



HIStoric Newsletter 2023-2024



Congratulations Hispanic Issues Section! As the first affinity section of the State Bar of Texas, we celebrate our 45th anniversary! Approximately 11% of active Texas lawyers are Hispanic; the largest SBOT affinity group¹. May our section continue its upward trajectory! Thank you to our members. And, thank you to our SBOT leadership: President Cindy Tindsdale, President-Elect Steve Benesh and 2023-2024 President-Elect Santos Vargas. The aforementioned leaders assisted with two of our biggest projects: *LAWteria!* and the Commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court case *Hernandez v. Texas* at St. Mary's Law School in San Antonio.

Winding down a memorable 2023-2024 bar year as HIS Chair, which culminates in HIS programming, a SBOT podcast interview with our *Hernandez v. Texas* panelists and a jam-packed reception recognizing our past chairs and notable Hispanic attorneys at the State Bar Annual Meeting in Dallas on June 20th, in this newsletter, I share a retrospective of the HIS board activities during my term. HIS proudly stands on the shoulders of many talented, committed, hardworking predecessors, specifically, the founders of our section. We celebrate them! In addition, each year, we draw on and showcase the talent of many Hispanic lawyers throughout the state. Thank you to the HIS board and HIS officers, (see below), for contributing to the success of our programs. It's been an honor to work with you all!



*Judge Maria Salas Mendoza,
Angelica Hernandez, Chris D. Pineda,
Erica Giese, Veronica Legarretta*

¹ State Bar of Texas Department of Research and Analysis 2022-2023.

September 2023- LAWteria!

In 2020, Past HIS Chair Judge Victor Villarreal (Laredo) and the HIS board of directors began a tradition of raising funds for legal aid initiatives. Thus, our first premiere project of the year was the fourth annual *LAWteria!* On September 14th, we hosted an amazing event that highlighted (on the “tablas”) Hispanic attorneys, judges and leaders that are notable Texas “firsts”. Our partner in this statewide endeavor was the Texas Access to Justice Foundation. My co-chair of *LAWteria!* was the Executive Director of TEAJF- Betty Balli Torres (a Past HIS Chair). HIS raised \$50,545; the funds raised were utilized by TEAJF to support a lawyer’s year-long fellowship to assist the profession and vulnerable low-income Texans Thank you to our partners at the Texas Access to Justice Foundation for co-sponsoring this event! Additional partners were celebrity callers: Justice Dennise Garcia- Texas 5th Court of Appeals, Justice Amparo Guerra Texas 1st Court of Appeals, Judge David S. Morales U.S. District Court, Southern District and Chief Justice Alia Moses U.S. District Court Western District. Our celebrity MC was the incomparable Past (and first Latina) SBOT President Sylvia Borunda Firth- she always does a phenomenal job!! Watch parties were held in El Paso, San Antonio and Houston. Thank you to all who donated their talents (by performing during the intermissions), to those who participated by playing, all who donated prizes, to all our sponsors which included many law firms and many local and affinity bar associations including those from Austin, Cameron County, El Paso, Dallas, Hidalgo County, Houston, and San Antonio.

October 2023

The Texas Access to Justice Foundation Annual Luncheon with the Supreme Court of Texas was held on October 30th in Austin. TEAJF presented an Access to Justice Award to HIS for its commitment to justice initiatives through the successful *LAWteria!* program. The award was a reflection of the hard work of a statewide team. Special thanks to immediate Past HIS Chair Novert Morales for his successful leadership of the 2022 *LAWteria!* Program and for attending the luncheon and accepting the award on behalf of HIS.



Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Nathan Hecht, Novert Morales, Angelica Hernandez, and Texas Supreme Court Justice Brett Busby

January 2024

Our second premiere event was a continuing legal education program held both in person (and by Zoom) at St. Mary's Law School in San Antonio. HIS commemorated the 70th anniversary of the first U.S. Supreme Court case, ***Hernandez v. Texas***, argued by Mexican American lawyers: Texans Gustavo C. Garcia, Carlos C. Cadena, John J. Herrera and James De Anda. The impact of their 1954 historic civil rights case win was analyzed by an outstanding panel discussion by Justice Gina M. Benavides, Chief Justice Dori Contreras, Former Texas Supreme Court Justice David M. Medina and HIS Officer/SBOT Director Christopher D. Pineda. The program was co-sponsored by St. Mary's Law School, the San Antonio Bar Association, the American Bar Association Commission on Hispanic Legal Rights and Responsibilities, Texas Latinx Judges and my law firm Linebarger. We were honored to have both SBOT President Cindy Tinsdale, and, the Dean of St. Mary's Law School, Patricia Roberts, help us welcome over 150 registered Zoom participants and over 100 in-person attendees. In attendance were members of the family of ***Hernandez lawyer*** Carlos Cadena, law students, members of the Bexar County judiciary, HIS past Chairs and SBOT Leaders: President- Elect Steve Benesh, Future President-Elect Santos Vargas, Chair of the Board Kennon Wooten, Past President Laura Gibson and many others. It was a wonderful event! The program was videotaped and is available on our website under the tab "Hernandez at 70." Please feel free to watch our informative program and scroll through all the pictures taken at the event.



SBOT Leadership and St. Mary's Law School Dean



Angelica Hernandez with Panelists Justice David M. Medina, Justice Gina M. Benavides, Chief Justice Dori Contreras and HIS Officer Chris D. Pineda

March 2024

HIS hosted a Spring continuing legal education program with attorney and Former El Paso Bar Association President and former El Paso Mayor Raymond Caballero. In the program “*McCarthyism vs. Jencks*”, attorney Caballero authored a book and discussed the origins of and the legacy of the United States Supreme Court decision in *Jencks v. the United States*. The case that originated in El Paso established that witness statements from hidden witnesses could not be relied upon unless produced to defendants. Clinton Jencks was a decorated war hero that took on the Mexican American fight for equal rights in the New Mexico mining industry. Thanks to the HIS El Paso crew for suggesting the topic, assisting with the presentation and securing the speaker!

May 2024

HIS co-hosted *The Intersection of Immigration and Family Law* with the Family Law Section and the Immigration & Nationality Law Section. A talented roster of speakers discussed legal issues related to international adoption and custody, I-751 waivers, U Visas, special juvenile immigration status and family preparedness. Thank you to our Section partners!

June 2024 - Annual Meeting in Dallas

Celebrating our 45th Anniversary

Past Founders and pioneering HIS Chairs returned to share the legal history of our section, the programming items throughout the years, discuss our Section’s legacy as the first affinity bar, and, its role in shaping the SBOT. As this newsletter goes to print, we have not yet heard the experiences/stories of panelists Judge Manuel Banales (who provided a written copy of his speech to the SBOT Board of Directors at a time when it was not a mandatory bar), Gloria Leal (who created Legislative Day Programs for our Section and served on the SBOT Board of Directors), Former El Paso Senator Jose R. Rodriguez (discuss the “early years” of our Section when it was known as the “Concerns of Spanish Speakers”) and Texas Representative Maria “Lulu” Flores (the Moderator). We’re excited to capture this history! For those unable to join us in Dallas, a video recording is being made and will be available on the HIS website (“HIS at 45”) a few weeks after the Annual Meeting. CLE credit will be available until June 2025.



45th Anniversary

Hispanic Issues Section - State Bar of Texas

Dallas, Texas

June 29, 1979 - June 20, 2024

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|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|---|---|
|  1979-1980 Peter Torres, Jr. |  1980-1981 Manuel Banales |  1981-1982 Manuel Banales |  1982-1983 Jose R. Rodriguez |  1983-1984 Juan P. Aguilera |  1984-1988 Esther Chavez |  1985-1987 Steven Y. Rodriguez |  1987-1988 Bertha Alcala Mejia |  1988-1989 Gloria Leal |
|  1989-1990 Elena Diaz |  1990-1991 Frank Cordoba, Jr. |  1991-1992 Henry G. Flores |  1992-1993 Arthur Robert Hinojosa |  1993-1994 Angelita Mendez-Walshouse |  1994-1995 Shirley A. Ehrlich |  1995-1996 Y. Leticia Sanchez Vigi |  1996-1997 Renato Soriano, Jr. |  1997-1998 Hon. Santiago S. Coronado |
|  1998-1999 Janet L. Montano |  1999-2000 Arturo D. DeLeon |  2000-2001 Patricia Ana Garcia Langarica |  2001-2002 Elizabeth Bolad |  2002-2003 Maria Luisa "Lulu" Flores |  2003-2004 Steven Altman |  2004-2005 Steven R. Wolfson |  2005-2006 Rodolfo "Rudy" Mata |  2006-2007 Benjamin K. Sanchez |
|  2007-2008 Rosa M. Gonzalez |  2008-2009 Michele Wong |  2009-2010 Brian Anthony Hatcher |  2010-2011 Hon. John Yonajart |  2011-2012 Jairo Anzures |  2012-2013 Daniela M. Galvan |  2013-2014 Hon. Patricia O. Alvarez |  2014-2015 Benny Aguirre, Jr. |  2015-2016 Manuel Escobar |
|  2016-2017 Arturo Avelar |  2017-2018 Betty Bull Torres |  2018-2019 Hon. Gina Benavides |  2019-2020 Valerie Cortis |  2020-2021 Hon. Victor Whitsett |  2021-2022 James Vasquez |  2022-2023 Navarr Morales |  2023-2024 Angelita Hernandez | |

Co-Sponsored by:

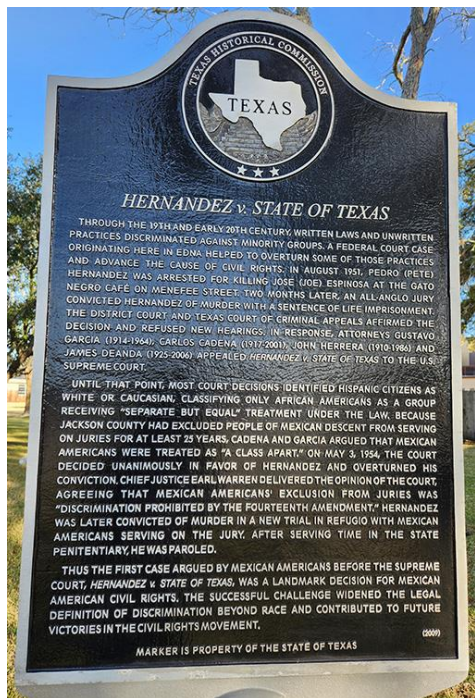







Recognizing those who helped found and shape this organization, we invited all past Chairs to Dallas! And, the Section curated photographs of each Chair for a slideshow. We also created a poster board to be delivered to the SBOT Archives Department. HIS strives to preserve our institutional history for future generations of lawyers. At an evening reception, Past Chairs will be honored with Past Chair pins.

Hernandez v. Texas 70th Anniversary



After a very successful January program, the Section recognized that we had barely scratched the service on the historic ***Hernandez v. Texas*** U.S. Supreme Court Case. The Section wanted to commemorate the lawyers who secured the victory that guaranteed new legal parameters for selecting juries; juries were to reflect the population. Now having completed additional research, Justice Gina M. Benavides, Chief Justice Dori Contreras, Former Texas Supreme Court Justice David M. Medina and the “quarterback” of this project, HIS Officer, Chris D. Pineda will share insights as to the “legal titans” - Gustavo G. Garcia, Carlos C. Cadena, James De Anda and John J. Herrera. As this program will be recorded, the discussion will be uploaded to the tab “Hernandez at 70” on our website- CLE credit is available until June 2025. Please take an opportunity to learn additional insights about the case, the legal environment in 1954 and the lawyers.

Shortly after completing their presentation, the *Hernandez* panel is being interviewed for a SBOT podcast. Be sure to keep an eye out for it! And, our HIS *Hernandez* panel is “taking the show on the road”; they will present at a bar conference in July. They anticipate “commemorating” all year; they have received inquiries from other associations and law schools!! And, finally, the *Hernandez* panel are authoring an article on this topic for the September issue of the Texas Bar Journal. Keep an eye out for the journal!

To top off our celebration of the milestone that advanced civil rights and shaped the legal history of not only Texas but the nation, the HIS family is presenting Posthumous Awards to the Legal Titans of ***Hernandez v. Texas*** at our evening reception.

The Section wants to extend our appreciation to the following co-sponsors for supporting our annual meeting events: the Dallas Hispanic Bar Association, Linebarger, the Hispanic Bar Association of Houston, the Mexican American Bar Association of Dallas, the Mexican American Bar Association of Houston, and the Mexican American Bar Association of Texas.

June 2024 Annual Meeting Award Recipients

HIS congratulates this year's notable award recipients for their talent, achievements and contributions to the legal profession and community. A round of applause for:

- » *Reynaldo G. Garza Lifetime Achievement Award- Carlos Eduardo Cardenas (El Paso)*
- » *Professor Michael A. Olivas Educational Excellence Award- Honorable Lupe S. Salinas (Houston)*
- » *James W. Wray, Jr. Founder's Award- Ruben R. Perez (Houston)*
- » *Legislator of the Year Award- Rep. Trey Martinez Fisher (San Antonio)*
- » *Judge of the Year Award- Judge Maya Guerra Gamble (Austin)*
- » *Pete Torres, Jr. Community Service Award- Kevin M. Chavez (Houston)*
- » *Hispanic/Mexican American Bar Association of the Year Award- Mexican-American Bar Association of San Antonio*
- » *Chair's Award- Christopher D. Pineda (Brownsville)*
- » *Outgoing Chair Award- Angelica M. Hernandez (Houston)*

In Conclusion



Santos Vargas, Angelica Hernandez, and Steve Benesh

We are proud of our profession, our Section and of our Texas bar! May we all continue to elevate all three. It's been a celebratory year. We contribute to the greatness of the Texas bar by recognizing our collective history. A big congratulations to Santos Vargas (San Antonio) and Alyson A. Martinez (Laredo) on their election as 2024-2025 President-Elects of the State Bar of Texas and Texas Young Lawyers Association! And, we look forward to Steve Benesh's upcoming term- thank you for promoting our activities!

Thank you again to the HIS Officers, Board, to the wonderful lawyers of this Section, to the founders, and to the staff of the State Bar of Texas for the opportunity to serve as HIS Chair. It has been an honor and very rewarding working with all of you! A huge thank you to my firm family, Linebarger, for all their assistance this past year including flyers, *LAWteria!* production services, slideshows, sponsorships, graphics and posters (did I leave anything out?) Special thanks to my Linebarger colleagues: Bridget Lopez (Managing Partner, Dallas), Carmen Perez (Former Managing Partner, El Paso), LeWayne Ballard (IT, San Antonio), Savita Patram (IT, San Antonio) and Michele Dennison (Graphics Manager, Austin). I could not have served without all of your help and support; you all elevated the activities of this Section. I appreciate your

time and service to the Section and bar. Finally, a huge abrazo and thanks to one of my mentors, Justice Gina M. Benavides; she epitomizes “service” by her leadership and example, and, she put me on the path of state bar service and involvement.



*Justice Gina M. Benavides and
Angelica Hernandez*

ADELANTE TODOS and best wishes to all,

Angelica M. Hernandez, Chair

2023-2024