

A CELEBRATION OF HEROES AND ROLE MODELS FOR

LESBIAN AND GAY AMERICANS. THE MEN AND WOMEN

IN THIS BOOK HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR

COMMUNITIES AND TO SOCIETY AS A WHOLE. EACH OF
UNCOMMON

THEM SHARES A COMMON THREAD OF EXTRAORDINARY

COURAGE. THEIR STORIES ARE TRANSFORMING PUBLIC

PERCEPTIONS OF THE GAY AND LESBIAN COMMUNITY.
HEROES



Linda Morales

ACTIVIST

In 1986, I sat down with my mother and discussed my participation in a gay and lesbian class action suit against the State of Texas. She asked me why I wanted to tell the whole world about my lifestyle. I responded, 'Not the whole world, just Texas.'

Linda Morales thought that she would be denying her mother's moral teachings if she didn't participate in the lawsuit challenging the Texas homosexual sodomy law. Even so, her mother was uncomfortable with the public nature of her stand. But eventually, her mother told her, "I've always known you to have deep convictions and that it's important for you to stand up for them." Morales then joined four others in the suit, and agreed to be the named plaintiff in *Morales, et. al vs. the State of Texas*. "It was important for people to know that an Hispanic female was involved in our lawsuit," says Morales. "It didn't have to be Linda Morales, I just wanted someone who was a woman and an Hispanic."

Morales is not only a lesbian activist, she is also involved in Mexican-American and women's issues. "The lesbian and gay community is not immune to the ills of the larger society," she says. "And it was because of the racism and sexism in the gay and lesbian community that I put my name on the lawsuit." It was an important statement. Her case was eventually thrown out, but only because the court ruled that another case, *England vs. the City of Dallas*, had already established the legal basis for overturning the Texas sodomy law.

No matter. For Morales, the case was a victory—another step in a long road of using adversity to overcome discrimination. Even as a child, when her mother told her that girls shouldn't play the guitar, Morales taught herself. In Uvalde, her small southwest Texas hometown, where Mexican-Americans were expected to speak English, Morales was paddled in front of her fifth grade class for speaking Spanish. Yet in high school, she became the first Hispanic female elected student body president. And three months after she became involved in the Mexican-American Democrats de Houston, Morales was elected president despite the fact that this group is not a gay and lesbian organization.

Of her two brothers and one sister, only Morales' younger brother is heterosexual. "My kid brother has a lot of my father in him," she says. "He is very accepting and supportive. He's proud of me and I'm sure if my father were alive today, he'd be proud of me too."

Linda Morales is a rare, singular, unique person. If only I could bottle her energy.

—Yolanda Navarro Flores

TEXAS HOUSE MEMBER