

# Teatro Esperanza

## reclaiming *memorias del barrio*

Documenting the stories of people who look like us and sound like us while living in the same community is a very important task. There is no one better to do this work than the members of said community. *Teatro Esperanza* was created with this purpose in mind. To tell stories focused on the Westside community of San Antonio and, occasionally, further out. These stories would be told by the mujeres who as the creators of life are, in turn, the creators of all stories.

The original plan was to have these stories told in traditional *teatro ambulante* form, hence the name Teatro Esperanza. This project began with the support of the *Esperanza Peace and Justice Center* partnered with actor Tony Plana who also shows support to other San Antonio storytellers via *Seniors in Play* which some of our members are also part of, and our very own Chingona, Mari Barrera, who set the foundation to our group's mission, to self-publish, act and tell our stories our way.

During *Teatro's* first adventure we were faced with a world-wide virus that demanded we go into a strict lock-down. What was suppose to be a stage performance turned in to a series of short filmed one-woman shows that were later streamed for a local audience and then for Mr. Plana who provided feedback and encouragement to our escritoras, some amazing mujeres of the westside of San Anto and one transplant with a westside heart.

There have been changes here and there but the foundation that our first fearless leader, Mari Barrera, left continues to help us grow. We work hard and document our stories based on real life while showing off our creative side by including fictional stories into our repertoire. Most stories are inspired by life in the



Photo: An early group photo that included members of *Teatro Esperanza*, *Seniors in Play* and *MujerArtes* pictured with actor Tony Plana who provided feedback on the stories and dramatic readings of the group.

Westside, *memorias del barrio*. We also make it a point to touch on important topics of daily life such as aging gracefully and also speaking out on things once treated as “*eso no se dice*” (we don't talk about that). In this group... Yes, we do.

This group has given voice to its writers and those who see themselves within our stories. We speak for the silenced, the scared

and the women that never did.

We welcome mujeres, our hermanas of the westside who have something to say about the life they've lived. If you feel the need to tell and document your story we are a group of mujeres who support each other using a platform that allows us to speak freely, yet respectfully.

It has been my pleasure to fill some big shoes left by Mari. I have done my best because I love and believe in “My Ladies”.

Members have come and gone but our door will always remain open.

Thank you, *Esperanza Peace and Justice Center*, for the space, support and love given to our writers. Our stories matter, they need to be documented and retold for generations to come.

Abrazos!

—Dennise Frausto

EDITOR'S NOTE: *While Teatro Esperanza has had a wide array of participants those in the present company include: Rachel Delgado, Mildred DeLong Hilbrich, Jackie Velez, Rosemary “Roze” Livar. Maria “Mary” B. Younger, Esperanza “Hope” Gallegos-Garza, Carla Mendiola, Violeta Garza, Sonya Rosario, Jessica Betancourt and Dennise Frausto. Stories and poems by the mujeres in Teatro will continue in upcoming Voz issues.*