

# Elena Vela

February 1, 1948 – April 2, 2021

Retired career educator, Elena Vela 73, left this world on Good Friday, April 02, 2021 in her South Austin home. She was a trailblazer in education and equality for all. Her legacy as an educator for 36 years at Austin ISD touched thousands of lives. During her tenure as principal at William B. Travis High School (1991), the campus replaced the Confederate flag used at athletic events. Ultimately, the rebel mascot, a grizzled Confederate soldier, was also replaced and, the fight song, Dixie, was dropped from use in 2012.

Elena was born February 1, 1948 in Laredo, TX to Ambrosio Jr. and Maria Del Socorro Vela. She was the fourth of eight children. She is survived by twin brothers, Alberto and Alfredo and their families as well as many other family members and countless friends and admirers. Elena's career as an educator in AISD began as a Physical Education (PE) and history teacher at Brentwood Elementary and she eventually became the First Hispanic Woman Principal of a high school in Austin, Texas in 1984. She served as Principal at Travis High until 1996 continuing in administrative positions with the AISD until 2007.

Elena received countless awards and accolades throughout her career. Her accomplishments continued in various areas even after her retirement from teaching including as President of Phi Delta Kappa at UT-Austin and as Eucharistic Minister at St. Ignatius Martyr Catholic Church. Her spirit remained indomitable.

The Vela family requests that memorial contributions be made in Elena's name for the Austin Retired Teachers - "ARTA Foundation Fund", Linda Harvey, Treasurer, P.O. Box 143483, Austin, Texas 78714. ARTA awards 14 High School Scholarships to deserving high school seniors in each of the Austin ISD High Schools. Elena's mantra was education for all so that young people can achieve their fullest potential. Your donations keep her legacy alive.

Condolences to the Vela family on their loss and to the many communities that Elena was a part of and touched, in a life well lived. ¡Elena Vela, presente!



## Adán Hernández

October 15, 1951 - May 15, 2021



Adán Hernández was 69 when he died unexpectedly on Saturday, May 15. He was one of the few celebrated Chicano artists of San Antonio. Collectors of his art were as disparate as English actor, Helen Mirren and Chicano actor, Cheech Marin, known for his collection of touring Chicano artwork. Best known for the 30 paintings he made for the 1993 movie, **Blood In Blood Out** by Taylor Hackford, Adán remained true to his Chicano roots in San Antonio portraying barrio life through the lens of the pachuco. After the movie was released, two of his paintings were purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York City. Locally, the San Antonio Museum of Art claimed one of his paintings for its permanent collection.

Born in Childress, Texas, Adán grew up as a young boy in Robstown, the son of migrant workers. At the age of eight, his family moved once again, settling in the Westside of San Antonio. A product of Edgewood High School, Adán experienced the student walkouts of



Cheech Marin, left, and Adán Hernández, right, at the Los Tejanos exhibit opening at the Art Museum of South Texas in Corpus Christi on January 11, 2018.

Photo credit: Melissa Richardson Banks  
1968 and was keenly aware of the social inequities and barriers confronted by Chicano youth. His paintings reflected the cholo experience and his art was termed "neo-expressionism with Chicano noir." Indeed, his works were literally dark and raw with overtones of surrealism. Actor Jesse Borrego, who played artist Cruzito in the film, said of his close friend: "That vato loco's art is going to live forever. Vato loco art is forever." Cheech Marin posted an Instagram photo of them together citing,

"There is no purer voice from the barrio than Adán Hernández. He was the artistic soul of Chicano noir."

Condolences from the Esperanza's staff, board and buena gente to Adán's familia and the community of artists and friends whom he held dear.

¡Te aventaste, Adán! Adán Hernández, siempre, presente!