

Dear San Antonio: I'm gone but not lost.

Letters to the World from Your Voting Rights Hero
Willie Velasquez on the Occasion of His Rebirth.

By Bárbara Renaud González



Illustration by Feda Zidan 2018, Auris Project

Over 50% of the public school-children in Texas are Brown/Black. More than 2 ½ million students.

Yet, they don't know their stories.

The young need to see themselves *as (s)heroes* in their story as they navigate their way in the world. *The (s)heroes story* teaches the moral value of generosity, humility, and the power of love.

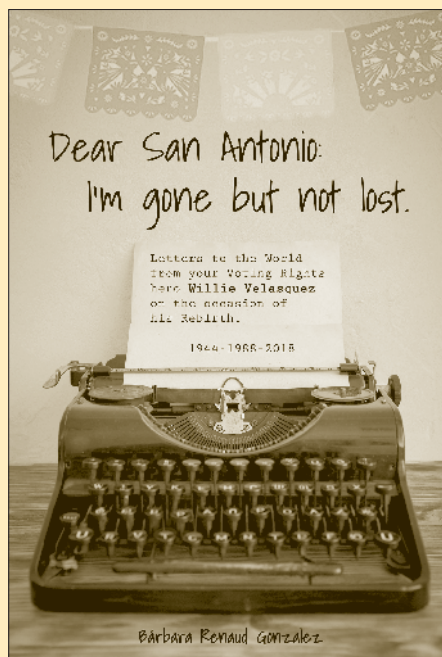
"We know the stories of the Holocaust. World War II. The Alamo. But we don't know the stories of Texas' cultural, artistic, and political (s)heroism."

These (s)heroes are the Tejas the young need to know about so they can make even richer contributions, says Bárbara Renaud González, a published writer (first Chicana novel to be published by the University of Texas Press, 2009—*Golondrina, why did you leave me?*)

Now a non-profit, *Alazan Arts Letters & Stories (AALAS)* from San Antonio, a 501(c)3 founded by writer Bárbara Renaud González, is determined to tell the greatest stories of her community that deserve to be widely known by the young and the young "forevers."

Willie Velasquez died thirty years ago at the age of 44. "God ('the Big One') has told Willie Velasquez that it's time for him to examine his life. And on the 30th anniversary of his death, the late voting rights champion does, in a series of heartfelt letters to his community, his wife, and the world. Based on a true story, the letters recount Willie's childhood memories, dreams, confessions, and most of all, his landmark achievements in democracy."

From the barrios of San Antonio, Texas, Willie



Bárbara Renaud González

Published by Alazan Arts Letters & Stories
www.alazanstories.org
(AALAS) - Facebook page

\$14.99 Paperback
Available October 28th on Amazon

Velásquez transformed the national electoral landscape through his voting rights efforts on behalf of Latinos. As founder of the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP), he organized 1000 voter registration drives in more than 200 communities across the Southwest and beyond. He won 85 voting rights lawsuits and doubled the number of Latino elected officials from about 1500 in 1974 to more than 3300 in 1988. In 1995, he posthumously received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Clinton at the White House.

"As a Latina writer, I believe we have to tell our great stories – greatly. AND we must also greatly reach our community... If we don't reach our young, we risk our democracy if they don't know about Willie Velásquez," says Ms. Renaud González.

The National Launch of *Dear San Antonio: I'm gone but not lost.* is scheduled for November 2, 2018 at the Guadalupe Annex. The introduction from this new publication follows:

I got these letters from Willie

Let me say that I believe in ghosts, Santa Claus, and the devil with the rooster foot. Don't you? Lately, I've been hearing from Willie Velasquez, one of the most important and fiery people from Texas, specifically, San Antonio, a soulful city with rivers and creeks like a spider web of water.¹ A semi-tropical city with all kinds of palm trees, orange trees and Spanish wrapped-up with English, like the Christmas lights on the river at Thanksgiving. Heard of the Alamo? Yup, it's here, along with four other missions, a million people strong, and stories about war and borders, dancing on rooftops, the Polish and Germans, the French and the Jews and lots and lots of Mexicans fighting and some of them surrendering and others

¹ Considered by many to be one of the most soulful and haunted cities in Texas — home to the Alamo, and to a vast network of creeks and rivers that served the dozens of indigenous communities that lived there. San Antonio was named for St. Anthony of Padua by the Spaniards. Founded in 1718.

"A buoyant, instructional, timely, and offbeat biography."
-Kirkus Review

Barbara Renaud Gonzalez

winning and it's been three hundred years since *San Anto*² was taken from the Native Americans who are still here. And we are celebrating that too and feeling guilty at the same time....

Willie grew up right here, on the Westside, *el Hueso*. The bone of San Antonio. We call it the barrio.

Lately, people have been getting these letters, and they bring them to me. I don't know why, only that Willie died 30 years ago this year, 2018. Something about he's stepping up, moving on, and now he's finding himself. Not lost anymore, no way. Has things he wants to get off his chest. Knows the way home to you now.

This is his story.

OTHERED

A Collection of Poetry by Randi M. Romo

Published by Sibling Rivalry Press

This book is dedicated to ALL who have been "Othered", by policies, laws, institutions, pulpits and bullies. It is in memory of those who did not survive the struggle; those who died silent deaths in the throes of the consequences of being seen and treated as "other". Those taken by violence and those by their own despair, because they were "othered". This book is for all those who have survived and those who remain in struggle. It is a hope that we can learn to truly see one another and find our most common element, human.

This book is also dedicated to my beloved daughter, whose life was deeply impacted by the penalties of "other" and who paid the ultimate price, with her life.

IN TIME

This watch
tells time
decorates
my wrist
weighty
in its gold
and silver
presence
but it's neither

jewelry nor
timekeeper
it's forgiveness
the first taste
of understanding
it's an exhale
a moment
when I knew
that my mother
truly saw me

when shopping
one day she
took me—her
only daughter
to the counter
where men
shop for watches
and helped me
pick out
this watch

that tells
time very well
both hands
pointing right
at the moment
that I knew
my mother saw me
and loved me
completely

... Othered is more than a collection of poetry; it is proof positive that becoming one's true self is still the most revolutionary act that any human being can undertake. Randi M. Romo shows us how it's done—with courage, great care, and community."

— JAMES LECESNE, co-founder of The Trevor Project



OTHERED
RANDI M. ROMO

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