



Las  
nalgas de

**JLO**

JLO'S  
Booty

The Best + Most Notorious  
Calumnias + Other Writings by  
The FIRST CHICANA columnist  
in TEXAS 1995-2005

Barbara Renaud González

First Edition

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1. Chicana Literature
2. Mexican American Journalism
3. Chicana Feminism
4. Chicana/o Studies
5. Literary Critique
6. Texas History
7. Politics

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## WHY THIS BOOK MATTERS

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Bárbara Renaud González's style of journalism and prose provides a model for writing about issues necessary to regenerate social, political and intellectual life in this century. Her disciplined research is combined with a huge, curious heart about humanity and the resources from deep within the Chicana/o experience. Her informed voice combines colloquial expression and a political minority point of view, with a contemporary critical eye. These qualities lend themselves to speak of the hard issues we must relate to if we are to come any further from being a silent (silenced) majority, to becoming an active voice of political agency.

Issues concerning minorities, migration politics, the environment, the re-imagination of democratic power and policy, the valorization of languages and cultures are not only relevant for Chicanas/os, but crave attention as new *mestizo* cultures emerge and evolve throughout Europe, the Americas and other continents.

The contents of these writings make room for the complexity of these issues and still there is generous warmth which counters cynicism. This work can offer young people of today constructive insights into finding their own formulations of discourse for how to embrace the understanding of a world and cultures in constant transition. Chicana/o experience and perspectives are important to the global context, as well as the global context is important to how we understand the Chicana/o experience. The recent criticisms in our own country of unfair electoral practice, of immigration and gun control laws, of race and hate crimes, of poor health care and an unending list of threats to civil

rights, calls for journalism and writing of the caliber of this *calumnista*.

I hope this book is seen as a signal that there is a need to cultivate more journals, magazines and books which contain information and stories of how and what shapes our lives, can lead us to understand how we can actively participate in shaping the events and attitudes needed to build a safe and sustainable future together with others.

*Susan Morales Guerra*

*Oslo, Norway*

*Originally from San Antonio, Texas*

## DISCLAIMER— PA' QUE NO CHI...

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I was a columnist for the *San Antonio Express-News* for about five years, and I believe I was the first Chicana columnist writing regularly—in my case, monthly for the Op-Ed section—for this paper. I was a “freelance” writer, an independent. I wrote what I wanted and tried to share the conversations my community was having around the kitchen table—in our authentic voice. People used to say I wasn’t a *columnista*, Spanish for columnist, I was a *calumnista*, a bilingual word play combining calumny and *columnista*, meaning to my community that I was telling truths that were sometimes so hurtful and scandalous, they seemed like lies.

I am sorry if I hurt anyone with these columns. Just don’t believe in wasting ink.

Yes, I have the rights to my *calumnias*. I wrote one column a month for about five years—these are some of my very best. I got paid big bucks, about \$150/each, and some of them took two weeks to research and write. And, yes, I really believe in the First Amendment, too. What’s the use of “free speech” if you don’t use it?

I’ve also included essays published elsewhere during this decade or so, plus, unpublished work and poetry as well.

If you’re wondering, I’m a Tejana, born here, papers and everything. And yes, it’s very possible to speak, read and write English and Spanish equally well. And I’m very fluent in Tex-Mex too, the new language of this century. Despite my state’s fear of languages. And especially, me. And yes, I’ve paid a very high price for being me.

Regarding the published columns and essays—they are

published here as they first appeared with some minor edits for syntax and clarity. I did include a couple of columns published before 1995 and after 2005, so your sharp eyes can see my evolving voice. Hopefully, I'm a better writer now.

I have changed the titles of some of the published columns to my original titles that were revised by the *San Antonio Express-News* and a few other publications. Mine are so much better. At the end of this book, I've also included the original published titles in quotation marks.

I hope you will see with this book that our voice matters. I'm only saying what so many are thinking. There is power in our voice, and I am not afraid anymore. #TuVozMatters.

While I think I was the "first" Chicana columnist, at least that called herself a Chicana, I trust I will not be the last. There are better writers out there that you need to read.

And a special message to researchers, librarians, and The Goddess of Tejas History: Because many of these pieces were written during the "Time of Floppy Disks," and I had an agent who protected them from the internet, and I did not keep them organized, it was a nightmare trying to find them again. I spent many, too many, hours and dimes at the microfiche inside the "Enchilada Library" in San Antonio. A few of the published pieces may not correlate exactly with the dates I've listed, and one or two may not be in the right published house. I tried. All you freelancers and independents, pay attention to my mistakes. When there is a question, I have placed an \* asterisk so you will know to check if needed. It seems that I typed and listed the date that I wrote many of these pieces, but didn't record when precisely they were published, and where—brilliant.

*¡Adelante, anyway! ¡Y dale shine!*

*Barbara Renaud González*

# DEDICATION TO THE INNOCENT AND THE ONE WHO IS GUILTY

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I dedicate this book to my Op-Ed Editor, Linda Vaughan, who trusted, shaped, challenged, and framed my voice when I was writing monthly columns for the *San Antonio Express-News*. To the late Carlos Guerra, fellow *peleonero* and regular columnist, who helped me understand the *alma* in the Alamo. RIP, Carlos. And happy fishing.

And to Mrs. Galloway. For teaching me to read. First grade, Olton, Texas. You understood that I peed in my *chones* 'cause I didn't know how to speak English.

And the guilty innocent: I especially thank our former Governor and President, George W. Bush, who gave me the righteous rage that got me to Santiago de Chile, and who proved he has no clue what it is to be born in Tejas.



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*Las Nalgas de JLo*  
*JLo's Booty*

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*I am a writer...I belong to the people who have  
given me language. Rubén Darío once wrote:  
“Con los pobres del mundo quiero echar mi suerte.”  
I am a son of that despised piece of ground we call the border.  
My fate lies with the people who gave me breath.*  
—Benjamin Alire Sáenz, from *Elegies in Blue*, 2002

*You know what the Alamo is?  
A monument to a war that we won but really lost.*  
—Sandra Cisneros



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**I.**  
**THEY SAY**  
**I'M NO LADY**

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## HAVE YOU SEEN PEACH?

I'm from Peach, the brown  
man in the wheelchair says.  
Durazno in Spanish. Succulent,  
ice cream made at home, peach  
cobbler and southern brandy—  
the best medicine, roasted calabasa,  
pumpkin from the wood-burning stove  
and brown sugar. He grew up  
with café con leche in the mornings, gone  
now. All this happened right here, under  
the Hemisfair Tower, where he was born  
on Peach Street, la calle Peach, aquí  
en San Anto.

I was born right here, but everything  
is gone, so how did it happen?  
Is the Tower my house now?

Have you seen Peach?

# AY, HENRY

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San Antonio Express-News • Oct 23, 1994

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Ok, I confess. I was in love with Henry Cisneros once. But I know better now. He is not the man for me. And I am too good for him.

Let me explain.

Like any intelligent Latina, I have made it my business to keep abreast of the latest *chisme* in Henry's complicated life. This is the stuff of novels, but it would make a better *telenovela*. The Greeks have nothing on the Mexicans; that's why my friends say we are God's own fiction—we write the truth and it only seems like magic to everyone else.

It seems like the Hollywoodesque Henry, our mythical champion, will be destroyed by love. I don't know whether to get down on my knees and pray for forgiveness, or curse the furies that brought us this gift of fire to begin with.

Because this is what we all fear. Love. But that's what happened, isn't it?

I don't think he planned to get involved with a married woman—worse, a bleached *gringa*—enough to create a scandal that would cool his political light and scorch his marriage.

If he wanted an affair, I personally know a legion of dedicated *la causa* lawyers, a dozen journalists, some *doctoras chulisimas* and even a *simpática* judge, who believe him to be the best thing since Julio Iglesias met Rubén Blades, but he didn't want them. No. He wanted Linda Medlar, from Lubbock, Texas.

A *machista* wit I know says that Henry's problem is that he doesn't understand the rules. A marriage is a marriage, he says—an affair is an affair... When it's over, the *movida*

has to go. You have to have standards, he says.

But Henry didn't choose, did he? Fate chose Henry. And when presented with the choice of a Cabinet appointment, a fresh start at your political career—or a dubious, if glamorous, speechifying future with your lover, what would you do? There are no easy choices between work and love. We wish to have them both. Henry obviously can't.

I, for one, believe that Henry's sense of financial obligation is honorable, but tragic. He is obviously a *macho* man in the truest sense—a man who keeps his word, who takes care of the people he loves.

While I have largely admired his political success, I am dismayed by his choice in women. In a time of *la* Madonna and our motorcyclist governor, Ann Richards, we have seen what an independent woman can be. Yet Henry is surrounded by women whose lives are still defined by him. Mary Alice, his wife, saw her fame ascend alongside his in San Antonio; his lover, Linda Medlar, suffered from his political descent. The wife has forgiven him. His lover has not. But it is not about them.

It is always about Henry.

And this is the way the story goes. If the man is powerful, the woman must be beautiful, and blonde is best. If the woman is successful, the man must be twice as much. We have our standards. After a while, the heart has nothing to do with it. We value ourselves by the love we keep—through marriage papers, money, mayhem, or even murder.

Henry is, and always will be, a legend to most of us. But his story proves that all our worship is never enough. We have made heroes of men who do not trust the worth of their lives without the subservience of women. It is not love that is to blame, but what we have made of it.

Love hurts. And the game of politics is not the game of

love, or is it? Henry has discovered that the women he loves, like any political chip he holds dear—have a price. In his case, it has now come due. Just like politics.

I would have loved him for free.