

Mujeres Marcharan 2.2022

Digital Drawing

by Anel I. Flores

2022

### Artist Statement

In my second edition of one of my most important works of my life, *Mujeres Marcharan 2.2022*, I hope to offer a place for us to connect our hearts to the energia of our vibrant and powerful youth, our spirit guides, and the fire of our community curanderas and healers. It is such a brilliant honor to create this work and connect with you through their memory and impact. Each time I pick up my pencil to doodle their smile, sketch out their energy in their posture, or add a small detail in the clothing they wore, I stare into their sketched eyes and can still feel them walking and working with me; and I hope this awakens in you too. Their presence in this work is to remind us that even when we sometimes feel like we walk alone, we are always joined by our spirit guides. And, although they are each missed, it is important to acknowledge each of them are being held up by the love and memory of thousands more they made an impact on during their years in this physical world, and still do. My goal with this work is to document the legacy of such brilliant people, and also provide a place for them to join together in our continuous prayer for justice in the world.

As each of these people have impacted you in ways you might not even know; and it is no mystery they each made a pivotal impact on my life as an artist, writer, activist, healer, queer mother and lover. When drawing each spirit, I looked through hard copy photos, taken in the early 90's, my digital archives, shot from my flip-phone and newer iphones, and also through photos taken and published in news stories. I traveled on an endless journey of the many times they lifted me from a fall or joined with me in a triumph. Their postures as well as their placements are also intentional. For example, I stood Maria Ibarra, a dear friend I met in college and later the director of my play *Empanada*, with Nikki Valdez, the founder of Dignity San Antonio and super activist for all LGBTQIA - because it was in college that the two of them brushed paths when UIW blacklisted me for creating Arco Iris, an LGBTQIA organization at our Catholic University. Nikki and her wife, Debbie Myers came to the campus and held a vigil that Maria attended, sparking our friendship for years to come. I didn't know then, they would be two of the most instrumental people in my life, connected in spirituality, my queer heart and my creative career. In 2016, when they granted marriage equality to same gender couples, Nikki and Deb were the second couple to be married. When Erika and I finally married, Maria Ibarra was there with us. These are people that have proven the activism of love and friendship brings about lasting and impactful change. Although the paths Maria and Nikki crossed were brief, the connection they both have to spirituality seemed very fitting; and in true Maria essence, she holds her elder close and marches on with her loving and strong smile. Adelante, Anel

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In Mujeres Marcharan 2. 2022, I center the youth of Empower House (formerly Martinez Street Women's Center), from a photo I took in 2015, at San Antonio's International Women's Day March. They bring las grandes spirit guides of South Texas along with all of us on our march towards peace, social justice, equity and love. Connecting the spirit guides with the youth, on the left, center and right, I placed three young curanderas, doing the work together to heal and open up the community through unearthing traditional practices of spiritual and earth medicina.

Spirit guides (and Curanderas) from left to right: Maria A. Ibarra, Nikki Valdez, (Susana Ramirez) Angela De Hoyos, Artemesia Bowden, Sylvia Rodriguez, Kenne McFadden, Sr. Dorothy Etteling, (Reb Mari), Choco Meza, (Erika A. Casasola) Gloria Anzaldua, Gertrude Baker, Erica Andrews, Martha Prentiss, Lauryn Ferris and Isabel Sanchez.

The youth from Empower House lead us and march with us and carry the message of our work. The youth are our teachers, our energy and our hope. I believe the work of Empower House is centered around exactly what is happening in this image. The children lead, the hermana/e/xs guide and the spirit marches with us.

There are more people I'd like to add to this image, hundreds more I am sure each viewer will think of, but in all reality, they don't fit on one page. Because of that, Mujeres Marcharan is a living portrait, I will continue working on as our familia passes into the spirit world as a space of honor, and memory. I will add the spirit guides of our women, queer and gender non-binary people to the work with the goal for the viewer to be charged to think about who their spirit guide is, who they want in this work, and who they want to walk with on the path to peace, social-justice, equity and love. I also hope you walk with us.