

# Brenda Davis

March 6, 1949-August 24, 2019

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Esperanza staff, board and Buena Gente extend our sympathies to Mrs. Davis' family and community on her passing. This tribute, delivered by Esperanza Director, Graciela Sánchez, at Brenda's funeral began with the stanza of a song made famous by singer, Mercedes Sosa, Si se calla el cantor...*

## *If the singer is silenced, so is life, joy and hope*

Brenda, you left us too soon.

In the late 1990s, you entered the lives of your friends at the Esperanza, eager to learn about environmental justice and even more energized to share your knowledge with the world, especially with your beloved Eastside.

You helped us collect data on the effects of the coal power plant in this area, and you worked hard to build connections among the people and places that you loved so dearly. You knocked on doors, met with people, shared your sweet smile and laughter and they responded by sharing their stories, their struggles, and their commitment to stand with you and with the many thousands who also understand that the coal power plant



Brenda Davis, an Esperanza boardmember, volunteered her time and energy in many ways.

wasn't just an eyesore, it was hurting the health and well-being of black, brown and poor peoples' lives.

You then helped us collect signatures on the eastside in particular, but throughout the city to save our precious water, the Edwards Aquifer. You helped to collect over 100,000 signatures to stop the development of the PGA Village and you worked with us for over 5 years on this struggle. We ultimately lost this battle, but the time you and others spent explaining the issue brought new awareness to our people of the threats to our water supply. You taught many new folks that water is precious and needs to be protected from those who would poison our water just to make money for themselves. You taught that your people, all people, have the right and need to drink clean water, to bathe ourselves and our children, and to prepare our meals with clean and sacred water.

When the city decided to charge thousands of dollars to march, congregate, or process through the streets of San Antonio, you joined the San Antonio Free Speech Coalition and once again explained to community members that for working class and working poor people, the right to free speech is also

the right to walk on the streets with hundreds and thousands to explain through chants, songs, placards, performances, our shared call for justice. In 2010, you traveled with us to New Orleans, reaching out to link our struggle with that of the second-line activists. And in San Antonio, you helped to keep the Juneteenth celebration alive despite the barriers imposed by City officials. For those of us who have little, if any money, the ability to join hands, to walk together or congregate together in parks, sidewalks, streets and other outdoor spaces for free, was and continues to be the best way to communicate with our communities. You marched with us, collected signatures, spoke at city council meetings and made us all strong.

Finally, I recall back in 2012, when you and I attended several eastside churches to collect signatures to save the Hays Street Bridge. We needed to collect at least 3000 signatures within a couple of months and it was important that eastside residents who lived closest to the Bridge support the struggle to preserve this important historic and cultural treasure. And although we collected the 3000 signatures and submitted them to the City clerk's office, the city ignored the pleas of *The Hays Street Bridge Restoration Group*. So we had to resort to filing a lawsuit later that year. And you were with us for the next 7 years to keep the struggle alive. You knew your community and they loved and adored you. You were instrumental in making sure that they all understood how our air quality, our aquifer, our free speech, the bridge and so much more are critical to their and our survival as humans.



Brenda Davis (left) with Nettie Hinton deliver signatures on behalf of the *Hays Street Bridge Restoration Group* to the city clerk's office.

Brenda, you were a bridge builder amongst the black and latino working class of San Antonio, amongst religious and non-religious, among queer and straight, among men and women. You were and are the energy, light, and life that brought so many communities together and for this we thank you and are eternally grateful for your commitment to love, justice, and community.

*¡Brenda Davis presente!*