



La Voz de Esperanza

July/Aug 2021

Vol. 34 Issue 6

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La Voz Mail Collective

The Collective is sheltering at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic but will be returning when their health and safety can be assured. Extra funds are being raised to pay for folding La Voz each month during this time.

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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 is a publication of

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 Letters with intent to slander individuals or groups will not be published.

Isabel Casillas Sánchez, ¡presente!



From the time I first heard that Isabel had been taken by ambulance to the hospital after a sudden stroke at home there was no denying that her last days were filled with love and remembrance. Even though she never regained consciousness, there was constant communication with her. Her family was with her every step of the way: Enrique, her husband of more than 70 years, Graciela, her eldest daughter, Leticia her youngest daughter and her sons: Xavier with his family, Fernando with his family and Bernard and Gustavo were present with their mother until the end. Each day conversations surrounded the room she was in, each day loving caresses, each day whispered endearments and, on many days, Enrique would sing her love songs, lullabies, tangos, canciones de despedida—expressions of a deep and lasting love—his way of saying good-bye.

With the options for recovery exhausted, Isabel was moved to Graciela, Amy and Leticia's house for hospice care. Their home was transformed into a welcoming space for family, friends and community to add their good-byes to Isabel. Food and drink in abundance appeared each day. Flowers, cards and photos filled the room. Children filled the rooms with the joy that only children can express. There, her life ebbed away into the spirit world to join her ancestors.

A Westside despedida for Isabel followed. Her body lay in state at the Esperanza's Casa de Cuentos in a simple pine casket painted with images of casitas of the Westside by artist, Mary Agnes Rodríguez. The rosary was held there with reflections on Isabel's life written by Maria Berriozábal accompanying each mystery that was read by a family member or friend. The next day a funeral mass at St. Alphonsus Church took place. A small choir sang at the mass accompanied by guitar and a baritone sax. In front of my pew, an elderly woman sang each alabanza loudly as only a viejita can—evoking my own childhood memories. A celebration of life followed the mass at the Casa de Cuentos where music, poetry, dancing and oral tributes honored Isabel's life.

A few days later Isabel's body was to be laid to rest at Ft. Sam where Enrique earned burial plots due to his service in the Navy. The service at the shelter provided one final farewell with an indigenous blessing. Amidst the smoke and the rainy façade of the day, those present walked away to their cars leaving Isabel's remains to be buried by authorities, later in the day. Everyone was invited to Graciela's house one last time to enjoy food, drink and the company of family and friends. Before I left, Graciela broke out the Coca Cola for a toast to Isabel who so loved to drink her Cokes. As Graciela asked her father, the widower, if he cared to say a few final words, he responded, I can only use music to express my feelings and with that he sang one final farewell to his beloved, *Dónde Estás Corazón*.

This issue of La Voz de Esperanza is dedicated to Isabel Casillas Sánchez, mother of Graciela Sánchez, director of the Esperanza and a constant source of inspiration for the work that Esperanza undertakes. In these last days of mourning for Isabel, we received word that another great soul has passed, Elizabeth "Betita" Martínez who died on June 29th at 95 years of age. I'm sure Isabel will receive Betita joyfully with open arms. Isabel's memory will continue to be honored in pages of La Voz and on our website. Tributes can be sent to: lavoz@esperanzacenter.org

— Gloria A. Ramirez, editor of La Voz



Betta Martínez at the 2008 IWD March with Laura Codina (l) & Isabel Sánchez.

ATTENTION VOZ READERS: If you have a mailing address correction please send it to lavoz@esperanzacenter.org. If you want to be removed from the La Voz mailing list, for whatever reason, please let us know. La Voz is provided as a courtesy to people on the mailing list of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center. **The subscription rate is \$35 per year (\$100 for institutions).** The cost of producing and mailing La Voz has substantially increased and we need your help to keep it afloat. To help, send in your subscriptions, sign up as a monthly donor, or send in a donation to the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center. Thank you. -GAR

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.