

## **An interview with Lupita Guerrero about the Frank De La Cruz Collection**

### **Why did you decide to initiate this collection?**

I remember back when Frank passed in late 2015, library staff began reminiscing about all the ways he served and advocated for the Tucson community. Throughout the thirty-five years he worked as a librarian, Frank was a quiet warrior. During his time at El Rio Library, he started a small community archive that included documentation on the community activism that helped make the neighborhood center and library a reality.

By the time Frank was no longer with us, the archive was only a memory. This was very disappointing to all the residents and El Rio Library staff. Frank's passing, coupled with the community's ongoing struggle against TUSD's ban on ethnic studies, is what motivated me to propose a special collection that would focus on the Mexican American history and culture of the Borderlands.

### **Why is this collection vital for our community?**

A collection like this is meaningful because it provides public access to knowledge not easily available, in part due to the systemic lack of representation in history books and formal educational settings. As the curator for the collection, I wanted to offer our community historical accounts and perspectives on the US-Mexico Borderlands. Together with the Nuestras Raíces Team, we gathered what we could into one collection and provided the community with easy and free access. Pima County Public Library reinforced its commitment to improve information services to all county residents.

### **Which book in the collection is your favorite?**

There is absolutely no way I could name just one favorite! The collection contains such a variety of fascinating topics—from cookbooks to poetry, art, folk medicine, music, biographies, history and more. The collection has copies of both *La Calle: Spatial Conflicts and Urban Renewal in a Southwest City* and *In the Shadows of the Freeway: Growing Up Brown & Queer* by Lydia R. Otero, a cherished local author. Tucson residents would definitely find these two books relevant to our local history.

### **What do you love most about the collection?**

I love that the collection has the potential to connect the Chicanx community to its cultural heritage while offering recognition for the contributions made by our collective ancestors. This collective knowledge was missing from my own educational experiences. I was fortunate in that I received some of that history from my elders via family stories. People cannot be expected to thrive without their stories being reflected in the society around them.

**Why did you become a librarian?**

I started working in libraries when I was still in high school—my love for being surrounded by books is to blame. My maternal grandfather was responsible for handing down his love of reading to me. He was pulled out of school at an early age to help supplement his family's income. As a result, he always looked for ways to educate himself. We had books everywhere. Most were thrifted and covered a bunch of random topics, feeding his thirst for knowledge.