

In Her Words: March



Corissa Hernandez



“I’m in a season of rebirthing.”

Every woman has a story. But some stories shake rooms, open doors, and redefine what’s possible. In Her Words is SAR’s series spotlighting trailblazing women who lead with courage, shape community with intention, and inspire the next generation through purpose, resilience, and grace.

Corissa's story is one rooted in teaching, advocacy, and an unwavering belief that access to information can change lives. A first generation daughter of immigrants, an educator turned entrepreneur, and a community leader, she has spent nearly two decades building businesses and spaces that serve more than profit. Today, she finds herself in a deeply personal chapter of transition, one she names with honesty rather than fear.

“There’s power in talking about what isn’t serving you anymore,” she says. “And not being afraid to restart. To rebirth. Because the possibilities are endless.”

After 19 years of entrepreneurship, she is navigating divorce, a reality many women quietly carry while continuing to lead, build, and show up for others. Vulnerability is the word she uses to describe this season of life, not as weakness, but as truth. A willingness to be seen while still moving forward.

Before entrepreneurship, she began her career as a teacher with LAUSD. Teaching, she explains, was never just about curriculum. “It was about access,” she shares. “About translating information into opportunity.” Raised in an immigrant household, she was taught to dream big and pursue education as a path forward, but she also witnessed how fragile that path becomes when information is out of reach.

Watching her father retire without access to financial literacy changed the way she understood systems. “I saw firsthand what happens to families when they don’t have access to resources,” she says. “And I couldn’t stay silent about it.”

That awareness deepened during the pandemic. As a first generation business owner in communities of color, she watched industries struggle while waiting for relief that often never came. “We like to believe someone is coming to save us,” she reflects. “But the pandemic made it clear. No one was coming.”

Rather than retreat, she returned to what she knew best. Teaching. Drawing from her background in sociology and lived experience, she began sharing information directly with her neighbors. How to apply for grants. Where to find funding. What resources actually existed. What began on one block quickly revealed itself as a widespread need.

“Our dreams deserve to thrive,” she says simply.

Today, she describes herself as a social entrepreneur, someone who believes business ownership extends beyond profit. She is the owner of Nativo, one of the few Latina owned tequila and mezcal bars in Los Angeles. While the space is known for celebration and joy, she is clear about its deeper purpose. “We’re not just a bar,” she says. “We’re a mission.” The space has become a hub for community learning and protection, hosting Know Your Rights workshops and conversations around safety and dignity.

Her work extends through Hustle & Heart, a platform she founded to support Eastside entrepreneurs through access, education, and shared resources. Their first summit brought together over 300 business owners. “In today’s political climate,” she says, “it really takes us looking out for one another.”

Sustaining that work requires discipline. For her, discipline begins internally. “You can’t pour from an empty cup,” she explains. “Especially when you’re showing up for your team, your business, and your community.” When she walks into rooms where people like her are often underrepresented, she carries her grandmother with her. “She came to this country with no English, no resources, and seven mouths to feed,” she says. “So when I walk into those spaces, I’m representing generations of women who deserved to be there.”

As this story is shared during Women’s History Month, she is honest about the gap between social media and real leadership. “There hasn’t been a leader who hasn’t had a season of challenge,” she says. What matters is how you care for yourself through it and whether fear is allowed to stop you.

“If someone like me,” she adds, “a daughter of immigrants with limited resources but a big dream, can keep going, then so can anyone else.”

When asked how she hopes to be remembered, her answer is immediate.

“That I was resilient out of love for my community.”

This is Corissa. This is SAR.

By Hector Zamora



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