

Brazoria, Comal, Guadalupe, Hays, Travis, Uvalde, Williamson, Zavala

LA VOZ

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September, 2026
Volume 21 Number 9

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Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center

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People in the News



Jonathan Olvera Texas is the new TAMACC Chairman of the Board

Austin, TX — The **Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce (TAMACC)** is proud to announce **Jonathan Olvera** of **Waco, Texas**, as the organization's new **Chairman of the Board**. With a proven track record of leadership, service, and community involvement, **Olvera** brings fresh energy and deep commitment to **TAMACC's** mission of empowering Hispanic business communities across the state.

Olvera has been an active member of **TAMACC** for the past seven years, serving as a committee chair for three years and as an executive officer for the last two. His leadership has been instrumental in advancing **TAMACC's** strategic goals and engaging member chambers statewide.

*"It is an incredible honor to serve as Chair of the **Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce**," said **Olvera**. **"TAMACC is a shining light of opportunity for our Hispanic business community across the state and country. As Chair, my goal is to grow, lead, and win together, because when we do that, we're not just building businesses — we're building generational impact."***

Beyond his professional and civic accomplishments, **Olvera** is also a public servant, currently serving as a **City Council** member for the **City of Lacy Lakeview**. He is an active board member of the **Heart O' Texas Fair & Rodeo** and other civic organizations, reflecting his deep-rooted commitment to community development..

As **Olvera** steps into the role of **Chairman of the Board**, following the dedi-

cated service of **Sam Guzman** of **Austin, Texas**. **Guzman**, who has completed his term in accordance with **TAMACC's** by-laws, leaves behind a remarkable legacy shaped by more than three decades of commitment and service to the organization.

*"We are deeply grateful to Samuel Guzman for his decades of dedicated service and steady leadership," said **TAMACC President & CEO Pauline E. Anton**. "His vision and passion have helped shape **TAMACC** into what it is today. As Jonathan **Olvera** steps into this role, we are confident that his leadership will build on that strong foundation and carry **TAMACC** into a bright and impactful future."*



Arte Público Press Welcomes Liana Lopez, Longtime Advocate for Latino Writers and Literature, as Marketing Manager

Arte Público Press is thrilled to welcome **Liana Lopez** as its new **Marketing Manager**. A longtime advocate for Latino literature and cultural preservation, **Liana** brings extensive experience connecting authors, readers and educators through literature, media and the arts. **Liana** is a well-respected voice in the Latino literary community due to her work with **Nuestra Palabra: Latino Writers Having Their Say** for more than 15 years, where she served as **Communications Manager** and as **Producer and Co-host** of the organization's weekly radio program dedicated to Latino literature and culture. She was a principal organizer of the **Edward James Olmos Latino Book and Family Festival** and co-founded the **Li-**

brotraficante Caravan, a movement that brought together writers, educators, students and readers across the country in defense of intellectual freedom and access to diverse literature.



Anastacio "Stacy" Lopez passed away in Austin

Anastacio "Stacy" Lopez passed away on August 11, 2026, at age 77. Born May 30, 1949, in **San Antonio, Texas**, he was the proud son of Mexican immigrants, **Anastacio Lopez** and **Herminia Marroquin Lopez**.

Stacy devoted his life to family, education, public service, and the **Austin** community. A graduate of **Burbank High School** and **Texas State University**, he used his background in sociology and criminology to advocate for underserved families and expand opportunities for young people.

He served his community through organizations including **LULAC**, the **Austin-Salttillo Sister Cities Association**, **Amigo en Azul**, and the **LULAC National Educational Service Centers**. His efforts helped raise substantial scholarship funds, support youth leadership programs, and strengthen partnerships between community organizations and law enforcement. He also hosted the annual **Robert T. Chapa Sr. Fundraiser** for more than 11 years.

A passionate soccer official for over 30 years and a founding member of **Pan American Golf Association-Austin**, **Stacy** found lasting friendship and purpose through sports.

He is survived by his beloved sons **Jonathan**; **Erik** and his wife **Stepha-**

nie; Grandchildren **Haley**, **Isabella**, **Greyson**, **Landon**; Former wife, **Shelley Lopez**; cousins **Lorraine Benivides** and **Mike Beraine**; half-sisters **Rita** and **Stella**; and half-brother **Felipe**.

A memorial service will be held Friday, August 28, 2026, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at **Weed Corley Funeral Home**, 5416 Parkcrest Drive, Austin, Texas 78731.



John Anthony Rodriguez Passes away in San Antonio, Texas

John Rodriguez, 75, of **San Antonio, Texas**, passed away on August 15, 2026, leaving behind a life defined by love, friendship, quiet strength, and a sense of humor that those who knew him will not forget.

John was born on January 8, 1951, in **Flint, Michigan**, to **Dolores** and **Juan Rodriguez**. As a boy, he was his older sister's partner in crime, a trusted confidant and sounding board to his younger sister, and shared an unspoken bond of mutual respect with his brother. In April 1979, **John** married **Beatrice Ledesma**, beginning a marriage that would span 47 years.

He built a long and fulfilling career in television at **Univision KWEX 41**, where the friendships and fun mattered most. Those friendships carried well into his retirement, often over a cup of coffee or a midafternoon lunch.

He is survived by his beloved wife of 47 years, **Beatrice Ledesma Rodriguez**; his children, **John Rodriguez** and **Marisa Rodriguez**; **Jonathan Capps**; his grandchildren, **Neal Capps** and **Isabel Rodriguez-Capps**; his sisters, **Lorenda Nerison** and her husband, **Denton**, and **Sandra Guerra** and her husband, **Ruben**; as well as many cousins, nephews, nieces, extended family members, friends.

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Por cualquier pregunta sobre el contenido de este periodico, llamanos en 512-944-4123 o por email: lavoztex-as@gmail.com

Pensamientos

***Bienvenidos a La Voz Newspaper.** It's September and as you wqill see in this issue, there a lot of events and celebrations taking place all around the state of **Texas**. Over the years I have come to notice that people who live in **Central Texas** think nothing of it to take off to **Corpus Christi** to attend a dance or celebration. También lo miso con **Dallas. Texas**. Even people who like to gamble will jump in their car and head down to **Eagle Pass, Texas** to the **Kickapoo Casino**. But with this summer's heat, es más facil to head over to your favorite swimming pool or spot on the river.*

***On a different note,** I am sad to report that my primo en **San Antonio, Texas, John Rodriguez** has passed away at the age of 75. He was my mother's brother oldest son. There is a short profile on John on Page 2.*

I would also like to call to your attention that as many of us are getting older you don't see us in public as often. But we are here and very impressed with many of the activities and causes that you support. As my friend Mario Castillo says, "Eat More Beans!"



Editorial



**Alfredo Santos c/s
Editor & Publisher
1965 in Uvalde, Texas**



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PHOTO: AMANDA STRONZA

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PROGRAMA

Austin City Council Filings

25 people have filed ballot applications with the City Clerk of Austin to run for one of the five council seats on the November 3rd ballot.

District 1

Amber Goodwin, a 46-year-old assistant district attorney. Through June 30th she had contributions totaling more than \$91,000.

Alexandria Anderson, is 39. She is president of the **Martin Luther King Neighborhood Association**. Through June 30th she had raised nearly \$27,000.

Steven Brown, is 42, he was raised in **East Austin**, and works as a clinical specialist with Medtronic, a medical technology company. He had raised more than \$22,000 through June 30th.

Michael Nahas, is 53,

Misael Ramos, is 40, and serves as the is president of the **Rogers Washington Holy Cross Neighborhood Association** He has almost \$25,000 in campaign contributions

Portia Riggins, 35, was born in **Austin**. Shw has raised less than a \$1,000.

District 3

Jose Velasquez is the Incumbent Council Member. He is 46, and is seeking his second term on the City Council. He has raised nearly \$91,000

Gavino Fernandez, is 72. He is a long time reside of District 3.

Eduardo “Lalito” Romero, is 28 He had raised less than \$500.

Neha Shah, is 40, Shah grew up in Qatar, United Arab Emirates. She raised \$11,000.

Brock Skinner, is 30 years.

District 5

Ryan Alter, is 37.

Farrah Abraham, is 35.

Elizabeth Brink, is 50.

Arkeem Gibson, is 33,

David Weinberg, is 48. He has contributions totaling almost \$16,000.

District 8

Selena Xie is 39, had raised nearly \$106,000 through June 30th.

Jeffery Bowen, is 70. He has raised close to \$9,000.

District 9

Zohaib “Zo” Qadri is 36

Richard Heyman is 59 years old.

Kai Huang is 33

Katherine “Katie” Kam is 49,

Dave Thandini is 19.

Girl Scouts of Southwest Texas has announced the appointment of **Jeanette Ball, Ph.D.**, as the organization's next Chief Executive Officer.

Dr. Ball's employment commenced August 24. **Dr. Ball** brings more than three decades of leadership experience in education, youth development, strategic planning, community engagement and organizational transformation. She has served 13 years as a public school superintendent, leading **Southwest ISD**, **Judson ISD**, and **Uvalde CISD** through major initiatives focused on student success, operational improvement, fiscal stewardship, stakeholder trust, and expanded opportunity for young people.

Her appointment reflects the council's continued commitment to strengthening impact and expanding opportunities for girls across **Southwest Texas**. As CEO, **Dr. Ball** will lead the council's strategic direction and operations, advancing **Girl Scouts'** mission to build girls of courage, confidence, and character who make the world a better place.

“Dr. Ball is an accomplished and respected leader whose career reflects a deep commitment to young people, families, and communities,” said Lea Ream, Board Chair of Girl Scouts of Southwest Texas. “Her experience building trust across diverse communities and creating opportunities for youth makes her exceptionally well suited to lead our organization. The Board is confident she will bring the vision and energy needed to strengthen our impact for the communities and girls we serve.”

Dr. Ball's background closely aligns with the council's focus on community-centered leadership, cultural competency, and meaningful engagement with families, staff, volunteers, donors, and community partners. *“I am honored to serve as Chief Executive Officer of Girl Scouts of Southwest Texas,” Dr. Ball said. “Throughout my career, I have been guided by the belief that every young person deserves opportunities to discover their strengths, build confidence, and realize their potential. Girl Scouts has a powerful and enduring mission, and I look forward to working alongside our Board, staff, volunteers, families, donors, and community partners to support the next generation of girl leaders.”*

Ball holds a **Doctor of Philosophy** in Education and Human Resources from **Texas A&M University**, a **Master of Arts** in Educational Leadership from the **University of Texas at San Antonio**, and a **Bachelor of Arts** in General Studies from **Schreiner University**. Her professional and community leadership includes service with regional civic and educational organizations such as **UP Partnership**, the **TASA Advocacy Committee**, **Go Public**, **San Antonio Rotary**, the **Bexar County Education Coalition**, and the **Trinity University Forum Committee**.

“Girl Scouts has shaped generations of leaders, entrepreneurs, advocates, and changemakers,” Ball said. “I am excited to build on that legacy and help ensure every girl across Southwest Texas has the opportunity to lead, thrive, and make a lasting impact.”



People's Hearing in Austin , Texas

Introduction

It's no secret that people of color, (especially Latinos) are under attack.

As we look around the United States, we see reports of people being picked up by **ICE** agents at jobsites, grocery stores and outside of schools. With masked faces and in unmarked vehicles, these agents beat people and in some cases, shoot and kill them. The Federal Government under **Donald Trump** and some of his advisors, like **Stephen Miller**, believe that the growing presence of **La Raza** is contributing to the "Browning of America" and they don't like it.

In **Austin, Texas** the attack on people who are "different" has moved into **The University of Texas**. "We are seeing systematic

reduction and displacement of academic programs and departments like **Mexican American Studies** which have helped thousands of students earn bachelors, master's and doctoral degrees. The intent of the university's attack is to decrease the presence of brown people in the classrooms.

It wasn't that long ago when **Adolf Hitler** pursued a similar attack on the **Jews** in **Europe**. After invading **Poland** in 1939, the **Nazis** moved into **Belgium** and **France**. They burned books and locked up prominent citizens. Six million **Jews** perished in what became known as the **Holocaust**. It took the United States almost two years to finally wake up and realize what was coming. It took another four years to put a stop to **Hitler's Nazis**.

Now you may be thinking, well that could never happen here in the **United States of America**. But a careful look around will show that we have a President and his advisors who are working hard every day to find ways to "bend the constitution." They are constantly testing how far they can push the judicial system.

Some people say we need to be careful because the **Nazis/Fascists** and **Gestapo** are coming back. I disagree! These elements are already here. With talk about invoking the **Insurrection Act of 1807** and possibly suspending the November elections, we as Americans need to wake up and pay attention.

On August 12, 2026 **Latin Coalition for Excellence in Higher Education**, a group of students, community advocates and acade-

micians in partnership with State Representative **Lulu Flores** convened a People's Hearing in **Austin, Texas** to discuss the threats to diversity and academic freedom.

People who attended and testified read prepared statements while others spoke openly about the consolidation of some programs and departments at the **University of Texas**. **La Voz** and the **Latino Coalition for Academic Excellence in Higher Education** wish to share some of the sentiments of those who gave testimony.

As you reflect on reports of what is taking place at universities and colleges in **Texas**, remember the people of **Europe** who in 1940, never believed the **Nazi** troops from **Germany** would some day occupy **France**. The time to stand up is now. The time to get out and vote is now. Mañana may be too late.



People's Hearing in Austin , Texas



Testimony of Nora de Hoyos Comstock, Ph.D.

Thank you **Representative Flores**, the **Legislative Progressive Caucus** and the **Latino Coalition for Excellence in Higher Education**. My name is **Nora de Hoyos Comstock**, and I speak today as a proud **UT** alumna and a national and community leader of 26 years.

I am here to express utter disbelief at how my alma mater has acted with impunity—bowing to legislative edicts without the involvement or consent of the faculty, staff, and students who make up its core. Complying with state law does not require abandoning democratic processes, individual rights, or institutional decency.

For over two decades, I have worked to preserve and celebrate our Latine culture and social capital. The scholars, researchers, and artists who build the knowledge base of our contributions to this nation are now being callously fired or forced out. This repressive behavior at UT Austin and across Texas is undemocratic. We are not asking for special treatment—we are asking for fairness and the enforcement of long-standing university rules.



Whether leadership acknowledges it or not, demography is destiny. Texas cannot build a thriving future if it relies on importing talent while dismantling the educational pathways of its own residents.

Right now, the Latine community in Texas generates over \$500 billion in economic output—the second-largest Latino economy in the nation—and contributes tens of billions in state taxes. Censoring history and dismantling ethnic

studies undermines the very workforce Texas depends on for its economic future. Higher education must be prepared to serve all students if our state is to prosper.

I urge the **Progressive Caucus** to hold university leadership accountable, demand transparency, and protect the integrity of **Texas** public education.

ABOVE: Some of the participants at the Oei-ole's Hearing in Austin, Texas.

People's Hearing in Austin , Texas

The recent so called “consolidation” of four academic departments at **The University of Texas at Austin** is misleading and dishonest, because it does not merely restructure—it dismantles the departments as we have long known them, erasing their identities under the convenient guise of administrative efficiency.

It forces them into a single unit so large and so varied that no institution committed to excellence could hope to manage it well—unless university administrators are creating the conditions to streamline and weaken the new department later.

Restructuring restricts the participation of each of the ethnic, women's, gender, and sexuality studies programs in the intellectual life of the university, placing them at the margins of scholarly engagement—where their voices can be readily dismissed, their contributions overshadowed, and their expertise devalued.

Restructuring discredits the long-standing, rigorous, and nationally recognized work these fields have produced, work that has shaped essential knowledge, transformed teaching, strengthened community and professional service, and built institutions that reinforce the university's standing. Their contributions have been repeatedly affirmed through formal, multi level reviews at universities across the country, including the University of Texas.

Restructuring is wrong when it collapses distinct academic fields, each with its own methodologies, histories, and intellectual traditions, into an oversize structure that diminishes their autonomy and undermines their ability to serve undergraduate and graduate students well. At a time when statewide political pressures seek to restrict teaching on race, gender, and sexuality, this appears less like an aca-



democratic reorganization and more like an ideologically motivated initiative.

Restructuring disproportionately targets the departments all-the-while knowing that the discriminatory act infringes upon the academic freedom of racially and culturally distinct groups that are explicitly protected by university policy and national standards. Faculty and students in these disciplines have already warned that the new structure could limit their ability to teach and learn the material essential to their fields. Such violations could well trigger external investigations by the Texas Legislature and civil rights organizations concerned with discriminatory governance practices.

Restructuring appears politically motivated and actionable because the review process appears to be incomplete in that it disregards established vetting policies and procedures—the very safeguards meant to ensure fairness, transparency, and academic integrity. It diminishes protected class scholarship, undermining fields whose

contributions have long expanded the university's intellectual horizons. It violates core norms of academic integrity, including freedom of expression, disciplinary autonomy, and the diversity of viewpoints that a university is obligated to protect. And it reverses decades of progress in building nationally recognized programs that have added to the university's reputation and contributed to a more inclusive and productive scholarly community.

Restructuring signals that specific bodies of knowledge—particularly those rooted in race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality—are expendable. It undermines the principle that universities must cultivate a broad and inclusive intellectual community, not narrow it. And it sets a dangerous precedent: that politically convenient restructuring can override rigorous evaluation, shared governance, and the rights of scholars whose work challenges, enriches, and advances the public mission of higher education.

Restructuring betrays public trust, because it fails to account for its actions—even when the **Latino Coalition for Excellence in Higher Education**, a community organization of good standing, twice requests a meeting with the president of **The University of Texas**, only to be met with silence. The public trust has been especially damaged in the communities whose histories, identities, and intellectual traditions are represented by ethnic, women's, gender, and sexuality studies programs. These communities now see an institution willing to dismantle the work of their professors and students

without transparency, without shared governance, and without regard for the constituencies most affected.

The harm extends to those who value the rule of law, procedural fairness, sound administrative principles, and institutional integrity, regardless of their ideological preferences. When an institution disregards its own vetting policies, bypasses established procedures, and undermines academic freedom, it erodes confidence not only in its leadership but also in its commitment to the public mission of higher education.

The forthcoming mid term election signals a potential shift in legislative balance and has encouraged cautious optimism that a measure of reasonableness may influence state-university relations. The hope is that the political climate may be opening a narrow window for renewed dialogue and more principled governance.

We must make a good faith effort to enter into constructive dialogue, to recalibrate policies, and to rebuild trust before our conversations harden into acrimonious and unfixable debate. Institutions do not heal by accident; they recover through deliberate engagement, transparent process, and willingness to confront the consequences of past decisions.

At this moment, the university faces a clear choice: it can continue down a path that discourages and alienates; or it can recognize the urgency of restoring transparency, accountability, and respect for the diverse intellectual traditions that define a truly great university. One path leads to deeper division. The other leads to honest dialogue, principled governance, and a recommitment to sound intellectual leadership. This moment demands courage and the willingness to act before the opportunity for repair slips away.

People's Hearing in Austin , Texas

Testimony by Alejandra Elenes

My name is **Alejandra Elenes**, and I am testifying as a private citizen and I am not representing any organization. I am here today because I am concerned about the future of public higher education in **Texas**. I have over 30 years' experience as a faculty member in **Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies** and **Ethnic Studies**. I have had the privilege of teaching individuals who have become outstanding members and leaders of their communities including a former state senator, college professors, educators, non-profit CEO's, and librarians and archivist to name but a few.



The implementation of legislation aimed at dismantling **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**, tenure, and faculty governance in **Texas**, is taking away faculty's rights over curricular decisions and students access to knowledge. Rules against teaching controversial subjects, without defining what this means, are attacks against academic freedom.

The closure of **Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies** at **Texas A&M University**; the cancellation of courses addressing gender and race; **UT Austin's** consolidation of **African and African Diaspora Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, American Studies, and Mexican American and Latina/o Studies** into a single **Social and Cultural Analysis** unit; and **UT San Antonio's** merger of the **Department of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality Studies** with the **Department of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies** all reflect the current political climate and anti-democratic policies attacking academic freedom. Such unilateral, top-down actions constitute political interference that threatens access to education. The free exchange of ideas is the foundation of a democratic society.

Women's Gender and Sexuality and Ethnic Studies departments were born out of grassroots efforts by students, faculty and staff who recognized gaps in critical knowledge about women and our communities. Knowledge that is necessary for a society based on social justice principles. A free society is one where we respect the free exchange of ideas. A critical educated population is necessary to advance society's knowledge and democratic processes. In a free society, the state does not dictate what one can learn and think. **Women's, Gender and Sexuality and Ethnic Studies** have been part of the creation of knowledge that has open opportunities for students to critically engage with the world for over 50 years. It is my hope that we restore academic freedom in institutions of higher education in Texas to ensure a prosperous future.

I thank The **Latino Coalition for Excellence in Higher Education**, the **Texas Legislative Progressive Caucus** and **State Representative Lulu Flores** for organizing this **People's Hearing** on Threats to Diversity and Academic Freedom in Higher Education. I am honored to add my voice in seeking better alternatives to educate Texans and support higher education in **Texas**.

Testimony by Liz Rocha-Seelig University of Texas at Austin

To my fellow students, educators, faculty, and community members, I am deeply saddened and angry about the elimination of **Mexican American and Latina/o Studies** and **African and African Diaspora Studies** as departments at **UT**.

I am part of this culture, and one of the reasons I chose to attend **UT** was because I wanted to be part of an institution that had grown into such a powerful place of learning because of the diversity of its people and educational opportunities.

As an educator (16 years) and doctoral student at **UT**, I believe our responsibility is to expand the histories, knowledge, and experiences we value in education, not make these spaces smaller. These departments represent decades of scholarship, advocacy, and work by students, faculty, and communities who fought to have their histories and experiences recognized within the university.

Eliminating or consolidating these departments does not strengthen **UT**. It diminishes the breadth of scholarship and learning that has made this university what it is. When universities allow outside pressures to determine what can be studied, taught, and discussed, we risk losing brilliant professors and students who will choose institutions where their communities are valued.

I also worry about what this continued erasure means beyond **UT**. Our students will eventually leave this uni-



versity and this state to teach, research, lead, and work alongside people from many different communities. I worry that the continued erasure happening in **Texas** will leave others questioning whether students educated here were given the opportunity to fully engage with the perspectives necessary to understand the world around them. We should be expanding opportunities for learning, not narrowing them.

Hope is not a strategy. But I am hopeful because I see my peers refusing to be silent. I see students, faculty, and community members speaking up, organizing, asking difficult questions, and standing beside one another.

My hope is not in waiting for something to change. It is in the people around me who are taking action to protect the kind of education and university they believe in. That is the **UT** I want to be part of.

Thank you,

Liz Rocha-Seelig

**See Page 14 for one additional
Testimony by Dr. Benda Sende-**

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LA PEÑA PRESENTS



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Thursday, September 3, 2026.
From 6:00 - 8:00 pm

CUBA Un Colectivo, Tres Miradas

Photographers: Ayash Basu, Nick Berard, and Rodolfo Gonzalez

Exhibition Dates: August 27 to October 1, 2026

La Peña Gallery: 227 Congress Ave. Austin, Texas 78701



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UNIVISION AUSTIN





TAMACC Announces 2026 Women of Distinction Honorees

AUSTIN, TX — The Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce (TAMACC) proudly announces the 2026 Women of Distinction Honorees, an extraordinary group of 12 Latinas whose leadership, innovation, and service are shaping the future of Texas.

TAMACC Chairman Jonathan Olvera stated, “When Latinas lead, communities thrive. These honorees are a testament to that truth. Their achievements elevate all of Texas, and it is our privilege to celebrate their excellence, courage, and unwavering commitment to service.”

TAMACC President and CEO Pauline E. Anton added, “We are proud to honor not only today’s changemakers but also the emerging voices of tomorrow. Together, they represent the strength, vision, and future of the Latina community in Texas and beyond.”

Tickets and sponsorship opportunities for the luncheon are available. For more information, visit www.tamacc.org or contact (512) 444-5727.

Event Details:

Friday, September 4, 2026, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Hilton Austin Airport Hotel, 9515 Hotel Drive, Austin, Texas 78719 | Ballroom



Ashley Alaniz-Moyer
Executive Director,
Hispanic Scholarship
Consortium, Georgetown



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Susan Warner-Sanchez, Ph.D.
Associate Vice Chancellor
of Special Projects, , Austin
Community College, Austin

Hello and thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is **Brenda Sendejo**. I am a **UT Austin** alum. I earned a PhD in cultural anthropology with doctoral portfolios in **Mexican American Studies** and **Women and Gender Studies**, a Masters and a Bachelors in **Cultural Anthropology**. I served as a tenured professor at **Southwestern University** for 14 years and am currently a business owner, scholar and consultant.

I'm proud to call migrant farm workers, pecan shellers, Mexican immigrants, and fourth-generation Tejanas and Tejanos my grandparents. And yet, growing up in **Corpus Christi, Texas**, I was ashamed to be Mexican.

I was ashamed of who I was. I didn't know very much about my culture or my history. I grew up surrounded by a whiteness that was elevated, celebrated, and rewarded. Systemic racism reminded me, often, that I wasn't good enough. That I didn't matter.

The stories and histories of my people and my culture weren't present in the schools I attended. Then came 1989. I entered **The University of Texas at Austin** as the first person in my family to attend college.

I came across a **CMAS** course with **Dr. Martha Menchaca** called **Mexican American Culture**. That course introduced me to **Mexican American** culture, history, and studies—to a world I didn't know existed in books, films, the civil rights movement, and more.

My world. One that, despite my family's love, had been silenced. Hidden. Erased. That course stirred something in me. It moved something in me. It changed something within me—at the soul level. To my core.

In 2003, I entered the **University of Texas** once again, this time as a doctoral student in the **Department of Anthropology** and its **Mexican American and Borderlands program**. And once again, I encountered a life-changing course: **Mexican Americans in Texas Politics**, developed by historian and prominent Chicana and Chicano movement activist **Dr. Emilio Zamora** in collaboration with seminal Chicana feminist scholar and movement leader **Martha P. Cotera**.

These civil rights activists, advocates, feminists, and scholars understood in an embodied way the harm of erasing our stories

People's Hearing Testimony | Brenda Sendejo, PhD

8-12-26

and our histories. They continued the movement that had taken place at **UT** in the 1960s and 1970s, fighting for the development of the **Center for Mexican American Studies** at **UT**.

Because of their efforts—and the efforts of their contemporaries and comrades—the flame within me grew. A light dimmed by systemic oppression was shining once again.

That course introduced students to women who had been prominent in the **La Raza Unida Party** and in the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s. I met in person **Martha Cotera**, **María Elena Martínez**, **Rosie Castro**, and other powerful Tejanas of the movement. And I saw myself in them. They and their stories would become the focus of my doctoral research and life's work.

I want to circle back to that little girl who was once ashamed to be Mexican—the first person in her family to attend college. Her journey was made possible, in direct ways, by ethnic studies and by the movement efforts of people who fought for ethnic studies to exist as something I could have the privilege of learning. They planted seeds in



me.

And those seeds grew.

After graduation I was hired as an assistant professor of anthropology at **Southwestern University**. I developed then taught the first courses in Chicana feminisms at **Southwestern University** and invited women like **Martha Cotera** and **Maria Elena Martinez** to speak to our campus community and students. And I witnessed something recognizable -- a flame lit in my own students that was once lit within me.

I share my story here today because stories and histories are linked to our full humanity.

To the right to exist without shame.

My story—and so many others like it, including that of hundreds of my own students—illustrates the urgency and responsibility we have to young people, to our families, to our communities, and to the people we serve.

This is my story of the moral responsibility we—AND the state of **Texas**—have to help our communities and our youth know their immense worth. To have pride in who they are. To see their histories represented. To know that their stories matter.

I would go on to become the first Tejana to receive a PhD in cultural and social anthropology at **UT Austin**. Then I would become the first Tejana to become tenured in **Southwestern University's** 175 years. And all of this is because seeds were planted within me.

Seeds that told me: I mattered. My stories mattered. My history mattered. And I will forever continue to share that message—far and wide, for as long and as far as I live. I will continue to support the efforts of those who are doing the same for others. Because I know in my mind, body, and spirit of the power of the stories, histories, and remembering.



ABOVE: **Martha P. Cotera** testifying at the **People's Hearing** in **Austin, Texas** in 2026

He Never Gave Up

From Cronicas Mexicanas

He spent seven years writing a novel that nobody wanted to publish. By day, **Rudolfo Anaya** taught English in **Albuquerque** public schools. By night he wrote and rewrote a story about a boy on the New **Mexico** llano and the curandera who came to live with his family.

Before it, he had already burned the manuscripts of everything he had written earlier. The book came slowly and would not hold together. Then one night, working late, he sensed someone standing behind him. An old woman dressed in black. In his own telling, she asked what he was writing, listened, and told him he would never get it right until he put her in it. He asked who she was. She said: Ultima.

She became the soul of the book.

Then came the rejections. He sent the manuscript to dozens of trade publishers over a couple of years and found no interest at all. The objection was almost always the same — too much Spanish, too Chicano. Years later he put it plainly: “The mainstream publishers weren’t taking anything Chicano and we had nowhere to go.” For him, letting Spanish into a story written in English was not a stylistic risk. It was simply how his people spoke.

He never took it out.

By his own account, what finally changed things was an advertisement. A small Chicano press in **Berkeley** called **Quinto Sol** was inviting writers to send in manuscripts. He mailed his in. The editors, **Octavio Romano-V.** and **Herminio Ríos**, read it, awarded it the **Premio Quinto Sol** for best novel by a Chicano writer along with a \$1,000 prize, and put it on shelves in June 1972.

Bless Me, Ultima.

It sold more than 300,000 copies across 21 printings in its first two decades alone. **Warner Books** later signed him to a six-book deal, and the novel reached cinemas in 2013. **Tony Hillerman** called him “the godfather and guru of Chicano literature.” It also landed on lists of the most frequently challenged books in the United States — pulled from school shelves for decades over its Spanish, its curanderismo, and the questions it asks about faith.

Anaya was born in **Pastura, New Mexico**, in 1937. His father was a vaquero from a family of cattle workers and sheepherders; his mother came from farming people in **Puerto de Luna**. At sixteen, a spinal cord injury left him temporarily paralysed. He later received the **National Medal of Arts**, and in 2016 **President Obama** presented him with the **National Humanities Medal**. He died in **Albuquerque** in 2020, at 82. Dozens of publishers told him his words did not belong in American literature. He is now counted among the writers who founded it.



They call him the godfather
of Chicano literature.
Dozens of publishers called
him unpublishable



Personal Note

In 1971, I was in my second year of college at **San Joaquin Delta College** in **Stockton, California**. The **Chicano Movement** was going strong and one could see the pride and optimism in the faces of the students. **Delta College** offered a variety of course that revolved around the experience of the Mexican American. One of those course was tagut by **Chris Martinez** and was called **Chicano Literature**.

I remember the poet and professor **Jose Montoya** came down from **Sacramento State University** where he was teahing at the time and delivered a great presentation on **Chicano Literature**. He shared the behind the scences story of **José Antonio Villarreal** 1959 novel called **Pocho** and the great difficulty in getting it published. There were other authors we discussed and read in that class.

But the most memorable event was the field trip we took to the **University of California Berkeley** to visit with the founders of **Quinto Sol Press**. We heard **Dr. Octavio Romano-V** tell us about the importance of this field of literature and why it should be part of the curriculum in the high schools and colleges. I remember this field trip because in the fall of 1972, I would return to **Berkeley** as a newly admitted undergraduate. And it was that fall that I got to read **Bless Me Ulima**.

Save the Date!

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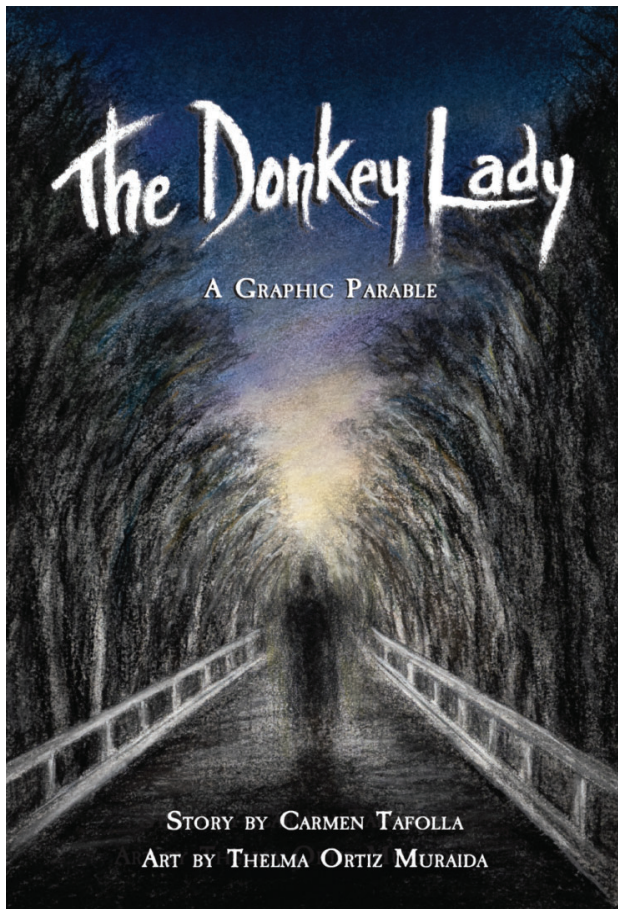


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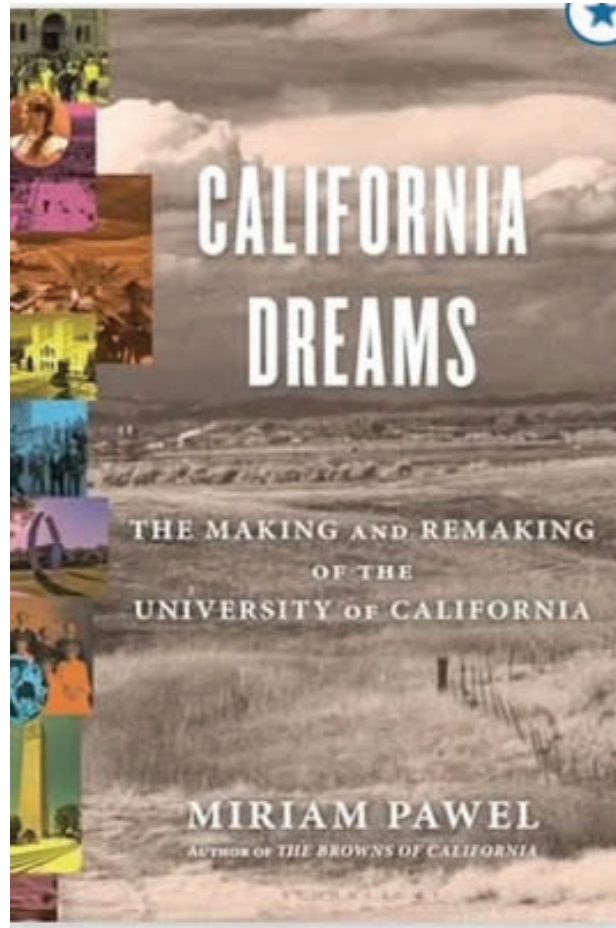
The Donkey Lady: A Graphic Parable by Carmen Tafolla and Thelma Ortiz Muraida

The Donkey Lady—long whispered about on **San Antonio's Southside**—returns with a new voice. In *The Donkey Lady: A Graphic Parable*, **Carmen Tafolla** and **Thelma Ortiz Muraida** reclaim the legend as a story of violence, memory, and humanity.

Rooted in a story familiar to generations of **San Antonians**, the book reframes the haunting of the *Donkey Lady Bridge* as something deeper: a woman's life marked by brutality, and a community shaped by what it chooses to remember—or forget.

At a time when stories of violence against women and cultural erasure persist, *The Donkey Lady* offers a powerful reimagining of a local myth as a narrative of witness, survival, and resistance.

Visit **Aztlan Libre PRESS**
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Pulitzer Prize winner **Miriam Pawel's** epic history of one of the world's elite public universities, its sweeping social impact, and hopeful lessons about endurance in troubled times.

Distinguished by its founding mission as an engine of upward mobility, the **University of California**—a constitutionally independent public trust—is a great American experiment that has persevered through fraught battles over access, funding, and leadership.

The University has been at the nexus of nearly every public policy debate and social movement since the **Civil War**, from women's rights to student protests, from academic freedom to affirmative action, shaping policies that reverberate throughout the United States.

California Dreams narrates UC's rise and resilience through the lens of those whose lives it has transformed—in particular, five pioneering graduates whose diverse paths underscore why the University remains, in the words of **Berkeley** graduate **Joan Didion**, "*California's best idea of itself.*"



The Focus Puller

by **Marcos E. Gonzalez** (Author) Format: Kindle Edition

4.4 4.4 out of 5 stars (6)

Rio Zapata wakes from nightmares he can't shake in a rented room in **Santa Fe, New Mexico**. Broke, haunted, and running low on everything including excuses, he moves through a city populated by shamans, shoplifters, **Kickapoo** elders, cosmic comrades, and the occasional ghost — all while trying to remember what his dead mother whispered to him in a dream.

The Focus Puller is a postmodern Latino noir that wanders like it means to — through flashbacks to **Laredo, Texas**, through the supernatural and the mundane, through dark comedy and genuine sorrow. It is a novel about a man who has spent his whole life adjusting other people's focus while remaining stubbornly, beautifully out of his own.

Funny, strange, and occasionally heartbreaking — for readers who like their fiction a little unhinged.

Calendar of Events

August 27th to October 1st, 2026 - *La Peña* presents CUBA Un Colectivo, Tres Miradas See Page 11 for more information.

September 4th, 2026 - Women of Distinction event at the **Hilton Austin Airport Hotel** from 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM. Agress: 9515 Hotel Drive, **Austin, Texas** 78719 | Ballroom For more information see Page 12. Sponsored by the Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerece

September 5th, 2026 - *Empanada Festival* in Austin by Latin City 1619 ScottdLW DR. at the CROSSOVER in Cedar Park, Texas. 12 to 5:00pm

September 12th, 2026 - *Day of Dance* sonsored by MindPOP 1500 Barba- ra Jordan Blvd. in Austin, Texas See Page 4 for more information.

September 12th, 2026 - *VIVA Mexico A Celebration of Independence* 4:00 to 9:00pm at the **Emma Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center** 600 River Street **Austin, Texas** 78701

September 12th, 2026 - *Vivir con Ganas!* For more information see Page 11.

September 15th, 2026 - *Fiesta de La Independencia de Mexico*, 422 Guadalupe Stret in Austin, Texas. Music, Entertainment and food. For more information see Page 10

September 17th, 2026 - *HABLA con Orgullo* Award AWARDS event at PBS studios in Austin, Texas. See Page 16 for more details

September 17th to the 20th, 2026 - *Hispanic Womrn’s Network of Texas Annual Conference* at the Double Tree by Hilton in Dallas. Texas 1099 Valley View Lane 75214. For more information: hwntstate@hwnt.org

September 26th, 2026 - *Robstown Fall Festival* at Club La Suerte500 North IH 69 Robstown, Texas 78380Doors open at 3:00pm

October 1-2-3, 2026 - *47th Festival Chicano* in Houston, Texas at Miller Outdoor Theater in Herman Park. Event is free and open to the public.

MONTESSORI KINDERGARTEN LEAD TEACHER

School in the Hills Inc. Austin TX. Bachelor or its equivalent in Education or Early Childhood Education. With 1 year work experience as Montessori Teacher in Early Childhood. With Early Childhood Montessori Certification issued by the American Montessori Society (AMS), the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) or the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). Willing to supervise 2 Teaching Assistants. Send Resume with Professional Reference Information and Certification to team@schoolinthehills.com

En Palabras Hay Poder

Nadie puede averiguar en el nombre de la educación que es mejor saber menos que saber más. Siendo bilingüe o trilingüe es parte de ser educado en el siglo 21. Es peramos traer cada mes a nuestros lectores de La Voz una lista de p labras en es pañol con sus equivalentes en inglés.

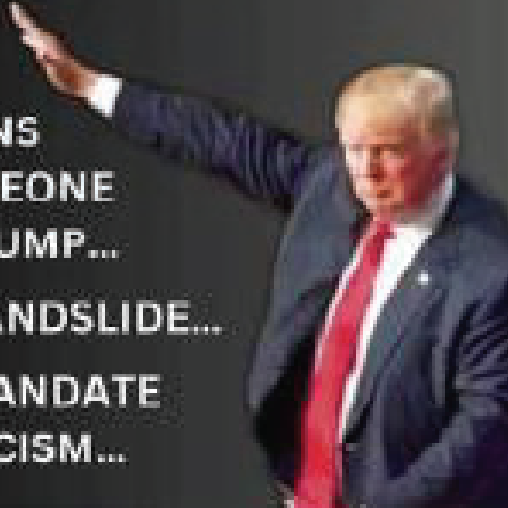
No one can ever argue in the name of education, that it is better to know less than it is to know more. Being bilingual or trilingual or multilingual is about being educated in the 21st century. We look forward to bringing our readers various word lists in each issue of La Voz.

Fire	Fuego
Fireman	Bombero
Fire Department	Departamento de Bomberos
Save a life	Salvar una vida
Save Money	Ahorrar dinero
Facial Make Up	Maquillaje facial
Clown	Payaso
Circus	Circo
Carnival	Carnaval
Festival	Festival
Party	Fiesta
Celebration	Celebración
Clean Up	Limpiar
Help	Ayuda
Help Out	Echar una mano
Rescue	Rescate

“

31.78% VOTED FOR TRUMP
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 36.32% DID NOT VOTE
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