

La VOZ de Esperanza

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

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Policy Statements:

We ask that articles be visionary, progressive,
instructive, & thoughtful. Submissions must be
literate & critical; not sexist, racist, homophobic,
violent, or oppressive. Articles 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individuals or groups will not be published.

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and la buena gente de nuestra comunidad.

Cover photo: Artescuola interns Claudia Ahumada,
Mika De Leon, Alonzo Avila, (pictured at bottom)
Valerie De Leon, Spiral (top)

Quince años de Esperanza

There is an image that first comes to mind and that is the dedication of the Esperanza when it was first created. I remember that in the Esperanza's first building there was a plazita with a fountain. The place looked very Mexican. It was like walking into a little pueblito. I was invited as a representative of the City. The Esperanza was new, hopeful, young and visionary. That was important because City Hall was a good place to see what a city is really like. As an advocate for marginalized people, it was sometimes hard to see that my dreams could come true: dreams of equality and justice. It was important and affirming for me to go to a place where those same values were elevated and celebrated. It was very special. –María Antonietta Berriozábal (El Grito)

We are dancing in a circle. It is October, 1993, a good few years before the false millennium, and the party, Raising Hope, Raising the Dead, is held in the upstairs room of an old Westside building, El Salón Téa. ... thinking that if all Esperanza came to reality, then this is how the world could be in the not-too-distant future, us dancing among families, lovers, friends in circles and across lines with the only regard or acknowledgement being smiles and gritos in celebration of a pure togetherness. –Paul Bonin-Rodríguez (El Grito, 2000)

Support of the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered community was part of the reason for the Esperanza's eviction from the North Flores location. We had been one of the first organizations in the country to publicly organize a queer art show. Our last show (in 1994) at the old North Flores location came to be one of the most debated and discussed shows ever, to this day. Some of the work was taken out of context and used against us by the Christian right as well as conservative gay white men which ultimately affected our funding and support base... –Martha Prentiss (El Grito, 2000)

When Esperanza's first building was lost, there was only one way to go. The building died yet the spirit called for a home of its own. Support to the Esperanza today is to support the force it represents in the development of our population: still segregated, still too many poor, still few accumulating wealth off the sweat and artisanry of the backs and hands and dreams of the destitute and working classes. The Esperanza still is the only organization of its kind which asks bothersome questions for those forces who are not interested in social change. We no longer need to ask for permission. –Susan M. Guerra (El Grito, 2000)

In the spring of 1996, the Ku Klux Klan came to San Antonio. The media had been reporting on other Klan rallies around the state along with the violence and arrests that always accompany such events. In our community, the mayor's office, the local chapter of the NAACP and a few local pastors were advising that we stay home and ignore the Klan. Passivity in the presence of racism has never been the Esperanza way. Our response was to take the lead in organizing an incredible coalition of activists from the African American, the Latino, the Gay and Lesbian, the Legal and the Arts communities... As a result of our efforts, no arrests or acts of violence occurred that day and the connections made through the coalition have endured over the years. –Jan Olsen (El Grito, 2000)

Almost died at the Esperanza. Before Cuando Calienta el Sol and after Guantánamera at Graciela's parent's fiftieth wedding anniversary. Right by the women's bathroom

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, specicism 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.

with a plastic glass of chardonnay in my hand. It was a carrot. After dancing salsa with John all night who is seventy plus, but dances like he's twenty, I went to see what chisme David Zamora Casas had to tell me. Something about his next victim in the game of love, I think. The punchline came, whispered and obscene, while I was swallowing the pinche piece of carrot, and the next thing you know I couldn't breathe. ...David saved my life. I could have died at the Esperanza. But come to think of it, I have died there already, many times. ... each time I get another chance to live without fear. –Barbara Renaud González (2000)

Para mi, Esperanza has for years been my personal answer to the Alamo and all it represents—no small accomplishment! Instead of war and destruction, Esperanza has stood for the creative spirit and liberating art. Instead of supposedly heroic men who were in fact building imperialism, its walls have sheltered brave women building a home for hope. Instead of a shrine to racism, Esperanza has celebrated La Raza and all the razas struggling for justice. –Elizabeth “Betita” Martínez (2000)

I am grateful for the Esperanza nudging me to do things I had been too afraid to do. At the outbreak of the war in Bosnia, I was silent about my own friend who I had lost contact with. Thanks to the Esperanza I was invited to make a speech about Bosnia for International Women's Day, and I moved from a place of powerlessness to a place of action. My speech was immediately reprinted by The New York Times, featured on NPR radio, and picked up on the wire, finally by the San Antonio Express News. If things have improved here in Macondo, it's thanks to many fearless community groups and fearless individuals. I am particularly indebted to the Esperanza for standing on the frontline regardless of the criticism that

often entails. –Sandra Cisneros (1997, Diez Años)

Maybe our homes reflect the world we want to live in. Beautiful, colorful, warm, open, comfortable. Like our home at the Esperanza. We are building the Esperanza for those who are coming after us. Preparing their new home. What will it look like when we are gone? What happens when we are the ancestors? When we have crossed over, six generations from now...what will we say to the living? –Dennis Poplin (2000)

At the Center the phones rang off the hook, as people called to wish us well. Supporters flocked to offer their good wishes; the air hung thick in expectation of the judgment. The Judge's chambers spilled over with supporters, detractors, and media jockeys ready to tell the story. Reverently, those in attendance honored the tone set by Judge García during the hearing. People reminded each other that he was not one to accept chatter. An individual reminded someone to take off their shades because “he had previously asked someone to take their dark glasses off” in respect for the court. Reminding us that he was making a non-partisan and potentially unpopular decision, he asked Dr. Antonia Castañeda to put away a yard sign reading, ¡todos somos esperanza! Judge García stated that the sign was too political, clarifying that he was not running for office. Shortly past 10:00 a.m., it came. Without fanfare, and in a very judicious manner, Judge García rendered his decision. –Dr. Josie Méndez-Negrete (La Voz, 2001)

Editor's note: Of course, Esperanza won the lawsuit against the City of San Antonio in 2001 with the Judge ruling in favor of Esperanza in 3 of 4 counts. Since then, we have more memories to share and write about. We will celebrate Quince Años on Saturday, October 26, so send your recuerdos in, now!

**Whomever you are, wherever you are,
you have been part of Esperanza for all or part of our 15 years.
We need your stories, recuerdos, photos, video and creative works*
related to la historia de Esperanza.**

**Names, dates, places, faces, events, images...
all will be part of a commemorative publication of
Todos Somos Esperanza, Los primeros quince años.**

Bring or send your contributions to the Esperanza this month!

***Copies will be made on site**

922 San Pedro, San Antonio, Tx 78212 or email lavoz@esperanzacenter.org

