



¡SALUD! Latina Leadership Showcase & Networking Mixer

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Melanie Mendez-Gonzales **Moderator & Host of ¡SALUD! Season 3**



Call her a multi-passion chaser. Melanie Mendez-Gonzales is the managing partner of MMG Media, LLC and founder of the award-winning blog Que Means What. She uses the digital media landscape to create and amplify stories about Latina leaders, representation of the Latino community and her experiences as a Mexican-American exploring her own identity.

Since the start of her blogging career in 2010, she has received various recognitions but she is most proud of receiving the 2018 TECLA Award “The Jewel Award” for Social Good Content Creator. Melanie has worked with Fortune 500 companies such as Walmart, Toyota, and Disneyland. She has also collaborated with local organizations such as Girl Scouts of Southwest Texas, San Antonio College, and LiftFund US.

Melanie is a four-time South by Southwest (SXSW) speaker on entrepreneurship, diversity in the outdoors, multicultural influencers, and parenting with STEM education. She has also been a speaker at H-E-B Diversity and Inclusion Summit, Women’s Global Connection Girls Summit, Voto Latino Power Summit, and Hispanicize Event.

Melanie is the 2022 Co-Chair of the Latina Leadership Institute, a program of the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. She serves as a Board Member and Communications Chair of SAY Si, a youth arts education nonprofit in San Antonio, TX. Melanie is Dare to Lead™ Trained and has received a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Certificate from University of South Florida.

As a proud seventh-generation Tejana, Melanie is raising her two boys in San Antonio with her husband. You can find her on social media as @QueMeansWhat.

FEATURED GUESTS

The Hon. Rosie Speedlin Gonzalez **Judge, Bexar County Court at Law No. 13**



Judge Rosie Speedlin Gonzalez was born in Brownsville, Texas to parents who instilled in her a love for both her culture and country, and learned the importance of service to her community and the value of people in her life.

She graduated from St. Mary's University Law School in 2001, then practiced law for almost 17 years, becoming the only lawyer in South Texas to be certified as a Child Welfare Specialist by the National Association of Counsel for Children prior to taking the bench. In her law career, she represented hundreds of foster children in the

CPS system. She mentored many new attorneys, who went on to develop successful law careers. The judge had a solo practice, where she committed to hard work and service to her clients. Rosie loves the law; this passion led her to running for judge in 2018 of County Court 13; a misdemeanor domestic violence court in Bexar County.

After a successful & victorious campaign, she took the bench in January 2019. She ran with the following initiatives: 1) to create a drug court/ domestic violence specialty program that addresses the core issues that bring offenders into the courtroom; 2) to collaborate with UTSA's Counseling Department to set up a therapeutic support for the victims of domestic violence and 3) to develop and bring transparency to the working of the criminal justice system. During the 2019 Texas Legislative Session, she co-authored HB 3529 which was sponsored by State Rep. Roland Gutierrez and Senator Jose Menendez. HB 3529 was signed into law by Gov. Abbott and mandates that a Specialty Drug Court be implemented within Bexar County Court at Law No. 13's Domestic Violence Docket, that Specialty Court is what we now know as REFLEJO COURT. In 2023, REFLEJO Court was continued by Gov. Abbott when he signed HB 4333 sponsored by State Rep. Josey Garcia who garnered bipartisan support for the program. Judge Speedlin Gonzalez recognizes the lack of resources for our most vulnerable residents. Further, she is aware that the most dangerous places in our city can exist in the home. She dedicates her time on the bench to addressing the needs for an ever-increasing problem in our city.

In 2021, the Texas Diversity Council honored Rosie with the LGBTQ+ Individual Leadership Award. In 2020, she was chosen as the recipient of the Alice Wright Franzke Feminist Award for outstanding work done and will continue to do that promotes the ideals of peace, empowerment, cooperation, equality and respect of all persons.

Over the past three and half years, she has been honored with the PIONEER AWARD recipient by Bexar County Commissioners, awarded the POLITICAL ICON award by the PRIDE Center and has been nominated for countless additional civic service and legal distinction awards. As an assistant professor at St. Mary's University Law School, she co-taught the Child Welfare Law Seminar with tenured professor Ana Novoa, and taught the Child Abuse & Domestic Violence Class at UTSA Downtown campus as a guest lecturer for six semesters and was honored for her teaching with the Richard S. Howe Award for her service to undergraduate students. Additionally, she was a featured writer for LA PRENSA TEXAS and is the author of their MANGUERA MEMORIES column; and is a highly sought after and frequent speaker on local radio shows, podcasts and panels across the state, nationally and internationally.

Judge Speedlin Gonzalez devoted her career as an attorney to obtaining fairness and justice for the disenfranchised and the voiceless., and as a judge she continues to be committed to ensuring that women have a seat at the policy making table of their respective communities of origin. She has received the Adele Advocate for the Poor Award, has been inducted into the Order of Barristers and INNS of Court, and is a recipient of the Presidential National Leadership Award. She is a past Commissioner on the Hispanic National Bar Association's Commission on the Status of Latinas in the Legal Profession, past Chairperson of the Hispanic Issues Section of the State Bar of Texas and Past President of both the MABA San Antonio Chapter and MABA Texas, and served on multiple non-profit and educational boards. She has been recognized for her work and leadership by the Texas Association of Specialty Courts with the Judge John C. Cruzot Award for Judicial Vision Leadership for her Courage, Vision and Conviction in the Justice System, joining such distinguished jurists as retired Judges Al Alonso and Peter Sakai for their service on the bench.

Erika Prosper Nirenberg

First Lady of San Antonio & Sr. Director of Customer Insights, H-E-B



Erika joined H-E-B in 2008, and in her role, leads a team charged with helping guide the development of H-E-B's strategic vision and operational efforts by providing customer insights to change the business, gain share growth and establish a definitive preference for the company.

Much of Erika's passion revolves around efforts to help improve quality of life among underserved populations. Outside of work, she co-founded and was the 2016 Chair of the Latina Leadership Institute and has led the creation of multiple education, youth entrepreneurship programming, and women's economic development white papers with Rai\$ing Texas, the SABER Institute and VentureLab. In 2019, Erika was named the San Antonio Business Journal's Woman of the Year and a Governor's Yellow Rose of Texas honoree. Since

2022, she has been a yearly regional Panelist for the prestigious White House Fellows Program and participated in the Department of Defense's JCOC Class 93. Within H-E-B, she has also received Executive Corporate Leadership awards in Community Service and Diversity & Inclusion in 2015, 2016, and 2019.

Erika grew up as a migrant in the Rio Grande Valley, earned a master's in Communication from the UPENN Annenberg School, and two bachelors from UT Austin. In 2020, she earned an Executive degree in Behavioral Economics from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. Her specialty is in Latino behavioral change cues. Having been the 2018 Chairwoman of the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Erika has served on several community boards and is currently active on the boards of the Girls Scouts of Southwest Texas, Methodist Healthcare Ministries, and the Las Casas Foundation. Additionally, she volunteers on several advisory boards aimed at empowering Hispanic women, non-profits, and voting.

Dr. Patsy Torres

Tejano Music Legend



The gifted and versatile **Patsy Torres** is one of the most important and influential Tejano entertainers of our time. She has performed for live audiences of more than 100,000 people, appeared on national television for millions of viewers, and traveled all over the world winning countless awards for her musical talents and community works. She has graced the covers of national and international publications. **Billboard Magazine** proclaimed Patsy Torres as one of the “Top Female Tejano Stars” while **Vista Magazine** selected her to represent “What’s Hot in Texas”. **Latin Style Magazine** described Patsy as “El Sonido del Futuro”, the sound of the future.

While still in high school, Patsy found music as a creative way to finance her college education. While performing in a local band she was “discovered” and given a recording contract. While still in college, her first Tejano album yielded a #1 hit that later garnered her the **Texas Talent Music Association’s “Female Entertainer of the Year”**. Patsy achieved a lot of “**firsts**”. She became the first Tejano artist to film a music video. When she performed one of her hit songs, “Abrazame”, on the **CBS** television special “**Sea World’s Lone Star Celebration**”, she made history as the first artist to expose Tejano music on national television. She repeated the honor when she performed Abrazame again on “**International Star Search**” televised in Los Angeles. She again made history when she was the first to perform a bilingual song on **TNN’s “Nashville Now Show”**.

The national recognition she received caught the attention of overseas promoters, which led to tours in **Hawaii, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Okinawa, Guam, Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Mexico, and China**. Patsy and her band dazzled the audiences everywhere they went. Patsy immersed herself in the culture of each country they visited, sightseeing as often as possible. The university allowed Patsy to take her studies with her as she blazed trails as the first female to ever perform Tejano music overseas.

This *international* attention made her a champion in her hometown of San Antonio. Her time and talents were in big demand as a speaker and role model for schools, charitable and civic organizations. The city honored her with **a river barge christened with her name** on the famous San Antonio Riverwalk.