



# YOU CAN DO IT MIJA!



## SPRING FORWARD Con Amor



### Welcome back Mija Community & Happy International Women's Month!

In this month's edition we celebrate and honor women's voices of resilience and activism within our own community and beyond. But first, a recap of what we've been up to this month.

On February 14, the Mija program hosted our Winter Party, celebrating radical self-love and love of community. It was a restorative and soulful afternoon: Mija Mentor Gina performed original songs, the UNM-Taos bodywork program offered chair massage, and participants made heartfelt and whimsical Valentines for their beloveds, children, aunties, themselves, and even their pets! We enjoyed the ambiance and art at Omnium Gallery, which featured an existentialism exhibit by Las Damas, New Mexico's premier female artist collective.

At the event, we met and exceeded our fundraising goal for Sin Fronteras, an organization that supports immigrant families in Taos through direct aid. We appreciate all who came out and celebrated with us, from the bodywork students to the additional musical guests, and to all our neighbors who work to uplift the spirit of love in our community.



We also kicked off our supporting role in "Say Yes to the Dress," a prom dress drive for local teens led by Cristina Portillo, owner of Cafe Sagrado. To contribute, bring gently used formal dresses, shoes, and/or accessories to Cafe Sagrado during the cafe's open hours. All donations will be distributed to teens at a special event in late March, to help make prom accessible and magical for more teens in Taos, Questa, and Peñasco.

**JOIN US on March 30th for a special Mija Monday** celebrating International Women's Day and month. We're hosting an Agua Fresca mocktail hour beginning at 3:30pm. Come and enjoy a refreshing drink and a moment of reflection about our own stories and the women who inspire us! Read on for more details.

### Upcoming Events

★ CAFÉ SAGRADO:  
PROM DRESS DRIVE

★ MIJA MONDAY  
March 30<sup>TH</sup>





# MIJA MONDAYS

## Monthly Gathering

Mija Mondays is a monthly gathering for women at UNM Taos designed to foster community, leadership, and empowerment. Our gatherings provide a safe and supportive space to share experiences, build meaningful connections, and receive mutual support.

Each Mija Monday gathering will combine reflection, conversation, and hands-on activities designed to help participants cultivate the skills and confidence to become leaders within their own lives and make positive impacts in their communities. Participants will have the opportunity to explore personal growth, strengthen self-leadership, and engage in practices that nurture emotional, mental, and social wellbeing. Whether it's through interactive workshops, collaborative projects, or guided discussions, each session is designed to leave you feeling inspired, equipped, and empowered to step fully into your potential.

Bring your curiosity and creativity, and leave with renewed motivation, tools, and lasting connections with women who are committed to uplifting one another. All are welcome – come as you are and leave feeling inspired!



Thank you to everyone who joined us last month for our first Mija Monday! We enjoyed a grounding breathwork session led by Melissa Rorman followed by reflections, chats, & conchas y chocolaté!

### JOIN US on 3/30 for **Mija Monday: Zumba w/ Neida!**

In celebration of women's month, we're kicking off this month's gathering with an Agua Fresca mocktail hour beginning at 3:30pm. Come and enjoy a refreshing drink and a moment of reflection about our own stories and the women who inspire us. Stop by the mocktail hour, join us for zumba, or enjoy the whole event!

*Meet Ale:* UNM-Taos Director of Strategic Initiatives & Research...aka our very own cheerleader! Ale has spent the last two years overseeing the Mija program with so much love and support that we truly could not do it without her dedication and hard work.

When it comes to education Ale knows the meaning of hard work and dedication. Born and raised in Juarez and committed to her education, Ale attended college at the University of Texas El Paso, crossing the border every day from home to school. Although speaking no English at the time and attending as an international student, Ale worked diligently at her education as well as supporting herself financially through various on-campus jobs centered around community. Ale went on to complete her BBA degree and later her master's in economics from University of Alaska Fairbanks, and doctorate in Education from Arizona State University. She enjoys working with data and conducting research.

Ale's commitment to building bridges within institutions of higher education and their communities, making it more accessible to all, is really the backbone of our program and we are so grateful to have her. When Ale isn't busy with all her cheerleading you can find her hiking, reading, or knitting!

# MUJERES DE MIJA

## Alejandra Villalobos





## **MIJA MOMENT**

### Olivia Tafoya

Olivia Presley Tafoya is from Taos, New Mexico—a place she describes as rich in culture and authentic beauty. She recently joined the Mija Program during her first semester after learning about it when mentors from UNM visited Taos High School. Although she is still new to the program, Olivia already appreciates the supportive people she has met, especially Opal, who encouraged her to be proud of her poetry and inspired her to get involved. To Olivia, the word “Mija” carries deep meaning. It represents love, guidance from elders, and the belief that a young woman can grow into someone strong and remarkable.

Outside of school, Olivia enjoys a wide range of hobbies including horseback riding, hunting, archery, poetry, and welding—activities she takes seriously and takes pride in. She has set ambitious goals for herself, including maintaining straight A's, graduating high school with a 4.0 GPA, and attending college in Fort Collins, Colorado to become a veterinarian. Her dream of caring for animals began when she was just four years old, inspired by her belief that animals reflect the beauty of God's creation. If she could travel anywhere in the world, Olivia would choose New Zealand for its breathtaking mountains and natural beauty. Above all, she hopes people remember to stay close to God, treat others with kindness, and appreciate the everyday beauty in life and the people whom make you happy.

Thank you Olivia for being such a beautiful and inspiring force within our Mija community and we can't wait to see all the amazing things that lie ahead in your journey. You can do it, Mija!

### *Ode to... my horses*

*I am thankful for my horses  
By angels above and by my side*

*Throughout my life's courses  
They have been my stars that I chase the sunset with*

*I am built from the memories I hold with them  
The bonds I share with them*

*Every run and breath of wind we share strengthens  
Our souls to collide like the freedom of my heart when I hold the reigns*

*My horses that are now my angels protect me against the dark wind  
And teach me to cowboy up and get back on*

*No heaven can be if my horse isn't there to welcome me to be my angel  
forever  
For me to fly, I need to take the reigns and give the light*

*I ride with my heart like they are the art that God has painted my life to be  
Bread of God may feed my body but horses feed my heart and soul*

*My true courage comes from being scared to ashes of death but saddling up  
anyways*

*Sound of hooves on the ground is the sound that makes my sadness no longer  
quiet*

**AMEN**

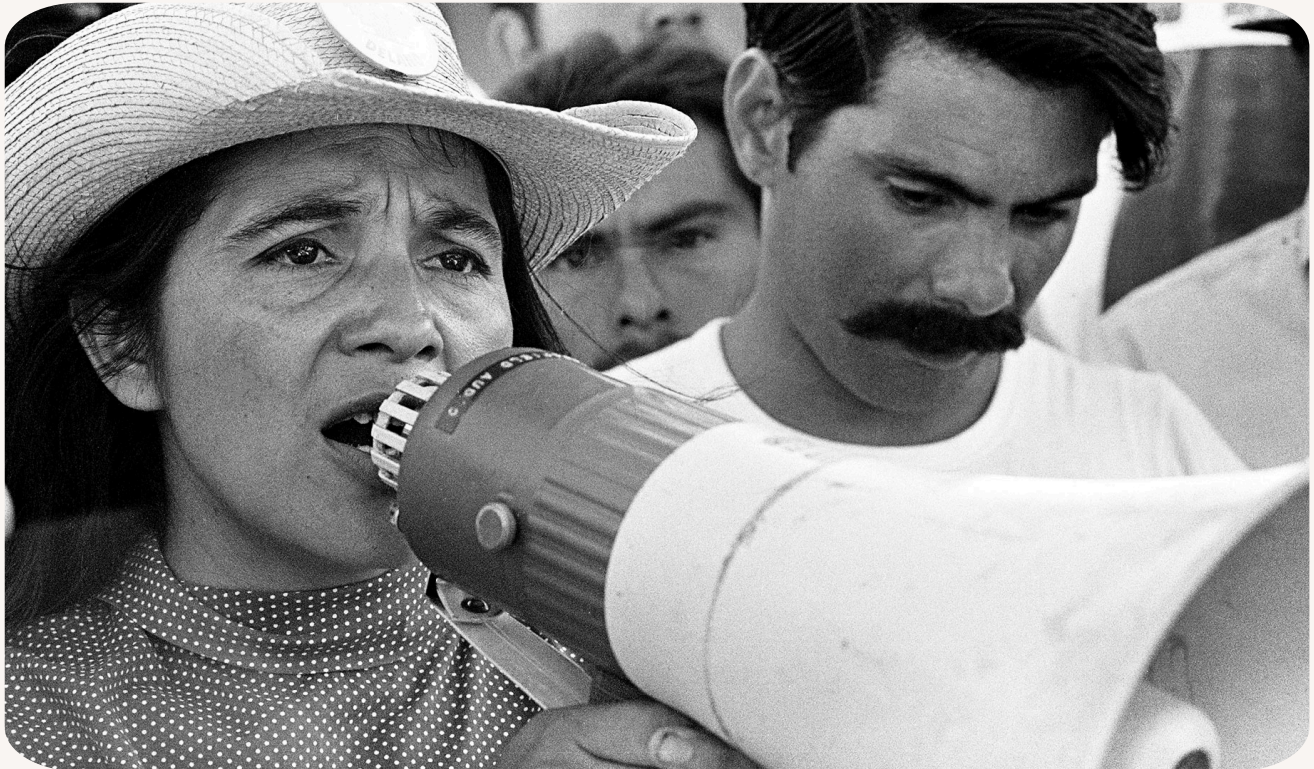
*“Ode to My Horses” by Olivia Presley Tafoya*





# INSPIRACIÓN

## Dolores Huerta



Dolores Huerta (born April 10, 1930) is a pioneering labor organizer, civil rights activist, and feminist who has spent decades advocating for farmworkers, women, and Latino communities in the United States. She co-founded the United Farm Workers in 1962 with Cesar Chavez and played a key role in organizing farmworkers to demand fair wages, safer working conditions, and labor protections.

Although she is widely known for her labor activism, Huerta has also been a powerful voice for women's rights and feminism. Working within the male-dominated labor movement of the 1960s and 1970s, she challenged sexism both inside and outside activist circles. She advocated for women farmworkers who often faced lower wages, unsafe conditions, and limited leadership opportunities. Huerta believed that social justice movements must include women's leadership and address gender inequality.

In the 1990s, she became even more outspoken about feminist issues, encouraging Latinas to become politically active and take on leadership roles in their communities. She later founded the Dolores Huerta Foundation in 2002 to promote community organizing, civic engagement, and leadership development—especially for women and young people.

Huerta is also known for popularizing the rallying cry “Sí, se puede” (“Yes, we can”), which became a symbol of empowerment across labor, immigrant rights, and feminist movements. In recognition of her lifelong activism, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by Barack Obama in 2012.

Today, Huerta is celebrated as a trailblazer who helped expand the labor movement to include women's leadership, feminist advocacy, and the voices of Latina organizers.





## VOCES ALTAS

### Paola Gonzalez & Karla Gutierrez



#### **At The Wall, US/Mexican Border, Texas 2020**

Paola Gonzalez, 21, and Karla Gutierrez, 22, are Latina poets who first wrote the poem “At the Wall” when they were 17 and 18 years old. Both were students at Animo Inglewood Charter High School in California. Paola later attended Wellesley College, where she studied Women and Gender Studies, while Karla went on to attend San Francisco State University.

In July 2016, they participated in Classic Slam, the largest youth classical poetry festival in the world. There, they performed their poem “At the Wall: U.S./Mexican Border, Texas 2020,” written as a response to the classic poem “At the Cemetery, Walnut Grove Plantation.”

Their poem is deeply connected to their personal histories. Karla’s grandfather worked as a bracero in the 1940s, and Paola’s father crossed the border as an undocumented immigrant at the age of 17. Paola and Karla continue to travel and share this poem today and through their poetry, raise their voices about the realities of borders and immigration, highlighting how the United States has been shaped by immigrants, African American labor, and many diverse cultures.

You can view and listen to this poem here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loHz2oQhLEI>





## CELEBRATE

*Say Yes to the Dress*  
**PROM EDITION**  
*Café Sagrado &*

*You Can Do It, Mija*

Are seeking donations of new or gently used dresses, shoes, or accessories to help make prom dreams come true for young women in our community. Your donations will help make this special milestone more accessible and memorable, helping students feel confident, celebrated, and ready to enjoy this special night. Thank you for helping us create a magical and uplifting prom experience!

📍 **FEBRUARY 15<sup>TH</sup> - MARCH 15<sup>TH</sup>**  
📍 **DROP OFF: Café Sagrado**

**MIJA**   
**MONDAY**

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**MAR 30** **ZUMBA w/ Neida**  
Padre Martinez Hall ABCD  
4:00 - 5:00 PM

**JOIN US** for Mija Monday—a gathering space for women rooted in community, support, and empowerment. Come connect with a community of women committed to uplifting one another and cultivating leadership from within.

All Are Welcome!

For more details and updates about Mija Mondays, please visit our website or follow us on social media

**Special Mija Mondays edition ~**  
**Join us for mocktails beginning at 3:30pm!**

## GET IN TOUCH

Looking to collaborate with the You Can Do It, Mija program? We'd love to hear from you with your ideas, questions, or community happenings! Email us at [mija@unm.edu](mailto:mija@unm.edu) or call Opal at 575-737-3736.

Interested in becoming a Mija Mentor or an advocate for the program? [Sign up here.](#)

Follow us on social media and visit our website to stay up to date:

[Mija Instagram](#)

[Mija Website](#)

Get in touch with Newsletter creator Melissa Rorman at [mrorman@unm.edu](mailto:mrorman@unm.edu)

