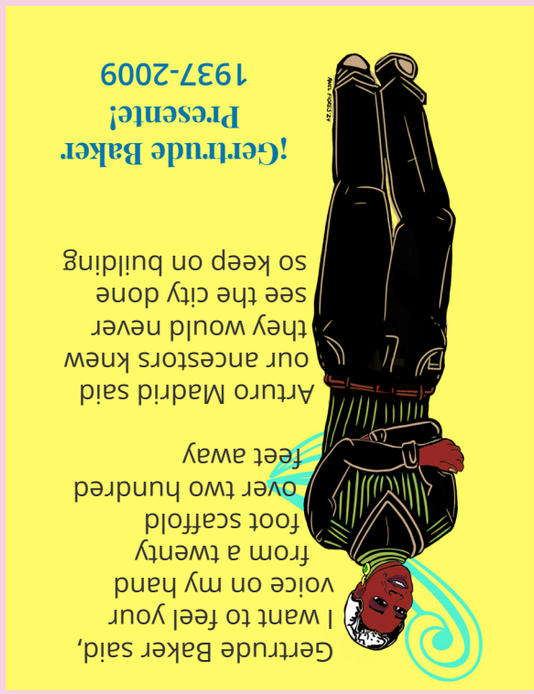




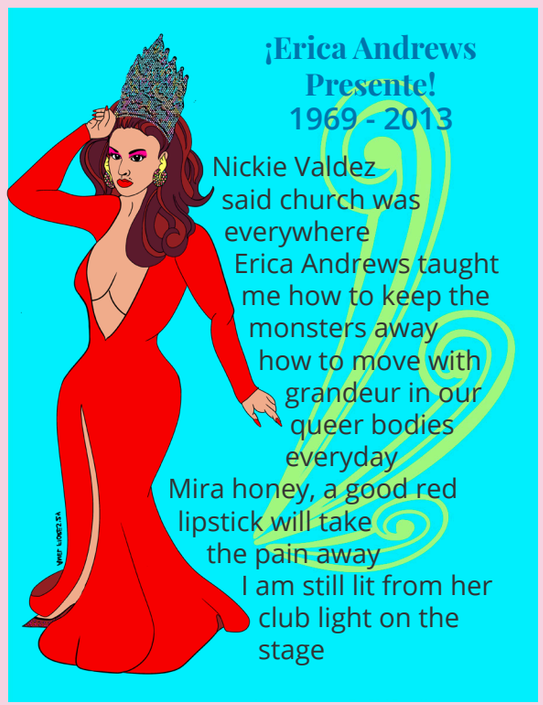


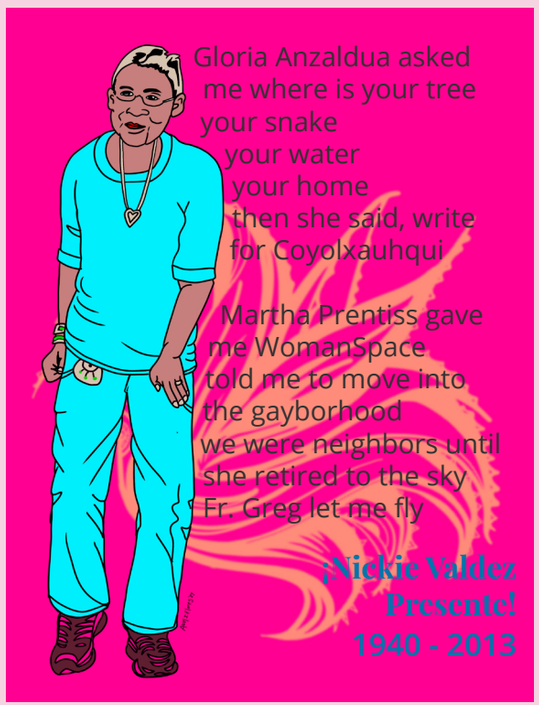


My secrets
didn't have language until
Dad said Abuelita Maria wrote poetry

The librarian waived my late fee
so I could check out Nikki Giovani
Carol Mengden wrote
Your words are yellow flowers
and You are a writer, Anel
then she died
Monica secretly signed me up
at open mic
with Trinidad Sanchez
at the original Twig Bookstore
Naomi Nye invited me over
read my poems from sheets of
loose leaf
we ate cookies
drank tea
I was eighteen







Les Maestres is a Micro-Memoir Zine - When drawing each spirit, I looked through hard copy photos I took in the early 90s, 2000s, my digital archives, shot from my flip-phone and newer iphones, and also through photos taken and published in news stories. I traveled on an endless journey of the many times they lifted me from a fall or joined with me in a triumph. Their postures as well as their placements were very intentional. I stood Maria Ibarra, a dear friend I met in 1995 and later the director of my play Empanada, with Nikki Valdez, the founder of Dignity San Antonio and super activist for all LGBTQIA+. They both were strongholds for me when I first came out in 1994, when my university, my family and my community blacklisted me for creating Arco Iris, an LGBTQIA organization at our Catholic University. Erica Andrews was the woman I looked up to when the women in my family were not present. She taught me what it meant to be a fierce queer latine, what it meant to use your entire body, your entire essence, your entire heart to empower and inspire our queer youth - at a time when we were youth ourselves. Gertrude Baker taught me to use my voice. And, these people didn't only impact me. Black, Queer artist and maestre of mine, Sharon Bridgforth shared her words about Gertrude Baker: "Gertrude's embrace and encouragement of my work/the way she fiercely showed up. Her swagga and style/her activism broke ground and made way. The sweetness, Grace and power that is Gertrude continues to Bless and Light the path. I am grateful." It is very important that we document and share freely with the community, the lives of such brilliant, generous human beings - people who have opened, carved, created and named spaces and places for our bodies to move, to flourish, to dance, to create and to make change - with love and with art.

I hope, in Les Maestres, I offer a place for us to connect our hearts to the energia of our vibrant and powerful spirit guides. It is an honor to create this work and connect with you through the memory and impact they have made. Each time I pick up my pencil to doodle their smile, sketch out their energy in their posture, or add a small detail in the clothing they wore, I stare into their sketched eyes and can still feel them walking and working with me; and I hope this awakens in you too. Their presence in this work is to remind us that even when we sometimes feel like we walk alone, we are always joined by our spirit guides. And, although they are each missed, it is important to acknowledge each of them are being held up by the love and memory of thousands more they made an impact on during their years in this physical world, and still do. My goal with this work is to document the legacy of such brilliant people, and also provide a place for them to join together in our continuous work towards justice in the world.

Love, Anel I. Flores

LES MAESTRES

A MICRO MEMOIR

BY ANEL I. FLORES

Copyright © 2026 To be used for educational purposes only and not for resale.

Les Maestres is a Micro-Memoir Zine, as auto-historia poesia documenting 11 South Texas, Latinx, Afto-Latinx and BiPoc women and gender queer individuals, in underrepresented genders, as an archive of legacy builders and maestres who have directly impacted my life as a queer artivist and the lives of countless others.

Visual artist and author of Empanada: A Lesbiana Story en Probaditas and Curtains of Rain, Anel I. Flores, has exhibited and published internationally in journals and museums. They are a Mellon Foundation DRJ Fellow, a Catalyst for Change Fellow, former visiting author at OLLU, a Macondo Writer, Founder of La Otra Taller Nepantla and Queer Voices. Currently she is at work on her Graphic Memoir, Painted Red, the Bilingual Edition of Empanada and her Solo-Exhibition, I AM HOME, at the Mexican Cultural Center UNAM San Antonio, opening on May 23, 2024.

www.Anelflores.com
@aneliflores

Supported by the City of San Antonio Individual Artist Grant,