



# La Voz de Esperanza

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## Editor

Gloria A. Ramírez

## Design

Elizandro Carrington

## Contributors

Greg Harman, Josie Méndez-Negrete

## La Voz Mail Collective

Georgina Cortinas, Brenda Davis Juan Diaz, Rachel Jennings, Rachel Martínez, Ray McDonald, Angie Merla, María Porter, Mary A. Rodríguez, Blanca Rivera, Zapopo Sánchez, Dave Stokes, Tony Villanueva

## Esperanza Director

Graciela I. Sánchez

## Esperanza Staff

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

## La Voz de Esperanza

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Esperanza Peace & Justice Center  
922 San Pedro, San Antonio, TX 78212  
210.228.0201 • fax 1.877.327.5902  
[www.esperanzacenter.org](http://www.esperanzacenter.org)

Inquiries/Articles can be sent to:  
[lavoz@esperanzacenter.org](mailto:lavoz@esperanzacenter.org)  
Articles due by the 8th of each month

## Policy Statements

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

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 Letters with intent to slander individuals or groups will not be published.

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Rare is the piece of legislation that can save lives, save money and improve safety in communities all with the stroke of a pen. Such a bill did exist in the Texas Legislature's most recent session. Labeled Senate Bill 359, it would have given hospitals a modicum of power to hold a patient for four hours if doctors consider that patient to be a danger to himself or others... The bill sailed through the House and Senate, and why not? The common-sense measure had the full support of the Texas Medical Association and the Texas Society of Psychiatric Physicians. But when it landed on Gov. Greg Abbott's desk, the measure died under a strange and unexpected veto.  
—Dallas Morning News, August 19, 2015

Clearly, Texas is behind in prioritizing mental health services for its people. Recently, there has been much debate about whether Texas is dead last among the 50 states of the U.S. or second to the last in providing mental health services. One thing for sure, help for residents who suffer from mental health issues in this state and throughout the U.S. is severely lacking. We have witnessed, time and again, mass shootings, family violence and senseless killings from perpetrators that had exhibited signs of mental illness but were not helped or taken seriously. We know that most people that suffer from mental disabilities do not end up as mass murderers—but they do wind up living a poor quality of life—seen as being responsible for their own state of being—if they are seen at all. Entire lives are wasted to mental illness because we do not have proper resources or care.

This issue of La Voz begins a focus on mental illness. Even though Frank Valdez, one of our writers, has tried to make us aware of the issue—we have not done enough. It is something that I personally have been wanting to delve further into. Persons suffering from mental illness are a group that is generally oppressed by society and discriminated against. According to data compiled by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), mental illness affects one in five adults in the U.S. whether it's depression, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia and a good percentage are not able to function well enough to take care of themselves or hold down a job. We need to be advocates for them.

Full disclosure: Josie Méndez Negrete is a close friend of mine and I knew about her son, Roberto, and his suffering from schizophrenia early on. I also knew that she was writing a book on her experience in dealing with this mental illness. The book, *A Life on Hold, Living with Schizophrenia* published by University of New Mexico Press is now out and Josie will be having a reading here at the Esperanza on Saturday, September 26 at 7 pm. An excerpt of her book is included in this issue of La Voz.

This summer, Greg Harman also published his book, *After Depression*, about his experience with this illness since he was 14 years old. An excerpt of his book is also included in this issue of La Voz. Both Greg and Josie are courageous human beings who have shared a sacred part of their lives so that we can learn more about mental illness and began to dispel the stigma. Look for more on this topic in future issues of La Voz.

Best of luck to Monica Velásquez, design person for La Voz and staff person of the Esperanza as she moves on to new ventures. Buena suerte, also to Itza Carbajal who will begin studies in archiving at the U.T. graduate school in Austin and to Saakred who is going to Ireland to pursue studies at the Burren College of Art. ¡Abrazos, adios! ¡Muuuuh!



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**VOZ VISION STATEMENT:** La Voz de Esperanza speaks for many individual, progressive voices who are gente-based, multi-visioned and milagro-bound. We are diverse survivors of materialism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, classism, violence, earth-damage, speciesism and cultural and political oppression. We are recapturing the powers of alliance, activism and healthy conflict in order to achieve interdependent economic/spiritual healing and fuerza. La Voz is a resource for peace, justice, and human rights, providing a forum for criticism, information, education, humor and other creative works. La Voz provokes bold actions in response to local and global problems, with the knowledge that the many risks we take for the earth, our body, and the dignity of all people will result in profound change for the seven generations to come.