

# San Antonio Express-News

## Ayala: Museo's virtual show in San Antonio expands definition of activism and its history in San Antonio

*Elaine Ayala - Dec. 10, 2020*

You probably don't know the story of San Antonio civil rights leader María Rebecca Látigo de Hernández, a contemporary of the better-known labor leader Emma Tenayuca.

You may not know that Eva Garza, an early Lanier High School graduate, became an international entertainer who toured throughout the United States, Mexico, Canada and Latin America and did radio shows in New York City.

You also probably don't know that Beatrice Gallego became a force for **Communities Organized for Public Service, now COPS Metro Alliance**, but also wrote a political treatise published locally.

Hernández, Garza and Gallego aren't likely to be in history books or taught in Texas classrooms. That's why they were chosen to appear in a new virtual exhibit at the Museo del Westside, another cultural spin-off of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center. The museo will break ground next year and will be completed in 2022.

The three historical figures are among 21 in a Facebook event tonight that will be carried concurrently on the pages of the Esperanza and Museo del Westside.

"Poder de Mujer: A Guided Tour and Platica on Women & Activism in the Westside" begins at 7 p.m. It also will be recorded and available for later viewing on Esperanza's YouTube channel.

Exhibit co-creators, San Antonio archivist Donna Guerra and Austin-based scholar Laura Hernández-Ehrisman, will lead the online tour.

A graduate of Brown University and a native of San Antonio who formerly taught at St. Edward's University, Hernández-Ehrisman described the show as a more inclusive story of local history.



The exhibit showcases women who not only organized church *tamaladas* but stood before City Council meetings. They led PTAs but also demanded flood control infrastructure investment from a city that knowingly neglected impoverished Latino neighborhoods.

As activists, educators, journalists and *ranchera* singers, the museo says, the women in the exhibit worked “toward the change they wished to see.”

The Esperanza planned the exhibit for the 100th anniversary of women’s suffrage. During community meetings, held virtually, it drew surprising additions.

It expanded the exhibit’s range beyond more recognized figures such as Tenayuca and journalist Jovita Idár, recently highlighted in a [Google Doodle](#).

Affordable housing policy advocate and former City Councilwoman María Antonietta Berriozábal, the first Mexican American woman to serve on City Council, has a spot in the exhibit.

Berriozábal also penned a profile of her grandmother, community and church activist Sebastiana Ramírez Rodríguez. Born in 1886 in La Hacienda Ibarilla, she was a member of the Chichimecas population that worked on the Mexican ranch whose land grant dates to the Spanish viceroys.

“We recognized a broad definition of activism and women who were active in different realms,” Hernández-Ehrisman said.

Each profile in “Women & Activism” includes links to companion essays that provide broader historical context. Well-written and researched, they’re accessible to middle school and high school readers.

Those written by non-academics have a place in the classroom, filling the voids in the historical record.

“These are stories that even in San Antonio aren’t known,” said Hernández-Ehrisman, who grew up on the city’s West Side and is of German heritage. She said she was introduced to Latino historical figures in college coursework but those were mostly of Latin American origin.

Research for “Women & Activism” uncovered a shameful chapter about the women’s suffrage movement: Its own willful exclusion of Mexican American women.

“It was quite intentional and a painful story of discrimination,” the scholar said.

Still, Mexicanas, Tejanas and Chicanas asserted themselves, and their families didn’t forget them either.

They opened their archives to exhibit creators, and representatives of those families will speak at tonight's online event, including Berriozábal, Native American tribal leader Ramón Vásquez and archeologist Mary Jo Galindo, who'll speak about her grandmother María Latigo de Hernández.

As you would in any museum gallery, you'll want to take your time with the exhibit later and linger over each extraordinary story.

But we'll have to wait for coronavirus vaccines and renovations at the Museo to see a physical exhibit, and that's something worth waiting for.