



La Voz de Esperanza

September 2024

Vol. 37 Issue 7

Editor: Gloria A. Ramirez

Design: Elizandro Carrington

Cover Art: Elizabeth Catlett

Cover Photo: Elizabeth Catlett 2006 by Kwaku Alston, *Oprah Winfrey Legends Portfolio*.

Contributors

Tarcisio Beal, José Ángel Gutiérrez,
Rachel Jennings, Dianne Monroe, *People's
University for Palestine at Yanaguana*,
Gloria A. Ramirez, Carmen Tafolla

Esperanza Director

Graciela I. Sánchez

Esperanza Staff

Sherry Campos, Elizandro Carrington,
Kayla Miranda, Nonye Okoye, René Saenz,
Imane Saliba, Susana Segura, Rosa Vega

Conjunto de Nepantleras

—Esperanza Board of Directors—

Norma Cantú, Brent Floyd, Rachel Jennings,
Amy Kastely, Ana Lucía Ramírez,
Gloria A. Ramirez, Rudy Rosales,
Lilliana Saldaña, Nadine Saliba,
Graciela I. Sánchez

- 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

Esperanza Peace & Justice Center
922 San Pedro, San Antonio, TX 78212
210.228.0201 • www.esperanzacenter.org

Inquiries/Articles can be sent to:

lavoz@esperanzacenter.org

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 Letters with intent to slander individuals or groups will not be published.



Photo: Adriana Zehbrauskas for the New York Times.

"I am inspired by Black people and Mexican people, my two peoples."

—Elizabeth Catlett *Ebony Magazine*, 1970

There is a song that Chavela Vargas sings, and that many other Spanish speaking singers have sung, entitled *No soy de aquí, Ni soy de allá / I am not from here, Nor am I from there*. It is a song that speaks of the freedom to be without the worry of identity. The refrain goes

*No soy de aquí
Ni soy de allá
No tengo edad
Ni por venir
Y ser feliz, es mi color de identidad*

*I am not from here. Nor am I from there. I have no age, no future.
And being happy is the only color of my identity.*

In the case of Elizabeth Catlett, it was inevitable that she, a granddaughter of American enslaved people could not escape her identity as a black woman growing up in the early twentieth century in the U.S. Despite having parents who were educators, she suffered blatant discrimination as she sought her place in the world. She wanted to be an artist from an early age and as a young woman applied at Carnegie Mellon to study art where she was rejected due to her race. She attended Howard University acquiring a BS in Art in 1935 and then became the first woman to receive an MFA in sculpture from the University of Iowa. However, while there, she was not allowed to live on campus due to her race. At Iowa she decided to focus her artwork on black people, particularly women. The political themes Catlett chose for her artwork, however, eventually led to her imprisonment in the U.S. during the McCarthy era. She was exiled. After renouncing her American citizenship she became a Mexican citizen in 1962 joining other artists of the era who sought refuge in Mexico inspired by muralists like Diego Rivera. She was quickly accepted as part of the *Taller Gráfica Popular*, a cooperative of artists founded in 1937 in Mexico City that focused on printmaking with themes related to oppression and labor producing artwork that was accessible to the people. Catlett's artwork influenced the Black Arts Movement and became part of the Black Power and Feminist movements of the 70s. Eventually, her artwork could not be ignored as she became



Artwork: *I'm Harriet Tubman I helped Hundreds to Freedom*, 1946

an internationally recognized artist and in 2002, her U.S. citizenship was reinstated. Elizabeth Catlett found a way to be *de aquí y de allá / from here and from there*. She fully embraced her African American identity with her chosen Mexican identity and expressed it fully in her life, art, and activism. She wound up living in Mexico for over 60 years raising a family with her artist husband, Francisco Mora, a muralist and part of the *Taller Gráfica Popular*. Their children continue their parents artistic and political endeavors in Mexico. Elizabeth Catlett's life was extraordinary and the small collaborative tribute that we have pulled together cannot begin to do justice to the recognition she deserves.

—Gloria A. Ramirez, editor of *La Voz de Esperanza*

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.