



Press Release  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
February 13, 2024

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## State Bar's Hispanic Issues Section Commemorates 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Supreme Court's *Hernandez v. Texas* Decision

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS — On January 25, 2024, the State Bar of Texas Hispanic Issues Section held a panel discussion (in person and broadcast via Zoom) at St. Mary's School of Law to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in *Hernandez v. Texas*, 347 U.S. 475 (1954).

Seventy years ago, in January 1954, four attorneys—Gus Garcia, Carlos Cadena, John Herrera, and James De Anda—made history as the first Mexican American attorneys to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court. Their client was Pete Hernandez, a migrant worker accused of murder in Edna, a small town in Jackson County, Texas. This case became a vehicle to expose a long-standing problem: the systematic exclusion of Mexican Americans from jury service in over fifty Texas counties. The Supreme Court's decision in *Hernandez v. Texas*, issued by Chief Justice Earl Warren in May 1954, was the first civil rights decision to recognize Mexican Americans as a distinct class entitled to equal protection under the law.

Chief Justice Dori Contreras (13<sup>th</sup> Texas Court of Appeals), Justice Gina Benavides (13<sup>th</sup> Texas Court of Appeals), and Justice David M. Medina (Retired, Texas Supreme Court) participated in the panel discussion, moderated by HIS Vice Chair and State Bar of Texas Director Chris Pineda. The panelists discussed the experience of Mexican Americans in Texas at the time, the attorneys and parties involved, the Hernandez team's legal strategy, and the impact and legacy of the case. Their slideshow can be found at <https://texasbarsections.com/coursematerials/hispanicissuessection/>.

This panel discussion was held at St. Mary's School of Law before an audience of law students, judges, lawyers, and members of the public. It was also broadcast live to an online audience of nearly 200 people watching from across the state and country. To kick off the event, HIS chair Angelica Hernandez, State Bar of Texas President Cindy Tisdale, and St. Mary's School of Law Dean Patricia Roberts gave introductory remarks and talked about the importance of the *Hernandez* case. Additionally, prior to the panel, St. Mary's hosted a small luncheon with the panelists, HIS officers, and members of the Carlos Cadena family who came to show their support for the event.

"HIS was honored to recognize the legacy of this case and the brilliant Texas lawyers who crafted and argued the legal merits," said HIS Chair Angelica Hernandez. "Our hope is that this story, that originated in Edna, Texas, is never forgotten. And, that future lawyers are inspired to reach the same legal heights for the betterment of our state and nation."

HIS thanks its sponsoring and coordinating partners who helped make this event possible: the American Bar Association Judicial Division, San Antonio Bar Association, Texas Latinx Judges, Linebarger Goggan Blair & Sampson, LLP, and St. Mary's School of Law. HIS also thanks the State Bar leadership for their support, and for attending the event: President Cindy Tisdale, Past President Laura Gibson (2022-2023), Past President Sylvia Borunda Firth (2021-2022), President-Elect Steve Benesh, and Kennon Wooten, Chair of the State Bar of Texas Board of Directors.



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To continue to commemorate the *Hernandez* decision this year, HIS has created a “*Hernandez at 70*” page on its website (<https://texashispanicissuessection.com/hernandez-at-70/>), to serve as a resource for anyone wishing to learn more about the case, through court and other contemporaneous records, compilations, video presentations, and articles. If you know of any sources that should be on this resource page, please email Chris Pineda at [cdpineda37@gmail.com](mailto:cdpineda37@gmail.com).