

ber, maybe we could call them and get their address” I suggested. “No, our friends don’t have a telephone” was their response.

I have done my share of traveling, sometimes even without much planning but I always know who to contact and have an idea of where I’ll spend the night so although I wasn’t worried about their response, I was intrigued by their obvious carefree attitude. Arguing that I had to have a specific safe place where to leave them they told me “just drop us off at the fig tree”

No more vague an answer could I have expected, so I insisted “do you have names for your friends” figuring I could locate them through public records but they looked at me as if I hadn’t understood, referring back to the fig tree as a meeting point with their local connections. So I asked “where do I find this fig tree, do you know where it is?”

By this time we are already in Santa Barbara off the freeway driving along some random street and still have neither idea where I am going or what to do with my passengers feeling a strong sense of responsibility towards Bob and Lily since they entrusted them to me.

“Just ask directions for the fig tree to anyone” was their answer to my state of confusion. So knowing and accepting I’d look stupid I slowed down and dared, asking a young man that was jogging along, “Excuse me, can you please tell me how to get to the fig tree?” To my surprise he said without blinking “sure, just go to the end of the street, make a right and follow the street all the way, you can’t miss it.” Still feeling like I was in a dream, I followed directions and lo and behold, there it was the biggest fig tree I could have ever imagined. Sure enough, impossible to miss.

I approached the site slowly still trying to make sense of what was going on and was mesmerized by the majestic sight. The tree looked like a huge mushroom resting in a small pie-shaped park. I have seen many fig trees during my life and as healthy as they

can be with a beautiful wide tree top, they never grow taller than 15 feet or so, but this one had to be qualified as a giant fig tree. Later on I came to learn about the *Australian Moreton Bay* fig tree being a key landmark for the locals in Santa Barbara.

Another thing that impressed me although not surprised me was the several dozens of homeless people under the tree as if seeking protection under a big natural umbrella. As I pulled over and parked, my two passengers didn’t waste any time working their way out the door to join their new community, so I asked the younger fellow.

Are your friends here?

We don’t know, but we’re supposed to meet them here

Do you see them in the group?

I can’t tell, we’ve never met them before

So, how would you know?

Oh, we’ll know

I felt sorry for them so before he walked away I pulled out my last ten dollars bill and gave it to him. As he said thanks he gave me a small black book no bigger than a cell phone and told me it was a copy of a hand written bible, so that I could deliver it to Cesar Chavez.

As I drove away, I felt their aura stayed with me in the car and kept pondering on the whole experience as if in a daze. Here I was, worried about my personal well being, about what would I do next without a job possibility in sight and no place to stay, while these two men who had less than me, were more concerned about giving to others in worse shape.

BIO: *Julio César Guerrero earned a Master’s degree in both social work and telecommunications at the University of Michigan. A prolific writer, he is currently working on a series of stories related to loteria cards.*

José Esquivel 1935-2022

Premiere Chicano artist & sculptor, founding member of the Chicano art collective Con Safo, civil rights activist, visionary and philosopher of Chicano thought, art historian, Fox Tech High School graduate, depicted scenes of San Antonio’s Chicano barrio from abuelitas watering their yards to the casitas of his beloved West Side and mentored young, up-coming Chicano artists.



“He humanized the barrio, never sugar-coating nor glorifying it,” —Santos Martínez, Chicano Studies educator

“He not only honored our bicultural identities, our homes, communities and social action but gave us voice and visibility.” —Ellen Riojas Clark, UTSA profesora emerita

José was one of the early advocates for Chicano arts in San Antonio and continued to contribute to our community through his beautiful paintings, activism, and storytelling throughout his entire life. He loved Centro and we loved him. —Centro Cultural Aztlán

Read about José Esquivel at: bit.ly/Jose-Esquivel

Paul Cohen 1953-2022

Internationally recognized American saxophonist, life partner and husband of Mexican singer/actor, Lila Downs who was also producer and artistic director for her, and father of two children. Formerly, a circus performer, his 25 year plus collaboration with Lila Downs resulted in Grammy award winning albums and innovative music styles.“



No hay palabras que consuelen el dolor por el que estás pasando. Paul Cohen fue un ser único que te rodeó de amor verdadero y eso es una bendición [“Dear Lila, there are no words that comfort the pain you are going through. Paul Cohen was a unique being who surrounded you with true love, which is a blessing.”] —Singer, Eugenia León to Lila Downs:

NOTE: We shall always remember Paul for graciously facilitating Lila Downs’ concerts in San Antonio for the Esperanza Center that took place at Plaza Guadalupe (2004), Sunken Gardens (2009), Laurie Auditorium at Trinity University (2012) and at the Majestic Theater (2014). Our most sincere condolences to Lila Downs and their familia.