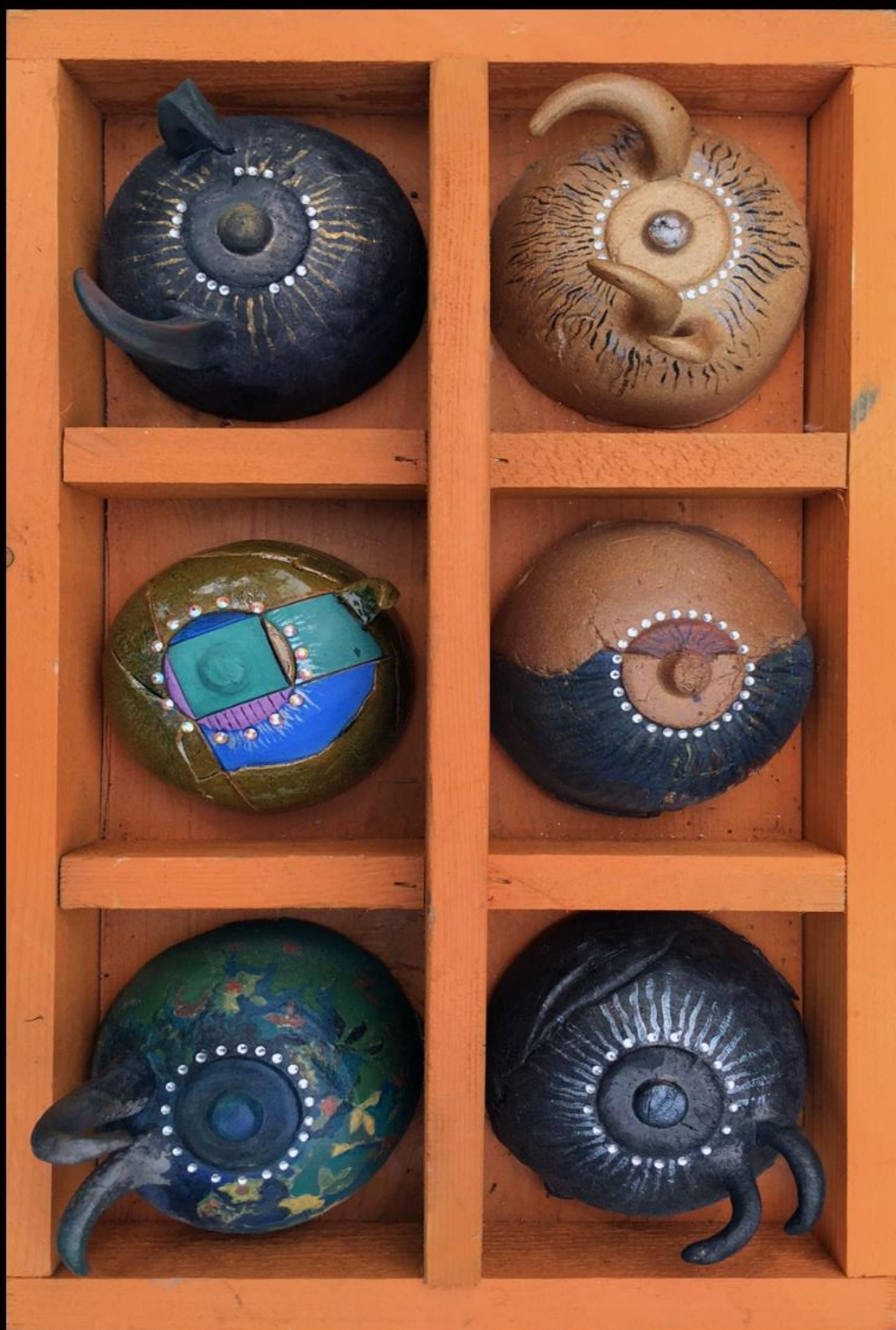




Fulden Sara Wissinger, Look at Me, Earthenware Ceramics & Mix media, 2015

*Look at Me*





Turkish Delight, clay, Found Object, 17.5X10.5X5 ", Fulden Sara-Wissinger

*Turkish Delight*

## Kim Coughman aka Roan Oak



*Sunrise Goddess* (2015) Medium: watercolor





*Sunset Goddess* (2015)

Medium: watercolor



*Self Portrait* (2014)

Medium: watercolor





*Robo-Woman* (2015)

Medium: Watercolor



*Exist without Apology* (2015)

Medium: Wood carving for imprint

# Morhiah Hernandez

## Ceramic 3-D Art



*Drinking Divine 1*

A series of ornamental pottery

*Drinking Divine 2*

A series of ornamental pottery







**Valerie Yanez**

Medium: watercolor

# Maraiah Palomo



*Padre Esta Con Migo En Mis Suenos*

Medium: Acrylic





*Tiger Lily*

Medium: Acrylic



*Tiger Mask*

Medium: Ceramic 3-D Art



# Stephanie Ortiz



*Child of the Moon*

Medium: Acrylic



*Alien*

Medium: Acrylic

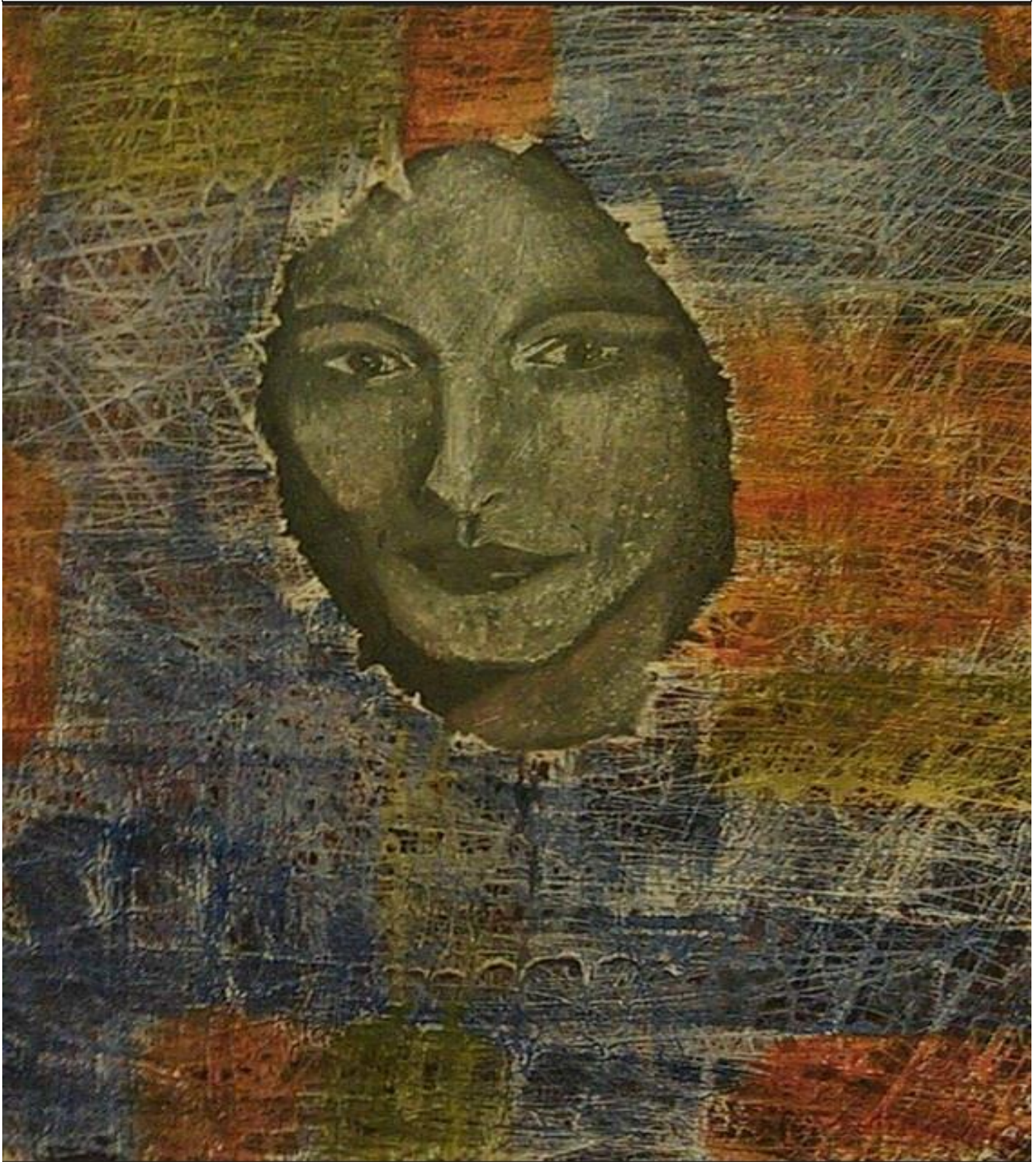


*Such Small Hands*

Medium: Acrylic



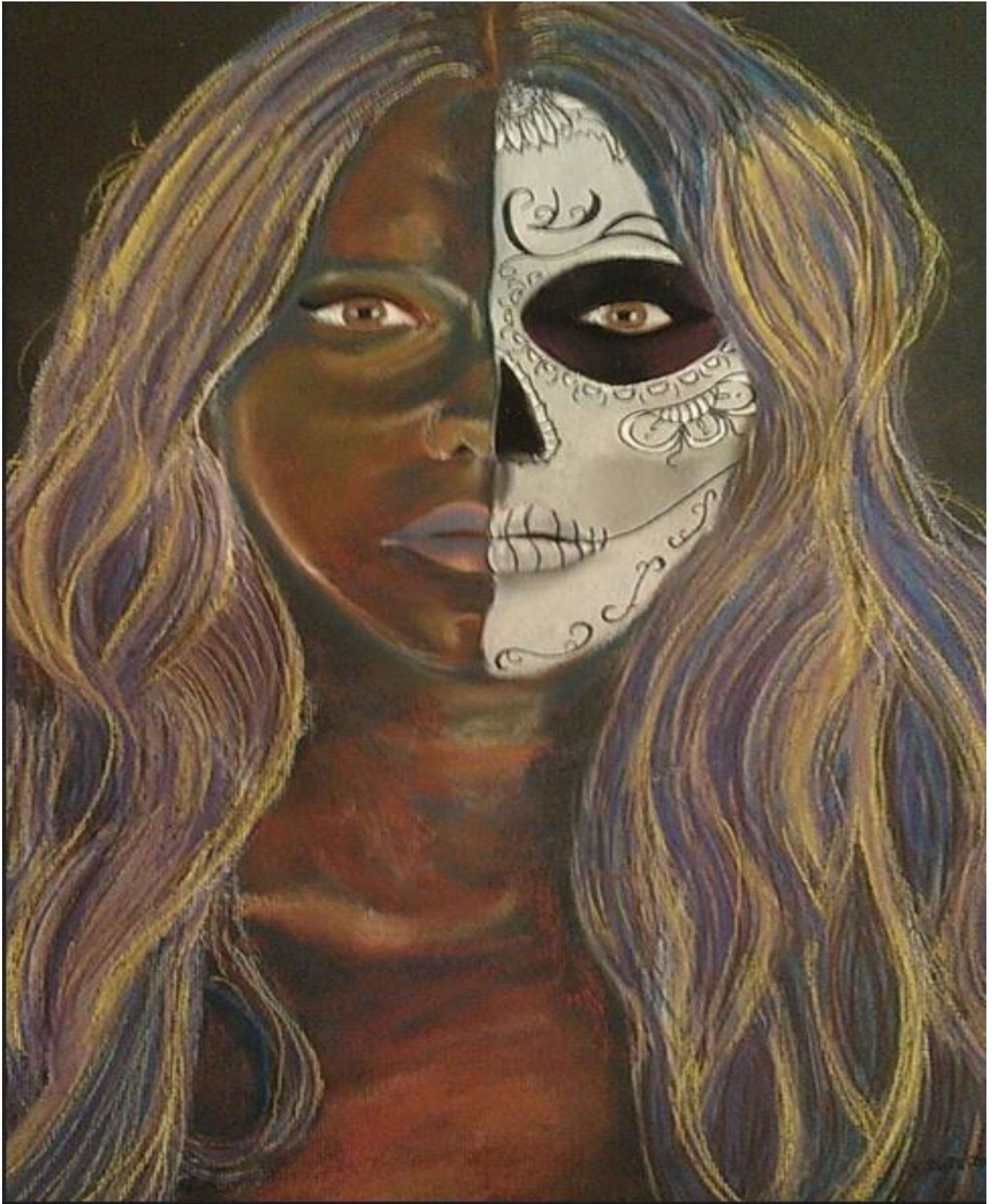
# Jennifer Bowyer



*Outside Her Own Walls*

medium: Acrylics





*Don't be Deceived* (2013)

Medium: Charcoal Pastel





*Woman on the Water* (2013)

Medium: Charcoal Pastel

## TAMUK NOW 2016 “PERSON OF THE YEAR” NOMINEES



Maria de Jesus Ayala-Schueneman  
Associate Director for Public Services  
James E. Jernigan Library  
Texas A&M University-Kingsville



Santa Barraza, M.F.A.  
Arts/Communication/Theater/Film  
Texas A&M University-Kingsville



Lucy M. Camacho, Ph.D.  
Department of Environmental Engineering  
Texas A&M University-Kingsville



Mary L. Gonzalez, Ph.D.  
Associate Vice President for Student Access  
Texas A&M University-Kingsville



Richard L. Miller, Ph.D.  
Professor and Department Chair  
Department of Psychology and Sociology  
Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Winner will be announced at the Women’s History Month Symposium on March 3, 2016 in SUB 219 A/B. Nominees will be contacted with a specific time.

# Nominee Biographies

**María de Jesús Ayala-Schueneman** (née Ayala León) was born in Tampico, Mexico in 1950 and was raised in Mexico City. She graduated high school from the Presbyterian Pan American School (PPAS) just south of Kingsville, and stayed in Kingsville as a member of the staff while attending college at Texas A&I University (Class of '72). Though intending to return to Mexico, she met her husband of 38 years in San José (Bruce) and decided to stay in the United States. In a stroke of providence, Bruce found professional work in Kingsville, TX at Texas A&I University. In 1984 she joined the staff of the Jernigan Library, where she has been involved in all library public services and has worked for over 32 years. She currently holds the rank of full Professor and is the only current library staff member with a doctorate (bilingual education). Besides advanced degrees in library science and bilingual education, María earned a master's degree in Spanish from Texas A&I University. María has collaborated with Bruce on several professional publications or presentations, including an article in *Internet Reference Services Quarterly* and *Fontes Artis Musicae*. She has also presented several times at the Association of College and Research Libraries biennial conference as well as a reference conference in Pittsburgh that led to a book chapter entitled, "Reference services in a multicultural university library." Recently she collaborated on a paper presented at the Library 2.012 virtual conference: *Know Thy Database: Testing Limiters in a ProQuest Database*. In 1997-1998) she was one of 21 librarians nationwide chosen to participate in the first Association of Research Libraries' Leadership and Career Development Program Inaugural Class. María is a member of the Delta Kappa Gamma (DKG) Alpha Lambda chapter. María is past president of the American Association of University Women (Kingsville Branch). María is member of the Texas Faculty Association (Kingsville chapter) (TFA) and has served as president and secretary. María has been elected several times to serve in the Texas A&M University-Kingsville Faculty Senate, serving as president and secretary of the Faculty Senate. María has been a long-standing member of the Texas Library Association (TLA) and the American Library Association (ALA).

**Santa Barraza** is a native of Kingsville. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees in fine arts from the University of Texas. Prior to coming to Texas A&M-Kingsville, she taught at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Penn State University at University Park. Her artwork has been widely exhibited in the United States, Mexico, Italy and Spain. Her artwork is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Texas Tech University, Mexican Museum in San Francisco, Del Mar College, Fondo Del Sol Museum, South Texas Museum, Olin Museum at

Bates College, and the Hispanic/Latino Archives of the Tomas Ybarra Fausto Collection at the Smithsonian Institution at Washington DC, and other collections and various art collectors. Santa C. Barraza is a contemporary Tejana artist who teaches at Texas A&M-Kingsville and formerly taught at the Art Institute of Chicago. Her work has been widely exhibited and has been published in a number of collections. She holds an M.F.A. in painting and drawing from the University of Texas. Her vita reflects a career replete with awards, appearances and lectures, exhibitions, and publications.

**Dr. Lucy Camacho** is an Associate Professor for the Environmental Engineering department and has more than 10 years of laboratory research expertise in the area of water remediation and innovative water treatment technologies. She received her Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering, from New Mexico State University in 2000 with a minor in Environmental Management. Dr. Camacho completed her M.S. in Electrochemical Engineering Process at Technische Universität Dresden, Germany in 1988, and her B.S. in Chemistry from Technische Universität Dresden, Germany in 1987. Dr. Camacho's research interest include: Water Desalination; Membrane distillation, Electrodialysis metathesis, and other innovative technologies for water purification applications; novel adsorbent materials; graphene oxide and graphene membranes; sustainable wastewater reuse and wastewater subproducts. Dr. Camacho's honors and Awards: Kingsville, University Research Award, 2013; NSF Travel Award, Minority Faculty Development Workshop, 2012; SACNAS Travel Award, Advancing Hispanics/Chicanos & Native Americans in Science, 2009; Journal of Hazardous Materials, Dallas Reviewer Acknowledgment, 2008; Who's Who in the World, 2008; Who's Who in Science and Engineering, 2006, 2007; NSF Travel award, Advance Program: Forward to Professorship, 2003; Teaching Award, Higher Education Council, México, PROMEP Recognition, 2001; Scholastic All-American Honor, United States Achievement Academy, 1997; National Award Winner, United States Achievement Academy, 1997; National Scholarship, Outstanding Scholar Achievement, Bogota, Colombia; 1982-1988 (Sponsored by the German Government to conduct Bachelor and Master of Science studies in Germany).

**Dr. Mary L. Gonzalez** is an Associate Vice President for Student Access in the division of Academic Affairs at Texas A&M University-Kingsville. Dr. Gonzalez oversees the division of Student Access, which houses 11. Federally funded through the US Department of Education as well as a campus funded undergraduate research. In addition, in 2014 she received a \$7.2 million dollar grant for GEARUP to provide services in the surrounding rural schools and Corpus Christi

recent awards include Student Support Services and Student Support Services STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) in 2015.

Dr. Mary Gonzalez possesses two degrees in Business: Finance and Management from Texas A&I University-Kingsville. She holds a Master's degree in Psychology from Texas A&M University-Kingsville and her Ph.D. in Educational Human Resource Development in Higher Education from Texas A&M College Station.

Dr. Gonzalez stands out in her field by not only serving as a principal investigator to over a \$3 million per year department. Previously Dr. Gonzalez has been awarded the administrator Women's award on campus "Be All You Can Be" in 2010 for her mentoring of women in the professional arena and students. The college level programs such as The Ronald E. McNair scholars program assist faculty and students engage in valuable research projects throughout the university. This program has yielded many minorities who are now doctors and Ph.D.'s in the past 19 years.

As an administrator at the university her funding is contingent on the expertise and ability to secure external funds that are vital on campus for opportunities for minority students and women.

Dr. Gonzalez has worked in higher education for 26 years and has coordinated efforts with high schools to adequately prepare high school students for college readiness. Dr. Gonzalez previously held an appointment by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board on an advisory board for Outreach and Access for Texas.

**Richard Miller** is a professor and the Chair of the department of Psychology and Sociology department. He received his Ph.D. from Northwestern University in 1975. He has taught at Georgetown University, the University of Cologne, and the University of Nebraska at Kearney. He is currently chair of the Psychology & Sociology Department at Texas A&M University – Kingsville. In 2009 he was named U.S. Professor of the Year by the Carnegie Foundation. In 2012, he received the Distinguished Teaching Award from the American Psychological Association. Rick first became a member of Chicago chapter of NOW in 1972 when he was a graduate student. In 1981 he served as a co-sponsor for the First International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women in Haifa, Israel. His research has explored a variety of issues of interest to women including life coping skills, family housing, eating disorders, derogatory humor, multicultural identity formation, romantic jealousy, and the socialization of children. Dr. Miller has published articles in: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*; *Teaching of Psychology*; *Public Opinion Quarterly*; *Personality and Individual Differences*; *Personality and*



*Social Psychology Bulletin; Leadership and Organizational Development; Human Relations; Journal of Personality.* Dr. Miller has contributed chapters on social psychology, cross-cultural psychology, research ethics, teaching methods, community psychology, student engagement, leadership and organizational behavior, and academic advising to scholarly books. He has edited books on social comparison processes, undergraduate research, student engagement, and academic advising. Dr. Miller serves as Editor-in-Chief of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology's e-book series. His research interests: social influence, interpersonal attraction, social comparison processes, cross-cultural psychology, environmental psychology, organizational behavior, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.



Salvador Dali Inspired Recast, *The Handshake*



2016 Person of the Year nominees with TAMUK NOW and TAMUK Student Veterans Association members at the Women and Gender Studies Symposium March 3, 2016



# **TAMUK NOW 2016 Person of the Year**



***Dr. Mary L. Gonzalez***  
Associate Vice President for Student Access  
Texas A&M University-Kingsville



# TAPESTRY



2017

Accepting Submissions: [Kujev001@tamuk.edu](mailto:Kujev001@tamuk.edu)



*The Life of Bridget V. Page*

*My Mother, Shannon  
Bartkowiak*



*El Burro Entre Caballos*



*Mobile for Movies*





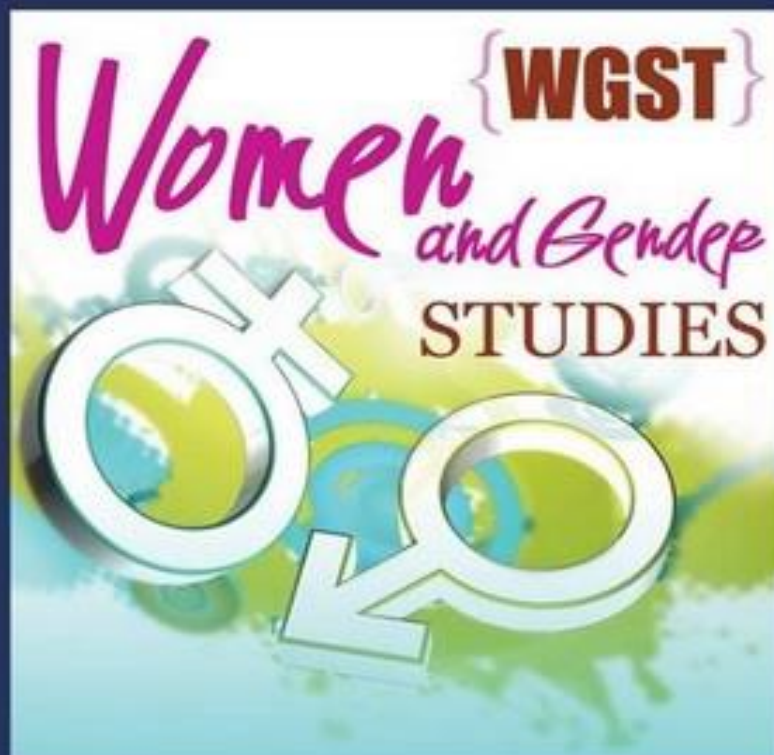
# Editor's Page

It has been a privilege to work on this first issue of *Tapestry*. First and foremost, we extend thanks to Dr. Susan Roberson for allowing us the opportunity and the creative freedom to develop the concept of this journal. We sought to weave together the stories of our community. Some told their stories in words and others through photography or various art mediums. Nonetheless, we arrived at a rich, colorful, bold and vibrant tapestry of stories and adventures.

We extend thanks and heart-felt gratitude to all of those who submitted and trusted us to weave your portion into the work. Your works made us smile, laugh, cry, or think. We were proud of each every submission we accepted for this project. Together, we arrived at a beautiful collaboration. Seamlessly sitting by one another, our works have truly come together to form the perfect *Tapestry*.



**Raymond Garcia III.** Women have always played an important role in my life. My Grandmother Petra H. Saldana, my mother Rachel Garcia, my sister Bonnie Garcia and my beloved niece Natalie Nicole Garcia. At 17, I met Melissa Ann Soliz with whom I have been best friends since. I love you all.



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