

# LETTERS FROM THE SAN ANTONIO FOUR

A special La Voz series: Part 2

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Editor's Note: ***Southwest of Salem: the Story of the San Antonio Four*** screened on March 4th as part of UTSA's Women's History Month. In attendance for the screening and panel were the four women who are seeking full exoneration from a crime of child sexual abuse that they did not commit. *La Voz* is publishing a series of letters from the four. The first letter, ***Life Begins Again***, appeared in the March, 2014 issue of *La Voz*. Here, the San Antonio Four react to the documentary about their case and speak about advocacy and support.

Today was a day that I was finally able to view the work-in-progress documentary with my three friends. I watched Cassie, Kristie, and Liz share the same emotions as I once did. It was something I had been waiting for, for a long time, and to have them view this in a crowded auditorium was worth the wait.

Supporters from all across the country were also in attendance, one even came from as far as Canada. The amount of support that we have now is truly overwhelming because nearly 20 years ago we had no one on our side. It makes me realize that there are good people still out there in the world.

Telling my life story and all the trials and tribulations that I've endured is not easy but it is something that needs to be done. Not only does it help to advocate for my case but for others as well. I have received numerous thanks and much gratitude for sharing the details of my case. It helps others come forward with their similar situations.

After spending nearly a third of my life in prison I have come in contact with some wonderful people — people who come from different backgrounds and yet so caring. I have stayed in contact with some of the women whom I met during my incarceration and we continue to share a bond that can never be broken. When you spend a great deal of time with people in such a dark and lonely place you take comfort in those that are in the same position as yourself.

My hope is that everyone will gain strength and courage to stand up for what they believe in and never give up...

— Anna Vasquez



March 4<sup>th</sup> was my first time to view the work-in-progress documentary about our case. Even though I have been living this nightmare for almost 20 years now, the screening was very touching and emotional for me. To see and hear what each one of my friends has gone through brought tears to my eyes. There was a wonderful turnout from the public. They let me know that there are people out there who care and believe in justice.

I was incarcerated for 13 years before being released on bond November 18, 2013. During that time I met some great people, a few who were in the same position as me, innocent. I try my best to advocate not only for us but for others as well. If I can help just one person or be an inspiration to many, then I know I have given back.

— Kristie Mayhugh





# LETTERS FROM THE SAN ANTONIO FOUR

Words cannot describe how I felt the night of the documentary. To see so many people involved and interested in our fight for justice is amazing. Never did I imagine that our story, our struggle, spreading and uniting people from all over. Their love and support has made every step to winning our battle so much easier. We do not feel alone anymore as we once did locked away behind gates with no idea of what might come. That night I heard people crying, shedding tears about our suffering over the years — not understanding how such an injustice could occur. But we want people to smile when they see us and to always stand strong and fight for what they believe in the way we have and will continue to do. Seeing the way people come together as one in society, today, is such a beautiful sight — one that we definately didn't see fourteen years ago. I have a strong gorgeous family that I am so proud of, they have stood by my side as families should. To everyone that is walking with us through our fight for exoneration, our gratitude is neverending. — *Cassie Rivera*



As I watched the work in progress documentary for the first time, tears rolled down my face to see and hear my friends speak about their experience and pain. To see their tears and cry for justice pierced right through me. I was so filled with love and compassion for everyone that was there to support us.

I could never forget those that have done time with us as well a few who drove in from Houston to show their support that evening. Monica Rivas shared: "This is a given — we love you guys, and where y'all go, we follow! Keep pressing, we're behind y'all." A true friend.

We have met a whole lot of people who want to help in any way possible, even if it's just a friendly dinner date. A wonderful couple shared their story with us and it seems like they are not all that different. I was able to speak with Darrell Otto for the first time face to face and thank him for being our voice, an Angel sent from GOD. I truly believe that people come into your life for a reason, season, or a lifetime. They will leave a milestone that will never be moved. Keith was amazed since it was his first time as well. He said "It was amazing to see as the girls prepared to go to prison that they were supporting you; I know that must have moved you. There has not been a day that I have not drawn strength from my friends to continue looking forward for the day that I will see them free."

I pray that this will encourage others to stand up for what they believe in. ❖

— *Elizabeth Ramirez*



## *Amalia De Hoyos de Méndez*, cont'd from pg 4

not to walk around barefoot and to do the dishes as I go, the difference between testales and tanatls, along with chingos of things — too many to list here. Most importantly, she taught me how to laugh at myself, heckling me any chance she got. She especially supported my organizing and the historic and cultural preservation work with Lerma's. In her memory, say a bunch of cuss words and listen to La Rancherita del Aire radio at [www.la-rancherita.com.mx](http://www.la-rancherita.com.mx), if only for an hour.

Her viewing was held at Memorial Funeral Chapel. Her final ascension at Sacred Heart Church in Eagle Pass. She was laid to rest at Our Lady of Refuge Cemetary. She was in good hands — with the same family that's buried all our relatives. Four generations llamados "Rito" fueron los encargados de la funeraria, el entierro, y el panteón.

I'm looking forward to more forgotten stories. Igle Pas' is a small town after all. ❖