

***¡SOMOS TEJANAS! Chicana Identity and Culture in Texas.* Edited by Jody Marín and Norma E. Cantú. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2025. \$134 hardback, \$39.95 paperback.**

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Accepted: Fall 2025 / Published online: Spring 2026

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The co-editors of this work are Jody Marín, Faculty Senate President, Professor of English, Interim Writing Center Director, with an appointment in the Department of Language and Literature at Texas A&M University-Kingsville and Norma Elia Cantú, Murchison Professor in the Humanities at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. In *¡SOMOS TEJANAS!* Marín and Cantú, and their contributors, explore the identity, history and resilience of Tejanas during colonial and postcolonial times. Their work is not just a narrative; it is a celebration of cultural heritage and a profound testament to the strength of often marginalized communities as expressed by the writers and artists who are included in this book. Gloria Anzaldúa's often-quoted description of the United States Mexican border: "The U.S. Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of the two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture" (*Borderlands La Frontera*, 25) resonates throughout *¡SOMOS TEJANAS!*

In Part I of Marín and Cantú's book, titled "¿Quiénes somos?" contributors recount their lived experiences often framed through stories of migration, border life, and the intersections of race, gender, and class. They write in both English and Spanish (often shifting between the two), affirming their bilingual and bicultural identities. This codeswitching is not just stylistic but a political act—asserting that Tejanas belong to both worlds yet are not confined by either. Key contributors in this section include established voices like Norma Elia Cantú, who offers both personal memory and critical insight into the role of Tejanas as cultural caretakers.

In Part II, "Music, Dancing, and Cultural *Movidas*, dance also emerges as a recurring motif; the movidas symbolize both physical resistance and movement across borders and beyond. As Marín states: "Conjunto music allows this transcendence, where Tejanas can remember, perform, and express their Tejanidad, thereby creating a complete space within an often incomplete third-space border subjectivity. Conjunto music does this to me. Listening and dancing to conjunto music allows me to express my Tejanidad as I strum my fingers and move my feet to the accordion-driven melodies and the n-ta, n-ta, n-ta polka beats." Similarly,

Sophia Salgado writes, "Our bodies and performances would become epistemic sites, sources of information for our audiences, and an opportunity to show case continuing Tejano heritage."

In Part 3, titled "Resilience," the authors explore themes of Tejana engagements with historical memory, their role in higher education in the past, and Latina athletic striving. Jennifer R. Nájera's "Tejanas Remembering Segregation" and Brenda Sendejo's "Unsilencing the past" highlight how Tejanas have preserved and transmitted cultural memory through activism and storytelling. Alberto Rodríguez and Jeffrey Glicks's "Los Círculos Sociales" examines the role of Tejana's in higher education during the 1920s-1940s, emphasizing their contributions in academic spaces and disproving the myth that Tejanas did not attend colleges or universities in the past. Paulina A Serrano's "A Legacy of Tejana Athleticism" traces the history of Tejana women in sports, framing their

participation in acts of community civil rights and belonging.

Finally, essays like Domino Renee Perez's "SNOWVID, the Storm within the Storm" and Liliana Valenzuela's "Blackout" reflect on the compounded vulnerabilities faced by Tejano communities during the 2021 winter storms and the COVID 19 pandemic.

Part IV turns the reader's attention to "(Im)migration." Through *testimonios*, essays, poetry, and visual art the contributors highlight how immigration is not only a legal or political issue but also a lived reality that shapes familial, emotional, and cultural life. Artistic pieces and poems in this section capture the emotional and spiritual dimensions of migration—grief for what one leaves behind and pride in preserving the language, food, and traditions across generations. The consequences of immigration or migration is well defined in the poem below by Brenci Patino "Tejas es mi Atzlán" which touches on that longing for the place which was once home:

"MIGRANTO, SIEMPRE MIGRANDO
 buscando la tesitura
 me arraigo a mi cultura,
 En hermosas tierras and
 pero me están alejando
 de aguas que un día me bañaron.
 Brownsville como te adoro,
 y a mi Tonantzin imploro
 que me regrese a mi Aztlán."

The final section of the book turns employs Tejana artists to illustrate the book's themes. In her pieces "*Urban Ecology (Reconquista)*" and "*Emma Tenayuca*," Ashley Mireles emphasizes Chicana activism and ecological reclamation highlighting the relationship between land and identity when it comes to contested spaces in Texas. Her portrait of Emma Tenayuca honors the legacy of labor justice and civil rights, connecting past activism to contemporary movements. Wendi Valladares explores cultural tensions, community spaces, and domestic identity in her works "*Tejanos vs. Tejanas*" and "*Chicano Kitchens*." Her work blends everyday life with historical commentary, using kitchens and common scenes as sites of cultural affirmation. "*Culebra Azul*" and "*Healing Borderland Hand*" by Celeste De Luna are deeply spiritual and symbolic. Her work explores themes of healing, migration, and border trauma. The imagery of the hand and the snake (*culebra*) speaks to the dangerous and sacred nature of the borderlands, drawing on Indigenous and feminist iconography to reclaim narratives of suffering and strength. In "*Soy Tejana*" and "*Siempre Selena*," Mayra Zamora blends pop culture with traditional Chicana motifs to celebrate Tejana pride. Her vibrant, colorful aesthetic affirms Tejana beauty and cultural legacy, especially through homage to icons like Selena Quintanilla. Santa Barraza draws on spiritual and ancestral symbolism in "*Frances con El Árbol de la Vida*", featuring the sacred *Tree of Life* motif. Her work is rooted in Indigenous and Mexican Catholic visual traditions, honoring matriarchal lineage, divine femininity, and spiritual resilience. Mireles, Valladares, Celeste De Luna, Mayra Zamora, and Santa Barraza convey a rich tapestry of Tejana experience blending political consciousness, ancestral memory, feminist strength, and cultural affirmation through their visual contributions. Their work transforms art into a space of resistance, storytelling, and community healing.

¡Somos Tejanas! is a powerful and necessary anthology that amplifies the voices, histories, and creative expressions of Tejana women across generations. The editors, Jody Marín and Norma E. Cantú, have created a collective portrait of resilience, identity, and cultural affirmation. Each section of the book, whether focused on migration, family, activism or art offers insight into the multifaceted experiences of women who have long shaped Texas history and culture, yet who have often been silenced, overlooked or marginalized. This work not only honors that past but also asserts a bold presence in the present and envisions an empowered future. *¡Somos Tejanas!* is more than a book, it is a celebration of survival, creativity, and the enduring spirit of Tejana womanhood.