

Reflections: Women Keep Marching y March 8th

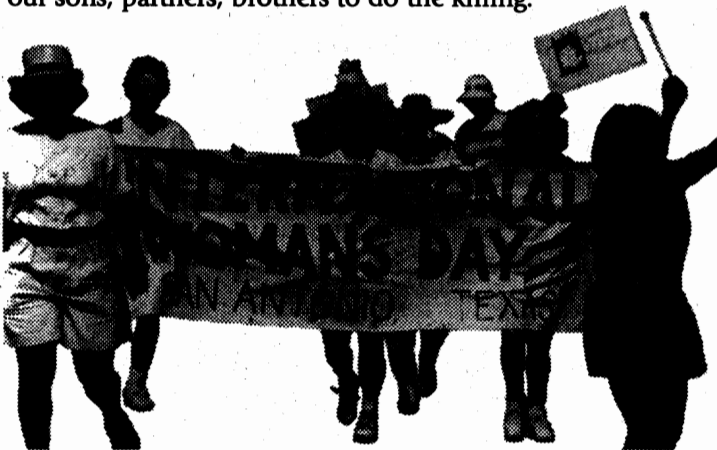
BY SUSAN M. GUERRA

San Antonio Women gathered for the first International Woman's Day March in 1985 beneath banners carrying these words: "San Antonio Women — Peace • Work • Equality"

We were approximately 300 women and men walking on city sidewalks from the steps of City Hall to Plaza de Zacate (Milam Park). (The plaza had in recent history been the gathering place in San Antonio for political discussions, creating social ties to maintain the sense of community in this Mexican- American working class part of the city. We wanted to honor this history by using this plaza).

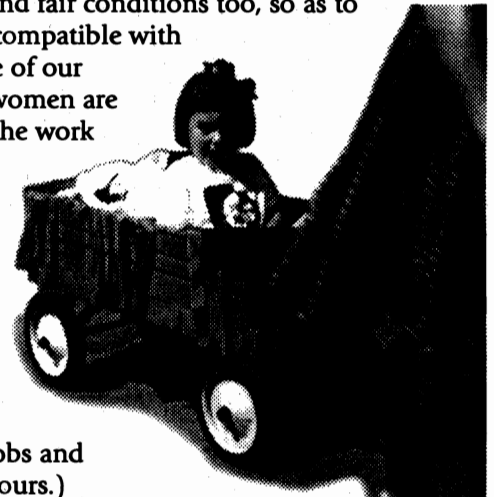
And what was a women's march in San Antonio like? After all, political marches had not been a common occurrence in our (red)neck end of the woods. We, particularly as women, had been taught that "politics" is a no, no, no..... don't get mixed up in that! But we countered those thoughts and mobilized our political selves. We brought up the issues we knew something about from our everyday life. After all, "politics" is no magic, ethereal sphere, untouchable and unmanageable. Politics is born from how we want to live our world. Our desires and our dreams. Our knowledge. Politics is gathering together, exchanging information and plans, action, and the decisions to get what we want. Validity in the public sphere. So San Antonio Women brought out their political concerns:

PEACE: in El Salvador, meant stopping U.S. military intervention there; meant putting a stop to sending our sons, partners, brothers to do the killing.



Our compassion for our fellowman is easiest to mobilize for those peoples closest to us and to our homeland, but a compassionate attitude towards humanity in general is also integral to the formation of our politics. (Today San Antonio women advocate for non-military intervention in Iraq and the de-militarization of the border between The U.S. and Mexico.)

WORK: women wanted equal access to job opportunities. And fair conditions too, so as to make work life compatible with the domestic life of our choice. (Today women are the majority of the work force facing unemployment at Kelly Air Force Base and make up the majority of employees in the service industry with only part-time jobs and unstable work hours.)



EQUALITY: is deeply rooted in the assumptions by which we live our daily lives. The understanding of equality is determined and subject to change in many places simultaneously— in political legislation, educational institutions, religious communities and in how we treat our children, co-workers and friends. (San Antonio Women are still under-represented in decision making forums which formulate and act upon these assumptions.)

The first International Woman's Day March in San Antonio was a manifestation of women's public voice. For the first time this voice was multicultural, multi-ethnic and crossed class divisions. Taboo issues which affected our lives such as gay rights, working class women's rights, anti-militarism and anti-consumerism were addressed by speakers at the march.

This march honored the values and voice of the work of Emma Tenayuca, political activist and union leader, until then overlooked in our local history; as is the case with

many of our local female heroes. Yes, it was this first International Woman's Day march which brought Emma Tenayuca's name and deeds out for recognition. Since then, she is recognized many times and now there is a book being written about her life. How many more "Emmas" are yet not recognized?

Our city was ready for this march. Our City Council at the time awarded an official Certificate of Recognition to the constituency of women organizing this march and a whole month of International Woman's Day activities. Working class women in San Antonio were publicly recognized for our position in adding to the wealth of our city. Our labor has kept businesses alive, has kept offices and hotel rooms clean, has maintained education as a political priority. Our labor has assured us that housing needs are addressed and has kept health facilities available for all children. Yes, working class women are individuals with individual concerns; but it is the sense of community which keeps the meaning of equality alive.

The contribution of working class women's efforts is the focus of International Woman's Day. Since this is the majority of San Antonio women today, there is all reason for as many women as possible to be out at this year's march on March 8th, International Woman's Day. Not everyone is given banquets or awards, yet our contributions are still vital to a democratic society. Bring your political concerns with you on a sign or a placard. Join in to be part of today's public voice.



International Woman's Day March & Rally



with
Beva Sanchez Padilla
writer, teacher, poet - M.C.
Sylvia Fernandez
director of special programs @ UT Health Science Center
Bárbara Renaud González
freelance writer
Shimi T.
belly dancer
Grupo Animo
from the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center
And a special performance
by the Leadership Club,
4th and 5th grade, of
Brewer Elementary

Sunday, March 8, 1998

Gather @ 12:00 noon
under the entrance to Hemisphere Park
off S. Alamo Street

March begins @ 1:00 P.M.

Rally @ 2:00 P.M. in MILAM PARK

Everyone is invited to join us, as women, men
and children of San Antonio unite to carry on a
tradition of activism, unification and strength.
Feel free to bring your signs and posters.

For more information
call Ruth (822-6984) or Suzann (226-3381).