



# La Voz de Esperanza

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

### La Voz de Esperanza

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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 Letters with intent to slander individuals or groups will not be published.



I grew up in an eastside barrio of Austin, Texas with chickens running free in our backyard and a rooster who would chase us trying to peck our legs when we went out to play. Our mother always had tomatito plants around the yard that I would lay under and eat, one by one. Mom's yard was always full of plants and flowers that she would share with las comadres in the barrio.

Her love of plants came from her mother, Epifania, 'buelita grandma, who lived across la calle ancha, 7th street, in another barrio. 'Buelita Grandma kept a backyard full of tomatoes, chiles, corn, papas and calabacitas. Both, mom and Grandma, always had cilantro, yerba buena, ruda, yerba anis and other herbs in their yards. We also had nopales, savila and all kinds of rosas.

Our maternal great grandmother, 'buelita Salomé, was always ready to administer curaciones for susto, empacho, nervios, or other ailments. She often prescribed yerbitas to be administered in teas or placed on the area of the body as directed. 'Buelita Salome would also use small glasses to create suction with a match on areas of the body that needed massage. When we had earaches, my father would roll up a paper cone and set it aflame with the point of the cone in the ear canal. The flame at the open end would blow out and relieve the pressure inside.

My father loved to plant fruit trees. Peaches were his favorite. He had up to 15 peach trees in our backyard and grew hybrids by grafting the branches of other fruit trees onto the peach trees. I swear he grew hybrids of apple-peach, pear-peach and plum-peach!

At the Esperanza Center, we work toward the recovery of ancestral knowledge like what I experienced in my childhood as one of our goals. That includes the use of plants for healing. In 2005, we hosted Doña Enriqueta, a curandera from Oaxaca at the Casa de Cuentos on the Westside. The workshops were swamped with Westside gente who identified with the ancestral knowledge of plants that Doña Enriqueta presented. At the Paseo por el Westside, Don Jacinto Madrigal's pláticas on plants are always full and he always sells out of plants. Blanca Rodríguez's chiles workshop have also become very popular. This year Margarita Elizarde and Susana Segura introduced plant tours of the barrio and foraging of plants like verdolagas for use in meals and yerba anis in healing. Ay vamos. We are reclaiming our ancestral knowledge.

At El Rinconcito de Esperanza on the Westside, our work continues with the recovery of history and cultural practices that were commonplace a couple of generations ago in all barrios—but that now are disappearing. My childhood home in East Austin is in the process of being sold and the neighborhood is being gentrified. Folks coming into the neighborhood are starting gardens, keeping chickens and trying out New Age healing practices—but we know it is our ancestors that taught us all of that.

On June 24 and 25, we will have a rare opportunity to extend and share our ancestral knowledge with Luz Calvo and Catriona Rueda Esquibel who will talk about their own journey in reclaiming native foods for nourishing their bodies and their spiritual well-being. The events will include a convivio where food and recipes will be shared. Come and find out what decolonizing your diet could mean for you and your family's health and happiness. See the back page for more information. —Gloria A. Ramirez, editor



Doña Enriqueta published her *Plantas de la Canasta de Doña Enriqueta* in the December 2010/January 2011 issue of La Voz de Esperanza.

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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.