

Oldie's



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HOW DOES A PLACE
AFFECT IDENTITY?



rio, Texas

Intergenerational Pairs

ANNA MARIA DELAROSA

Anna Maria DeLaRosa was born in Knippa, Texas, to migrant farm workers. She moved around Texas as a child due to her parent’s work, living in Uvalde and other Texas cities. As a young girl whose first language was Spanish, she struggled in a society that discouraged bilingualism. After graduating and completing a teaching internship, Anna worked as a bilingual educator in San Antonio for 40 years, with a few of those years spent in Houston, Texas. During her early years as a teacher, Anna married and had three daughters. She has been a resident of Westside San Antonio for the past 50 years, teaching and raising her family. Now she spends time as a new grandmother in the home she and her husband created on Buena Vista.

ERICA RAQUÉL DELAROSA

Erica Raquéel DeLaRosa was born in Houston, Texas, to parents Jerry and Anna DeLaRosa. She was raised and currently resides in the Westside of San Antonio, Texas. Erica is an experienced performance artist, activist, and educator. An alumna of NYU, she moved to New York City at 18 years old. After being on a flight home during 9/11, Erica recalls the life-changing moment that led her back to Texas to be with family. After taking a short break from NYU, she returned to New York to complete her education and lived there until 2013. Erica currently teaches choir and theater arts at Rodgers Academy, is the Education Program Director at Jump-Start Co., and is a teaching artist at Gemini Ink. Often serving inner-city youth, she uses her education and lived experiences to help young people find their voices.

MIMI HUDSPETH

Beloved educator Armenia Hudspeth, or “Mimi,” was born in San Antonio, Texas, and raised in the close-knit community of the historic Mount Zion First Baptist Church. She earned a Bachelor’s in Speech Communication from Southwest Texas State University and a Master’s in Administration from Prairie View A&M University. Her father, Charles Hudspeth, was president of the NAACP in the 1960s and helped organize many demonstrations. Their family received calls from people threatening to burn down their home. Yet, Mimi serves the San Antonio community faithfully despite the violence she experienced as a child. After 40 years of teaching, Mimi receives regular phone calls from students she taught on the West Side. One of her most cherished teaching accomplishments was helping a 91-year-old student achieve his GED. A proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated, Mimi’s celebrating 50 active years in the sorority and shows no signs of slowing down.

TERRI WILLIAMS

Born in Galveston, Texas, in 1963, Terri Williams made a home on the East Side of San Antonio with her mother, grandmother, great-grandfather, and a close-knit Black community at Mount Zion First Baptist Church. After graduating valedictorian from Wheatley High School, she earned a Bachelor of Political Science from UTSA. Experiencing the valiance of civil rights in her youth made her naturally inclined to pursue academia. Alongside school, Terri joined her mother as a proud, lifelong member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Incorporated. Terri’s career contributions since 1989 are demonstrated by the city’s San Antonio International Airport expansion, and the Small Business Economic Development Advocacy Ordinance she wrote has given minority businesses more opportunities. Terri’s accolades, such as the 2015 Women in Leadership Award, speak to her public expertise. After 32 years of marriage, Terri enjoys watching her family grow. She has two sons, a daughter-in-law, and a 3-year-old grandson. She fills her life with community service as a member of several boards and organizations. Terri’s other interests include piano, which she used to play for the church Sunday school, and games like bid whist, bridge, and poker.

CAROL GONZALES

Carol Gonzales was born on June 2, 1976, in San Antonio, Texas. She is happy to have grown up on the Westside. Although some people consider the neighborhood to have a bad reputation, Carol is proud to have seen Westsiders succeed and thrive. She especially appreciates that many from the neighborhood have gone on to jobs in which they give back to their community. Carol currently lives with and serves as caretaker for her grandmother, Rosa Sánchez Ybarra, at the Alazán-Apache Courts. She remembers loving to visit her grandmother ever since she was a kid when she and her cousins would gather at the Courts and play jacks, ride bikes, skate, and play hopscotch. They used to slide down the stairs on couch cushions, for which Rosa would scold them. One of the biggest challenges Carol has overcome is getting sick with COVID during the pandemic. Both she and her grandmother were sick, but Carol’s illness was much more severe, and she was extremely worried about who would take care of Rosa if she became hospitalized. Fortunately, they both recovered, but it remains a painful memory for Carol.

ROSA SÁNCHEZ YBARRA

Rosa Sánchez Ybarra was born on January 2, 1929, on the East Side of San Antonio, Texas. Her parents were from Guanajuato, Mexico, and raised nine children to believe in God. Rosa’s mother taught her how to pray. They were a loving family, and Rosa’s parents never fought. When Rosa got married, she moved into her in-laws’ house on the Westside. Her in-laws were very kind to her, and her father-in-law used to tell his son, “Take good care of esta muchacha.” Rosa’s husband worked for a furniture store. When she moved to the Westside, her brothers used to tease her and say, “You’re not from the East Side anymore!” It was all in good fun, though, and Rosa loves living on the Westside. For the past 68 years, she has lived at the Alazán-Apache Courts, raising 10 children. When she was younger, her hobbies were gardening and playing volleyball.

BETTY GREEN

Betty Green is 91 years old and was born in San Antonio, Texas, in 1931. Since moving into the Dignowity Hill neighborhood in 1962, along with her husband William Green and their young family, Mrs. Green has been actively involved in the community. She was a founding member of the Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association and is still actively involved in various committees, including the Special Events Committee, which produced the very successful Jazz on the Hill music festival. She is a member of St. Paul United Methodist Church, where she also served as President of the Trustee Board for a time and was active on the St. Paul Area Redevelopment Board, where she utilized her knowledge of the design and function of community meeting spaces gained in her career as an interior designer. She also served as a founding member and the first chairperson of the Carver Community Cultural Center’s Development Board, where she still serves as President Emeritus.

DIANNE YVONNE GREEN

Dianne Yvonne Green was born in San Antonio, Texas, at Brooke Army Medical Center in 1951. She is an arts administrator and cultural organizer who has centered art, culture, and activism throughout her career to build community and preserve culture. Ms. Green has lent her expertise to several prestigious institutions across the country, such as the Smithsonian Institution, Mid-America Arts Alliance, Madame Walker Theatre Center, and the Carver Community Cultural Center, to name a few. She is the founder and director of CultureWorks Enterprises and My 3rd Act Cultural Collective. Ms. Green is routinely asked to consult on projects related to arts and culture, from program design to fundraising to capacity building and more. Ms. Green is also a co-founder and consultant for the Teatro Anasi Theatre Company.

NIEVES MENCHACA

Nieves is a creative 9-year-old tree climber. She is a student, sister, daughter, and granddaughter. She is a creative spirit who enjoys making art, reading, and writing. Nieves shares her stories with her friends and family. She confronts new challenges, like learning gymnastics or expanding her vocabulary and spelling skills, with persistence and determination. She likes to spend some of her time in the tree between her mother’s and grandparent’s condos, where she can go if she feels frustrated and to get a better view of things. It is a knobby tree, making it especially good for climbing. Although Nieves’ name translates to snow in English, she was born in the warm and sunny city of San Antonio, Texas, where she has lived her whole life, and it almost never snows.

RICHARD MOGAS

Richard Mogas is an artist and architect, born in Laredo, Texas, in 1945. At age 6, he moved to San Antonio, Texas, for school. Throughout his youth, he remained connected to his family’s hardscrabble South Texas ranching life, from raising cattle to building fences and corrals, and bull riding. He then moved to Austin and attended UT. Following his college years, Richard spent some time in New Mexico and then headed back to San Antonio, where he completed his internship and became a registered architect. Richard opened his architecture practice approximately 45 years ago. Foundational to Richard’s ethos in life is the importance of caring for the human condition by living with integrity, honesty, and compassion. First and foremost, this is a commitment to his family and being a good father, grandparent, husband to his wife Michelle, and role model. Between 2021 and 2022, Richard lost three of his children, and his family continues to live with these losses and grief. Richard and his wife Michelle are nurturing and stabilizing forces for their loved ones as they navigate uncertain times together.

MARIA JUAREZ

Maria Juarez was born in San Antonio and lives near Lackland on the West Side of San Antonio. She has two sons, Mario and Marcos, who are 15 and 11. She loves baking, and so do her sons, who enjoy creating from scratch. Maria has a kind and generous heart, and her passion is for helping people. She saw a woman in her community struggling with her two children living with her. Maria already had two children of her own but started helping her a little here and there and eventually became her neighbor’s care provider. This grew into a career for Maria. It was through a care provider service that she was matched with Linda Manson.

LINDA MANSON

Linda Manson was looking for a quieter place to live. What she found was even better. She heard the senior living Primrose apartments offered art lessons. She began taking painting classes immediately in the Bihl Haus Gallery, a restored historical building next to the apartment’s pool. She also took a yoga class in the gallery. Twelve years later, the apartments are now called Sorento, and Linda still takes painting classes and is the lead docent for the gallery. She has been able to meet a lot of artists and has seen over 70 exhibitions. Linda lit up as she recalled her favorite visiting artist, a Cuban man who made his own paint and created political portraits from hole-punched painted dots. She has seen the Bihl Haus organization grow from one center to 17 senior centers. She has heard countless stories from students about how Bihl Haus has changed their lives and, in some cases, brought them out of depression. Linda is 75 and attributes her own resilience to her hope and belief. She’s learned to listen more, and she understands that everyone is different and has a unique experience. She was born in South Dakota, lived in North Carolina and Corpus Christi, and is happy to now call San Antonio home.

People's Homes is a collaborative project that honors longtime residents and investigates expanded notions of home. We began the first *People's Homes* project in 2015 by pairing five Portland-based artists with five senior citizens. Each artist made a small-scale billboard to honor a senior's life experiences, which was installed in the resident's front yard. Our continued work on this project is propelled by the people we have met, the resilience we have witnessed, and the stories that move us.

Each iteration of the *People's Homes* series draws upon the vernacular of symbols and objects found in front yards, on porches, and in neighborhoods to make powerful statements about home, family, and gentrification. The first iteration repurposed the form of front yard billboards that are often used as real estate signage. Instead of seeing the expected 'for sale' sign, passersby are met with artworks about longevity, place, home, and aging. In the second iteration, newspapers are distributed in custom newspaper boxes, which often hold commercial publications and advertisements. In their place, passersby are invited to take a free newspaper and learn about elders in their community.

The third iteration in the series is focused on intergenerational belonging, caregiving, and caretaking in San Antonio, Texas. It draws upon the history of flags and banners as they are attached to the front of people's homes, sometimes patriotically, but other times to mark the passing of seasons, stand in solidarity with social movements, or share family crests. In this project the traditional use of a flag is reframed to represent an intergenerational relationship and demonstrate something personally meaningful in these connections. We invited representatives from six local cultural organizations to select and interview

an intergenerational pair of community members. The stories about these individuals and their shared lives are brought together through this publication and an exhibition at the Contemporary at Blue Star in San Antonio. This investigation bridges the indistinguishable line between the personal and political. As artists, we are interested in using creative practices and storytelling to humanize, visualize, and reflect on the complex issues of gentrification, aging, and isolation.

—Emily Fitzgerald and Molly Sherman

Published on the occasion of *People's Homes* at the Contemporary at Blue Star, March 3–June 4, 2023.

Organized by Emily Fitzgerald and Molly Sherman

Design by Molly Sherman
Map by Christina and Athena Barbosa

All images by Emily Fitzgerald and participants unless otherwise noted.

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Front cover, bottom: The home that Myra Davis Hemmings lived in from the 1920s until her death in the late 1960s. Photo by Dr. DL Grant Jr.

Back cover, left: Illustration from *Ambulante Power*. Courtesy of Las Imaginistas.

Mama,



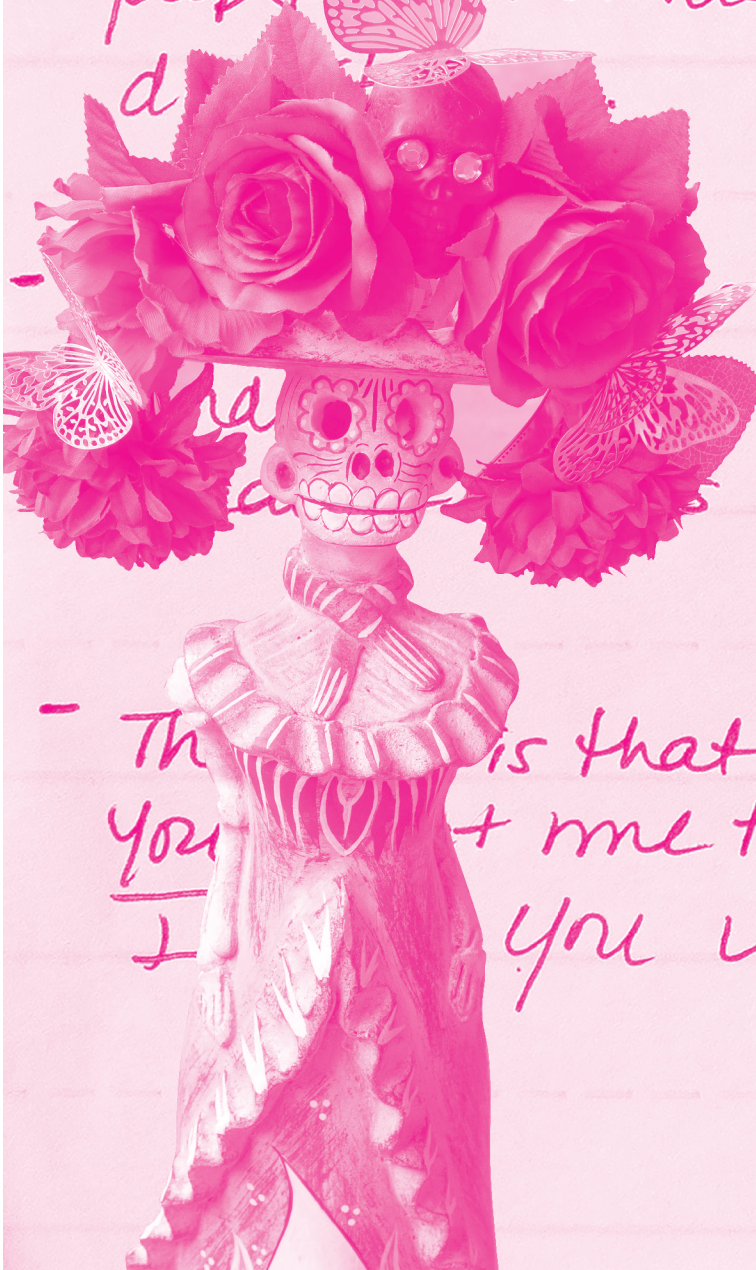
many memories

- I remember helping you to prepare Gabi + I were always coming in to see you. Then, as the school year ended we had a party. Somehow you always had a party.

- I remember the paper butterflies the kids made for you. I remember if you were sick.

- I remember you as a child and how you would come to school as a teacher.

- The thing is that you helped inspire me to be a teacher + me that w/ dedication + sacrifice I can be a teacher. I love you very much!!



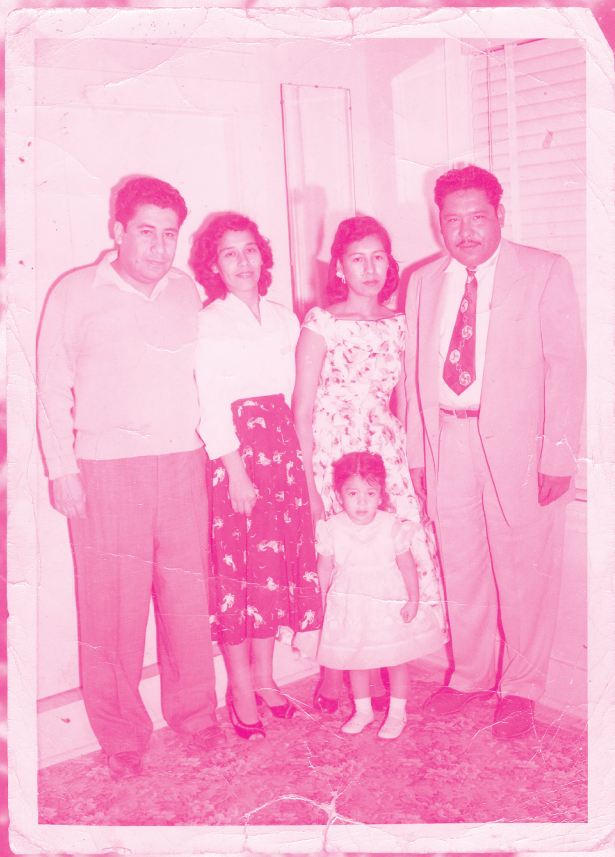
Anna Maria DeLaRosa and Erica Raquéel DeLaRosa *with Esmeralda Hernandez*



Anna, 75, and Erica, 46, live in a 100-year-old home in the inner-city Westside of San Antonio. While Anna was living in Houston in the 70s, her husband was working in San Antonio as a lawyer, where he would stay with Erica's padrinos (Godparents). When the house next door went up for sale, they bought it and haven't moved since. After Erica moved back to her childhood home from New York in 2013, she and Anna redefined their living relationship with each other. Learning how to be in the kitchen together and working at different paces presented a couple of challenges. They are, first and foremost, mother and daughter, but now with new sets of boundaries, interdependence, and respect. Before the pandemic, the two spent time going to the movies and restaurants. Now that times have changed, they care for Erica's father

and spend time tending to their garden, watching bad TV, and hanging out with family. While a little different in personality, Erica and Anna carry similar values, such as the importance of language, culture, community, and education.

WHAT DOES A FUTURE LOOK LIKE
WITH YOUTH WHO ARE UNAFRAID
TO USE THEIR VOICE?



Rosa and Carol's Collective Care taking Lineage

- Henry G. YBarra Sr. - Husband, grandfather
- Yolanda YBarra - daughter, Aunt
- Robert YBarra - Son, Uncle
- Richard YBarra - Son, Uncle
- Henry YBarra Jr. - Son, Uncle
- Sylvia Barrera - daughter, Aunt
- Rose Anne Gonzales - granddaughter, Sister
- Alejandro Gonzales Jr. - grandson, brother
- Christina Gonzales - granddaughter, Sister
- Hortencia Gonzales - daughter, Cousin
- David Gonzales - stepson, Cousin
- Andrew Gonzales - stepson, Cousin
- Jonathon Chavira - grandson, Cousin
- Tiffany Chavira - granddaughter, Cousin
- Pearl YBarra - granddaughter, Cousin
- Michael Chavira - grandson, Cousin
- Carol Gonzales - granddaughter,
- Alejandro Gonzales Sr. - Son in law - Father
- John YBarra - Son - Uncle
- Fran K YBarra - Son - Uncle
- Rose MARY Sandoval - daughter, Aunt
- Grace Rodriguez - daughter, Aunt
- Anna Gonzales - daughter, Mother

Carol Gonzales and Rosa Sánchez Ybarra *with Sherry Campos and Graciela Sánchez*

HOW CAN STORYTELLING, ART,
AND CULTURAL PRACTICES
CREATE A SENSE OF CULTURAL
GROUNDING FOR HISTORICALLY
OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES?



Rosa Sánchez Ybarra and her first granddaughter, Carol Gonzales, live together at the Alazán-Apache Courts in San Antonio. They have lived together off and on for the past decade, depending on the caretaking needs of the family. Rosa is currently in hospice, and Carol serves as her caretaker, aided by nurses and chaplains who provide in-home care. Rosa has dementia, which makes caring for her challenging. Any time of change is difficult for her, and some days are better than others. Carol is adept at understanding her grandmother's needs; for instance, she makes sure all of the chairs around the house are always pushed in so Rosa can navigate around them easily. It's not her first time serving as a caretaker: Carol and Rosa together provided end-of-life care to Carol's aunt, who passed away four years ago. When Carol was a kid, her parents

often relied on Rosa for childcare, dropping Carol and her siblings off at Rosa's on the way to work. Rosa would get them ready and walk them to JT Brackenridge Elementary. At the time, Rosa had an extra-large unit at the Courts, made by linking two units together to accommodate her large family. An avid gardener, she surrounded the units with rose bushes, and Carol remembers feeling safe and warmly enclosed by the environment. In those days, there were many small businesses within walking distance, so if you needed something, you could take a little stroll to the store. Nowadays, Carol often talks to her neighbors about how the Westside used to be, remembering people, places, and experiences that they miss.

Dear Mrs. Green and Dianne

What a joy it was to visit with you in your home recently. Though I have known you both for many years, I leave each visit filled with new knowledge and inspiration and humbled by your graciousness and generosity.

I left today with a deep sense of gratitude for the integral role you both have played in not only the history of The Carver, but also of this community that we call home. Both have been greatly enriched through your passion and unwavering dedication to the preservation and celebration of culture, the arts and community. Thank you for being guardians and champions of our history and our community!

Yours in gratitude,
Cassandra Parker-Nowicki

Betty Green and Dianne Green *with Cassandra Parker-Nowicki*



Betty Green and Dianne Green are mother and daughter, and both reside in San Antonio, Texas. Betty Green was born in San Antonio in 1931 and gave birth to her daughter, Dianne, in 1951 at Brooke Army Medical Center. Together, they reside on San Antonio's East Side in the historic Dignowity Hill neighborhood. The two share the beautiful house the family purchased in 1962, which has been called home for the past sixty years. Both mother and daughter are actively involved in their community. Both have served as President of the Dignowity Hill Neighborhood Association and on several committees. Betty and Dianne have been heavily involved with the Carver Community Cultural Center as a board member and staff member, respectively. The mother-and-daughter team is often called upon to provide

insight into and reflect on the community as it has evolved and changed over time. Today, their home is still a gathering place for the community, and on any given Sunday afternoon, gatherings of friends and family can be found sharing stories, history, and friendship.

**WHAT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY
IN PRESERVING THE CULTURE
OF A COMMUNITY THAT
IS CHANGING RAPIDLY THROUGH
GENTRIFICATION?**

Maria Juarez and Linda Manson *with Jill Ewing*

HOW DOES ART
CONNECT GENERATIONS?



Linda says her biggest life-changing moment was having her first son. Becoming a parent made her realize life wasn't just about her. She had to be responsible and care for her child. Maria has that in common with Linda. Both have two sons. Linda was a single mom, and Maria is now experiencing that herself. Despite challenges, both women retain a positive outlook and find time for things they enjoy. By odd coincidence, they both have the same kidney condition, which turns out to be serendipitous because they have to avoid the same foods. They like getting creative in the kitchen and cooking together. They explore recipes of their favorite foods with the twist of alternate ingredients that accommodate their dietary restrictions. They shop together at the grocery store, sometimes hunting for special items. In addition, they

both like to garden and occasionally are able to incorporate herbs they have personally grown. They also find time to laugh during television shows they enjoy and find common ground as viewers. And they both care for J. Lo, Linda's long-haired chihuahua.

KEEP SMILIN', KEEP SHININ'

KNOWING YOU CAN ALWAYS

Mount Zion First Baptist Church
REV. OTIS I. MITCHELL, PASTOR

COUNT ON ME FOR SURE

THAT'S WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR

Mimi Hudspeth and Terri Williams *with Cristal Rose Mendez and Amariah Williams*

HOW DOES YOUR COMMUNITY EVOLVE AS TIMES CHANGE?



Mimi Hudspeth and Terri Williams met as children attending the same Mount Zion First Baptist Church in the 60s. Growing up around the corner from each other, they developed familiarity with a majority of the families around them. Mount Zion leader Rev. Claude Black was a father figure to both Mimi and Terri.

San Antonio's East Side Black community at this time had a community of care that was partially due to necessity. They relied on each other to share information, resources, emotional support, and social privileges. For example, during Mimi's birth, her mother, Louise Menefee, became ill, and the doctors believed she would not survive. The hospital staff begrudgingly allowed Rev. Black into the hospital to pray over Louise. They urged him to "say his lil prayer, and go."

Mimi and Terri's youth reflected acts of resistance in pursuit of civil rights and

engaging with prominent figures in the movement. Foundational experiences such as picketing local businesses and watching their community work the polls instilled values in both women to stand dignified in their African American identity.

As time progressed, the East Side changed a lot. Families moved out, San Antonio continued developing, and centralized places for Black life, news, and entertainment disappeared. Terri and Mimi also grew up and established their own lives. However, they still maintain a community of care. When their mutual friend and mentor, Dorothy Collins, fell ill later in life, both women teamed up to care for her and check in. Regardless of how much time has passed since the last conversation, their sisterly bond remains solid. They know they can reach out to each other for anything.

Mimi, Mt. Everest, Woodridge Elementary, the river, a flower, Nieves



with her village—her mother's and grandparents' home, the big tree, a flower, Nieves

Nieves Menchaca and Richard Mogas *with Jacqueline Saragoza McGilvray*

ARE THERE WAYS THAT YOU THINK THAT ART AND ARCHITECTURE CAN COUNTER DISPLACEMENT CAUSED BY GENTRIFICATION?

Richard and Nieves are grandfather and granddaughter. They live together in the same condominium community in San Antonio, Texas. Richard and his wife Michelle moved into the community nine years ago during a transitional time in life. They co-parent their three grandchildren, Feliciano, Noelia, and Nieves, with their daughter Jackie. Around one year ago, Jackie, the kids, and their stepfather moved into the same complex as Richard and Michelle to collectively form an intergenerational living relationship. Their family village shares caretaking responsibilities of the children but also each other, from cooking and cleaning to driving to school and appointments, homework, bedtimes, and everything in between. Together they have created an environment where creativity, compassion, and mindfulness are cultivated by everyone. They hope to celebrate

everyone's roles and strengths in the family and be supportive while providing structure, discipline, and unconditional love. Richard, Nieves, and their family try to engage daily in rewarding conversations, including practicing daily prayers and expressing their gratitude, concerns, and struggles.



That's How You Build a Movement

A Conversation with Michelle Serrano

What is Las Imaginistas?

Las Imaginistas is an art collective of femme individuals founded in Brownsville, Texas, in 2016. In addition to being practicing artists, we are experienced educators and activists working in collaboration with our community to advance justice and equity. We prioritize skill sharing, community voice, and radical imagination, using our skills as printmakers, healers, performers, and designers to confront civic problems at the local, regional, and state levels.

We are curious about the collective calling themselves artists. Why is art the vehicle?

Art transcends languages and challenges people's perspectives, which is a safer way to start having difficult discussions. Art is an arbiter of a message. Too often in mainstream society, there is a deficit of art that speaks to unity, community, action, dynamism, and people's consciousness.

A lot of times, artists are like, "I want to bring culture. I want to bring identity. I want to bring change to my community. These are the tools that I have." A lot of the funding will come from institutions of power or governments, and they're like, "Help us revitalize." Revitalize, to me, is an offensive word because it usually is based on principles of capital interest, like let's revitalize downtown Brownsville.

Las Imaginistas is socially engaged in the sense that we know that art has power. Art can be a game changer when it is co-made with the community and reflective of the community through intimate conversation with one another. When people identify with the art they see, it's different from seeing something that's just a pretty picture to them in a museum. That is the most impactful thing about art that matters.

Las Imaginistas doesn't believe in the metrics of measurement for success because everything is incremental, and you can't expect society and community to radically transform in a funding cycle. So the art we do is intentionally made to continue conversations with the community, building trust, and that's how you build a movement. It's organically formed.

Can you speak about why community-led transformation is important to you?

What we want to do is make sure that when people are consulted for change within the community, they are part of the process from the beginning to the end and that they see the visions that they had, the ideas of justice that they brought from discussion amongst each other come to real life. If we're going to engage communities, we have to make a promise to them that we're going to fight for them and that we're not going to forget about them. So when participating in community-engaged art, you're also becoming an activist and an advocate for people. It really is about making a community and being a part of it.

Is Las Imaginistas's role more about supporting people and identifying the issues important to their community, mobilizing people around an issue, or both?

In one economic food justice project Las Imaginistas was working on, you have the resources to make your own mobile unit to sell your corn, shaved ice, or whatever. Brownsville has a law right now that prevents people from doing that. There was a project we worked on for five years. At the beginning of this project, Las Imaginistas presented through a coalition of other groups a proposed plan of action for the city to make things more equitable. The city is still looking at the plan, and it's up to them. It's in their hands now what they do with it. It's as close as, I think, we can get to lobbying, which we can't do. All we want is to have some sort of justice for the communities that might be affected by a lot of this rapid change happening in the downtown area.

Persistent poverty means poverty that happens generationally. It doesn't improve over time and without situations where people can uplift themselves. Many people living within the scope of persistent poverty are in intergenerational homes in the downtown area, where Brownsville started and then expanded outward. So a lot of people have homes that have been there since the 1920s or older, and they're not in the best shape, but they have a home. When Las Imaginistas propose something, it's with the consciousness and knowing that these are the people who attended our meetings, these are the people we're going to speak up for.

Your work pushes the boundaries of community organizing by making it participatory and questioning colonial ideology. How do intergenerational relationships fit into your work?

I think when we have access to older people and can listen to their stories, it gives us better insight into where we are now. Were the choices made by previous people the best choices that could have been made? You start building connections when you start interrogating something from the past or trying to make the most of, "Who am I as a person?" It's not common for people to think about who they are when they're not in shared spaces with multigenerational people. Little children and older adults are always kind of diminished to the background, and we don't really hear what they have to say. A Latinx household tends to be more intergenerational. There is going to be a lot more conversation about the past than you're gonna get in your traditional American home. The conversations aren't happening in a free-flow way; they're very much relegated to a visit to Grandma's house.

You're not going to get to know your past unless you're talking to people who live that past. We don't put enough value on elders in this society.

As neighborhoods experience rapid change through gentrification, layers of culture, sense of place, and histories disappear. What changes do you see happening in your community?

Imagine living in a world where everything you've ever cared about is now in the hands of a billionaire. You say to yourself, "Well, activism works, let's see what we can do on Twitter to get the word out." Well, not anymore, because Musk owns Twitter now, too. You start to feel like your whole life is controlled by the powers that be, and the only way to change that is by establishing more solidarity with people outside of the region.

There is an urgency here to maintain the freedom we remember when you could cross back and forth on the bridge and meet in the middle. Binationality, for us, is a way of life, and the border is a place of encounter. We are a migratory corridor where everybody comes and goes as they please, or it should be because that's the nature of things. Animals, plants, and money come and go here, too.

People code-switch from English to Spanish all the time, and we have our own language. Even if you want to include TexMex, so much has been accomplished here from us just existing and not being messed with anymore. If you look at an old newspaper clipping or in the photo archives for Brownsville in the 1950s, you will not see Brown people represented anywhere. We bounce back. We want to make sure that we can stay here and thrive here the way that things used to be and for us to not lose our identity as a people.

The land itself is sacred, but it's getting destroyed with new development. Ultimately, our work is about making sure that Brownsville stays affordable. That the RGV stays affordable for people. They are who we want to uplift and who we want to make sure are taken care of. We don't like how they are considered an afterthought and forgotten by community leaders. Those are people who primarily speak Spanish or people who are elders, or people who just don't have the power to be able to negotiate these types of systems. Yeah, it sucks! Elon Musk sucks! Despite that, a lot of people here still love him. And that's frightening. To think about losing not just our land, but everything good about the earth, just so we can populate a planet that was never meant for us to begin with.

We interviewed Michelle Serrano on Zoom in November 2022. Michelle (she/her) was born in Brownsville, Texas, and comes from a long line of luchadorxs across the cosmic diaspora. Her life force is a catalyst for transformation in the Rio Grande Valley, having worked alongside communities on strategies which range from traditional social justice campaigns to relational organizing in the visual and performing arts.

—EF/MS

Who Would Tell Their Stories?

A Conversation with Dr. DL Grant Jr.

As a resident of San Antonio and being born and raised here, how have you seen San Antonio change?

San Antonio has grown so much. I live on the East Side, which is often associated with African Americans and Latinos. Wooded lots are now becoming sought-after places for development, which is strange to us, and it's made the community very crowded. People are desperate for housing, and developers are trying to satisfy their needs and make money. They're building in places where we never thought anybody ever would.

We're an epicenter here. I was looking at realtor.com, which had a statistic about it being one of the fastest-gentrifying spots in the United States. If you drive through some of these historic spaces that we occupy, Denver Heights and Dignowity Hills, the work does not stop. Homes are being built. Homes are being transformed. The land is so valuable now since it's close to downtown. When I was a kid, nobody was investing in the area. I was doing my research on displacement pressure, which is a phenomenon associated with gentrification when the neighborhood is no longer its former self, and you experience a self-imposed exile where you leave on your own because you don't belong there anymore. Displacement pressure is a real thing.

What makes you feel at home in San Antonio?

I always wanted to stay connected to the community and historical past I have come to admire and respect, so I chose to stay. And I'm so glad, because I might have missed those things, and I am immersed in the history and the people who are affected by that legacy.

We're discovering things about the cultural heritage of African Americans that we did not know about. For some reason the history was lost. We have scholars that are now looking at this community and uncovering history that happened here. Some stories we knew, but there is also illumination, and we're celebrating and documenting that history. I'll give you an example. Are you familiar with Myra Davis Hemmings? Anywhere you go and there are African American women, there is likely to be a chapter of two sororities, Delta Sigma Theta and Alpha Kappa Alpha. Well, back in the early 1900s she and some other young women formed Alpha Kappa Alpha at Howard University. And after that established Delta Sigma Theta. So here she is a founding mother of two thriving, robust sororities that are recognized around the globe. She was a resident of San Antonio. She taught at the iconic African American High School, Phillis Wheatley. And she wound up participating in a famous suffragette march in 1913. How come we didn't know that? She was there. The African American activist who crusaded against lynching, Ida B. Wells was also in that march. And Alice Paul, and other feminists of the day were there. She touched history. It was a weird history because they were asked, "Would you

mind marching in the back?" I never knew Myra Davis Hemmings was there. She was also an actress and we can watch her films. So I'm thinking people should know this. What we are involved in now is preserving her home.

Were you always interested in libraries, history, and archives?

Texas history fascinated me, and I revisited that as an adult, because I wondered, how does this apply to me and the people that I care about and the people that I came from? I didn't live it, but the people that gave life to me and made me who I am, it happened to them so that made history fascinating to me. I liked to write and wound up at the Express-News, and then eventually made my way to library school. I think library work is fascinating. It's organizing information and making it available for people. Nobody ever talked to me about becoming a librarian. I don't think it's intentional but it's something that has been hidden from children of color because you don't know how exciting the career can be.

My research focused on how librarians and public historians, archaeologists, professors, curators, and archivists can work in a community together and help the community to preserve their cultural heritage. We celebrate Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King Jr., and Rosa Parks widely, but we weren't celebrating the people from our own community. And now it's almost like a hydrant has been opened, and I do wonder what's the next thing that we're going to uncover?

How have longtime homeowners managed to hang on and thrive?

It hasn't been easy because what does gentrification do? It drives up the cost. This is already a very poor community. It's becoming sought after now, because people want to be downtown and want all these wonderful homes with architectural embellishments. And the property values have skyrocketed. So how can poor people hang on? A lot of times they don't. Sometimes people do lose their homes. I talked to a woman about her late mother losing her home. So yeah, it does happen then.

It's on a lot of people's minds because Black people talk a lot about generational wealth, and being able to pass something on to their heirs. And a lot of times that's just not going to happen. Another thing that complicates staying in your home is, how do you keep that home up? Because if you have enough money to pay your taxes, is there going to be money left to repair the rotting wood in your home?

What are we losing through the process of gentrification?

You are facing erasure. Because who's going to tell these stories and capture this cultural heritage? Nothing against new people coming to the neighborhood, but what can't be lost in this is the soul of the community, the heart

of it that gave it life and its vibrancy for so many years.

Somebody was talking about how Sam Cooke attended a debutante across the street. Well, if we don't preserve that, then erasure does set in. You're losing the cultural heritage of a people, and it's almost like they didn't exist. People don't just spring from nowhere. There was a back story. The DNA of your ancestors is here and there, but you don't know about it. That's what happens when you don't document things. Oral histories, donating objects, historic markers that say "These people lived here." Those are things that you could do to make sure that those stories live on.

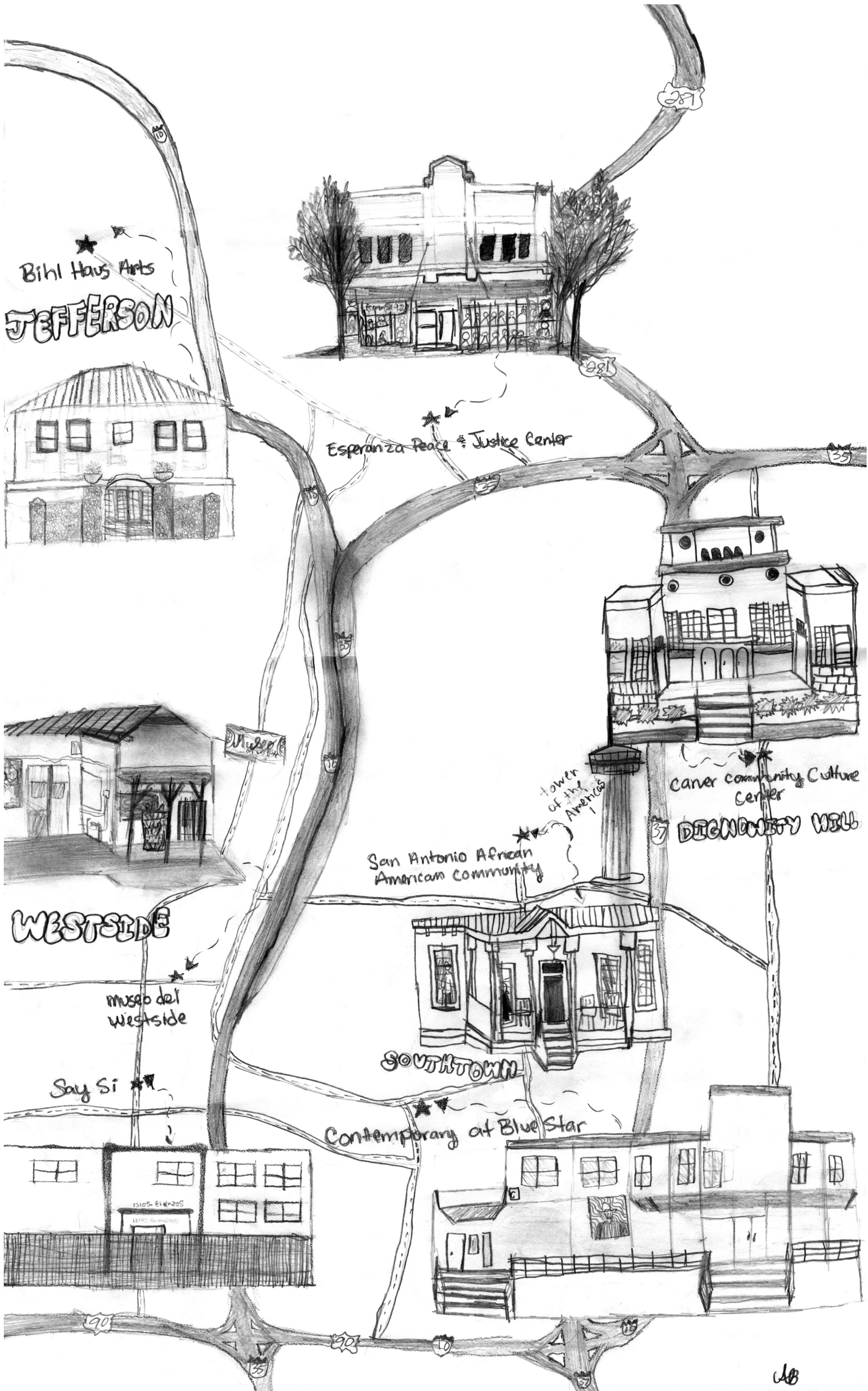
[I have an] old photograph from the 1950s of my parents out on the town. Segregation was not fun. But they got dressed up, and they went out on the town. They celebrated. We also want to capture Black joy. We have to know about the negative, but what else did we do? We went out. We enjoyed ourselves. We had cocktails. We were young. This generation is dying. Our parents are dying. I started looking at my parents' old photos, and I thought who was AO Perino? [The photos says], "This photo by AO Perino." He was this roving photographer and would take pictures of Black people out on the town. And I thought that's an archive right there. Other people have these photographs in their homes, so what I'm doing is working with them to put these photographs together, and we call the archive Black Joy. So it's important that we show as much about their lives as we can. And this is one way we can do it.



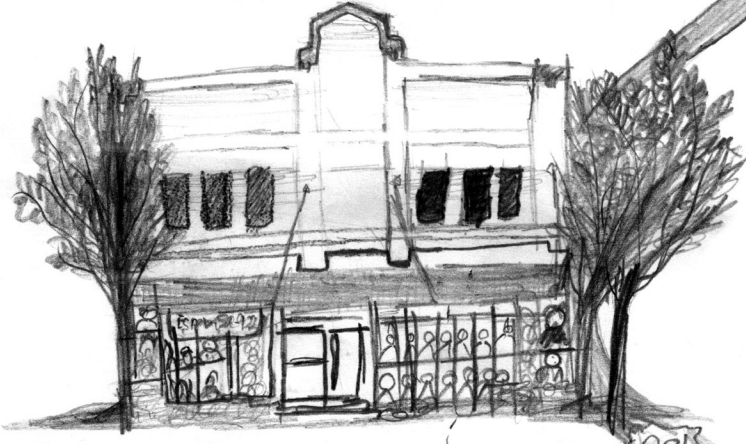
Why do you think it's important to talk to elders in the community and hear their stories?

Everybody assumes that they are not important, that their experience didn't matter. Sometimes people have touched history, and they didn't even know it. So I assume people have a story, because if they had gone to their grave with that story it would have been lost to history. Some people are still around that hold the stories and the keys to unlocking our past, and we're losing them. Not many people get to live to be 90 or 100, so we ask them, "What was your experience like?" cause you never know what they're going to tell you.

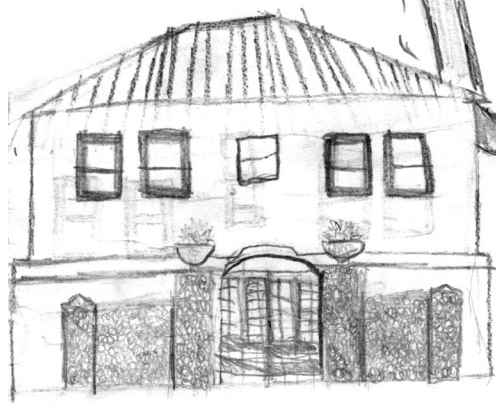
We interviewed Dr. DL Grant Jr. on Zoom in November 2022. DL is a native of San Antonio. Before entering the library profession, he studied journalism at Texas State University and wrote for the San Antonio Express-News. He went on to attend the School of Information Studies at Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois, where he received the Doctor of Philosophy, researching African American cultural preservation.



Bihi Haus Arts
JEFFERSON



Esperanza Peace & Justice Center



San Antonio African American Community

Carer Community Culture Center

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WESTSIDE

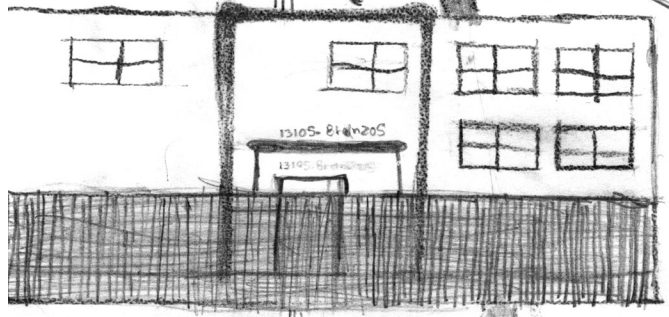


Museo del Westside

SOUTHTOWN

Say Si

Contemporary at Blue Star



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Cultural Organizations and Representatives

BIHL HAUS ARTS

Bihl Haus Arts—Creating Community through the Arts—is founded on the belief that each person, when given a chance, will achieve significant personal, social, and cultural growth through the arts.

JILL EWING

Jill Ewing, BFA, CJEA, Bihl Haus Arts Instructor, is native to San Antonio and has shared art experiences with people of all ages for over 20 years. She has been teaching for the Go! Arts program for six years and for Forward! Arts for two years.

THE CARVER COMMUNITY CULTURAL CENTER

The Carver Community Cultural Center is a multi-cultural, multidisciplinary performing, and visual arts center that celebrates the diverse cultures of our local and global communities, with an emphasis on African American heritage and culture, by providing equitable access to high-caliber artistic presentations, arts education, and community engagement programs.

CASSANDRA PARKER-NOWICKI

Cassandra Parker-Nowicki is the executive director of the Carver Community Cultural Center. Cassandra moved to San Antonio at the age of four. She graduated from Lee High School and has spent most of her career as an arts administrator in San Antonio, where she now lives with her husband and teenage daughter.

CONTEMPORARY AT BLUE STAR

Founded by artists and grown from a grassroots art exhibition in 1986, the Contemporary at Blue Star is the first and longest-running nonprofit space for contemporary art in San Antonio. Our mission is to inspire the creative genius in us all by nurturing artists through innovative contemporary art.

JACQUELINE SARAGOZA MCGILVRAY

Contemporary at Blue Star's Curator and Exhibitions Manager, Jacqueline Saragoza McGilvray, first came to live in San Antonio with her foster family between 2006–2008. She returned following graduate school in Ohio in 2013 to pursue work in the arts and be close to her and her husband's families.

ESPERANZA PEACE AND JUSTICE CENTER

Esperanza was founded in 1987 by a group of mostly Chicana activists seeking to bring together diverse movements for peace and justice. We culturally ground our communities through arts, education, and preservation, working to build a world where everyone has civil rights and economic justice, where the environment is cared for, and where cultures are honored and communities are safe.

SHERRY CAMPOS

Sherry Campos was born in San Antonio in 1970. She has always loved knowledge, seeking information about everything—from why a building was built to the ins and outs of a particular culture. Sherry has two sons and lives in the Westside, on Pinto Street, where she often talks to her neighbors about the history of their building and encourages them to take pride in the Westside.

GRACIELA SÁNCHEZ

Graciela Sánchez was born and raised in the Westside. She is a dedicated activist/cultural worker/social critic. As a co-founder of Esperanza and as Executive Director for the last 30 years, Graciela has worked with staff and community to envision and create the innovative programming for which Esperanza has earned local, national, and international acclaim.

SAAACAM

SAAACAM is a nonprofit organization formed to collect, maintain, disseminate, and interpret authentic African American artifacts related to San Antonio history in a community-based digital archive. SAAACAM is reclaiming San Antonio's Black history by empowering individuals to curate their own archives and cultivate a community-driven museum of digitized, audiovisual exhibits.

AMARIAH WILLIAMS

Amariah Williams is originally from Hampton Roads, Virginia, and now works as a Planner for the City of San Antonio. She spends her free time contributing to research projects and events with SAAACAM. She values community and is passionate about documenting nuanced lived experiences.

CRISTAL ROSE MENDEZ

Cristal Mendez is a Public Historian born and raised in San Antonio, Texas. She is honored to serve her community through two local museums. Cristal is dedicated to sharing fuller and more robust stories about African American and working-class barrio history in San Antonio.

SAY SÍ

SAY Sí ignites the creative power of young people as forces of positive change. The teaching artists and staff of SAY Sí value artists, empower marginalized communities, and advance culture.

ESMERALDA HERNANDEZ

Esmeralda Hernandez is a filmmaker and artist born and raised in San Antonio. She is an alumna of SAY Sí and works for the organization part-time as a visiting artist and ABC (Artist Building Communities) instructor.

*SAY Sí defines marginalized communities as people of color, women, LGBTQ+, and the economically disadvantaged.

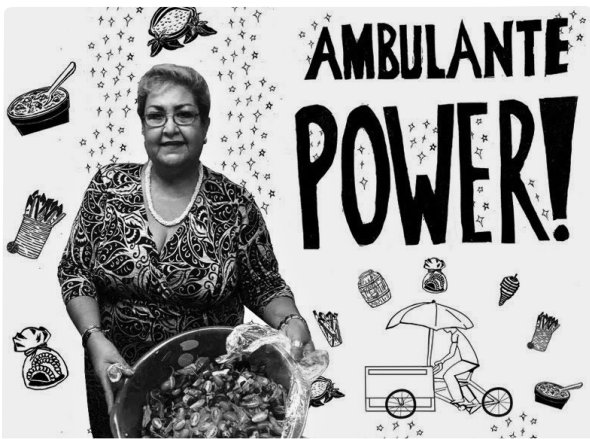
HOW CAN THE PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND THE HISTORY OF PLACES CONTRIBUTE TO MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE?

People



WHOSE STORIES ARE BEING
TOLD OR NOT BEING TOLD,
AND WHO GETS TO TELL
THE STORY?

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San Antonio