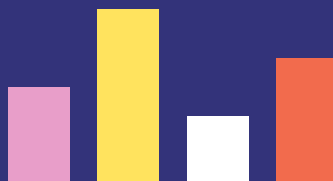
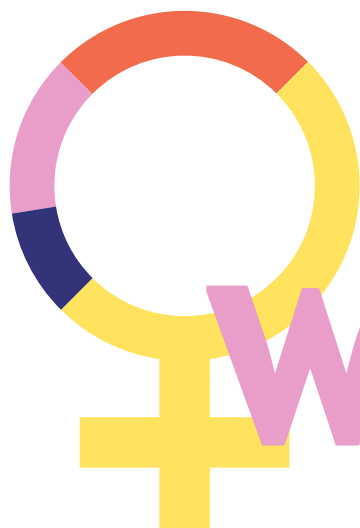


STATUS OF  
**WOMEN**  
IN SAN ANTONIO

Reflections on the Pursuit of Gender Equality

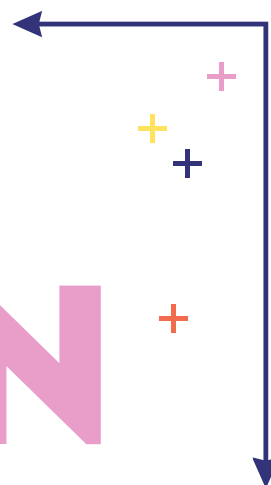




STATUS OF

# WOMEN

IN SAN ANTONIO



**Reflections on the Pursuit of Gender Equality**



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ARTS & CULTURE

[SANANTONIO.GOV/ARTS](http://SANANTONIO.GOV/ARTS)



**VIOLENCE  
PREVENTION**



# CONTENTS



**3**

**FOREWORD**

**KRYSTAL JONES**

**DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF ARTS & CULTURE**

**4**

**WHEN WE GET HOME**

**BONNIE ILZA CISNEROS**

**18**

**FEATURED ARTISTS**

**36**

**ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES**

**41**

**ABOUT CULTURE COMMONS**

# WHEN WE GET HOME

by

**Bonnie Ilza Cisneros**

*domestic (adjective)*

1. *of or relating to the home, the household, or human habitations.*
2. *devoted to home duties or household pleasures.*
3. *no longer wild; tame.*
4. *of or relating to one's own or a particular country as apart from other countries.*
5. *Indigenous.*

— Merriam-Webster.com

I.

The United Nations deemed gender equality as one of the key components to healthy communities and a better world. To better understand the challenges faced by local women, the City of San Antonio commissioned Dr. Rogelio Sáenz and Lily Casura of the University of Texas at San Antonio to conduct research and formulate statistics about the status of women in the city.

The 74-page report<sup>1</sup> is comprised of their findings within 13 dimensions, from health and education to economics and civic engagement. They categorize women in four overarching racial categories (Latina, Black, White, Asian), divide them into age groups, and then compare their statistics to women in Travis, Dallas, and Harris counties to “provide a touchstone for community leaders as they seek to establish programs and policies to better the lives of women and ultimately to eliminate gender disparities.”

If you grew up in San Antonio, like me, and if you were raised amongst women, chances are you don't need 74 pages to know that a report on the status of women in this city, despite decades of advancements in equal rights, contains this sad fact: “unfortunately, the results point to few positive spots and many areas of concern.”

I pored over the various categories, charts, and graphs of the report, but I'm not just a disseminator of data, and these are not just numbers. I am one of 1.5 million people in the seventh largest city in the United States; I proudly identify with 64.5% of San Antonio's Hispanic<sup>2</sup> population. I am a woman in San Antonio who is

raising two school age girls, so to say that the report conjures strong emotions in me is an understatement.

II.

Art can show us what statistics cannot, so it makes sense that in 2019, the Department of Arts & Culture and the Metropolitan Health Department's Violence Prevention Program collaborated to “highlight the report findings and celebrate women artists.”

The 15 artists in the exhibition represent different facets of this jewel we call San Antonio: some are educators, others work at art institutions and nonprofit organizations, a few are gig workers, and one is a registered nurse. Some of the women are mothers, a lot of them are mentors; a few are descended from multiple generations of San Antonio *familias*, some transplanted to San Antonio as adults.

They all create art to express their emotions, visions, and ideas; they all alter the world with their work. When I was commissioned to write this essay, I read the report back-to-back with two intense visits to the gallery, and all I could think of is how a woman's creativity is an energy that we are very privileged to explore.

The report states that “while women have experienced important gains in educational attainment, there continues to be a wide gender gap in earnings.” Economic hardship, many times an intergenerational inheritance, diminishes a woman's access to high quality educational opportunities, which often leads to

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<sup>1</sup> *The Status of Women in San Antonio* report is accessible online at [www.sanantonio.gov/Portals/0/Files/health/News/Reports/StatusOfWomen/StatusOfWomen-Full.pdf](http://www.sanantonio.gov/Portals/0/Files/health/News/Reports/StatusOfWomen/StatusOfWomen-Full.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> I will use *Hispanic* interchangeably with *Latina* for continuity's sake in place of terms like *Chicana*, *Tejana*, *Native*, *Mexican-American*, *Latinx*, and a myriad of other identities that describe people from regions in the Americas where Indigenous lands were colonized by the kingdom of Spain.



low paying yet physically stressful employment, which leads to poor housing in neglected neighborhoods, which leads to inability to pay for basic necessities, which can lead to brushes with crime and violence, which can result in incarceration and fractured families, which is...a really hard cycle to dismantle.

For many of us, this fact from the report does not necessitate a spoiler alert: "Latina and African American women fare much worse than White and Asian women across the 13 dimensions."

III.

In early May 2022, I had the opportunity to sit alone in the quiet and cold Culture Commons Gallery for two weekday mornings in a row. I worked at a long metal

table where a city meeting had been and where another would soon be, and I took jaunts about the gallery, spending my sweet time with the exhibition, absorbing each piece visually and viscerally, reading over each artist statement, thinking my thoughts, and feeling my feelings, which even now feels like a very decadent way to spend my day.

Right away, slightly shivering in the frigid air-conditioning, I knew that there was a through line that connects the artwork besides the obvious elements of womanhood, San Antonio, and the commissioned report.

The through line is HOME. In one way or another, each artist focuses on an aspect of the domestic. The home tends to be the epicenter of a woman's world, even more so considering the last two years