



September 4, 2009

**For Immediate Release**

**MEDIA ADVISORY**

## **THAT'S NOT FAIR!**

**Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice – a new play based on the Children's book by Carmen Tafolla and Sharyll Teneyuca**

**WHAT:** SAY Sí is proud to present That's Not Fair: Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice. This stage adaptation of Carmen Tafolla and Sharyll Teneyuca's children's book is the first major stage production produced by SAY Sí. Audiences will enjoy the intimacy of SAY Sí's 110 seat Black Box theater and will appreciate the innovative set design, multimedia elements that echo illustrator Terry Ybanez's brilliant art, and live music that is incorporated throughout the show.

With a cast that includes children, teens and adults, That's Not Fair is a passionate and true story that educates and inspires, it is sure to touch the hearts and minds of San Antonians from all walks of life. In the 1920s, in San Antonio, TX, a young girl named Emma Tenayuca took a long look around her city and decided that life was really not fair to some people. She began to do things to change that. She taught other children how to read, and she learned the value of sharing what little she had with those who had even less. Just a few years later, barely out of her teens, Emma led 12,000 Pecan Shellers in their historic strike for fair wages and improved working conditions. No less a legend in her own time, her story will now come to life and her voice be heard again as this production honors a heroic figure in Mexican-American history.

**WHO:** Produced by SAY Sí in collaboration with local actors, musicians and artists.

**WHEN:**

Gala Premiere Performance: **Thursday, September 17, 2009 • 7 PM**, performance followed by a dessert buffet and book signing by the authors.

\$15 per person

Performances: Friday and Saturday, September 18 & 19 @ 7 PM

Friday and Saturday, September 25 & 26 @ 7 PM

\$10 Adults | \$5 children under 12 and seniors over 60

**WHERE:** SAY Sí Central  
1518 South Alamo Street, San Antonio, Texas 78204  
Please call 210-212-8666 for tickets and info

SAY Sí is a tuition-free national award winning multidisciplinary arts program that assists youth in the development of artistic and social skills in preparation for higher educational advancement and professional careers. SAY Sí onsite tuition-free programs are: **Project SAY Sí**, the high school visual arts program; **Project WAM**, the middle school visual and media arts program taught by trained instructors and student mentors; **Project MAS**, the high school media arts program; and **Teatro ALAS**, a new theatre program for middle and high school students. SAY Sí accepts diverse students from all areas of San Antonio, but first priority is given to students from inner-city schools and low economic households.



## CAST

### **Emma Tenayuca (Adult): Cynthia Davila**

Cynthia is a graduate of Loyola University with a B.A. in Political Science. Over the last five years she has worked as an actor with the New Orleans Opera, Loyola University Theatre, Our Lady of the Lake University Theatre, and the Boerne Community Theatre. In addition to acting, Cynthia enjoys designing Hair & Make-Up for the stage. She is happy to be back in San Antonio and looks forward to working in the local theatre community.

### **Emma Tenayuca (Child): Sophia Ramirez**

Sophia is a sixth grader at the Carver Academy. She enjoys playing the piano, working on art projects, theatre arts, helping people in the community and hopes to one day be a Neurosurgeon.

### **Emma's Grandpa: Jorge Sandoval**

Jorge is a San Antonio based actor and photographer. He has worked with many local community arts organizations and art galleries over the years. He is excited about bringing Emma's story to life.

### **Narrator and local Ice Cream Man: Brian Gutierrez**

Brian is local actor who enjoys performing every chance he gets. He has done comedic work with San Antonio sketch comedy troupe Comedia A Go-Go and performed with The Cameo Theater.

### **El Campesino and Farmworker: Anthony Flores**

Anthony is a San Antonio based poet and performer. He is four time member of the S.A. Puro Slam Poetry Team and 2007 & 2009 Grand Slam Poetry Champion. He has presented his original poetry at The Lincoln Center in New York, NY as well as in the beautiful backyards of San Anto.

### **Alma a Pecan Sheller: Mari Williams**

Mari is an arts educator, singer and actor here in San Antonio. She has worked with theatre companies in Del Rio, TX as well as here at home. In addition to her stage work she enjoys performing with her band Junko at local venues around San Antonio.

### **Esperanza a Pecan Sheller: Sarah Grace Villarreal**

Sarah is a senior at St. Mary's University where she will be receiving her B.A. in English/Communication Arts. She is a dancer with the San Antonio Parks and Recreation dance program as well as a Senior Company member of the San Antonio Metropolitan Ballet Company. She looks forward to pursuing a career in Filmmaking.

### **Beatriz a Pecan Sheller: Erika Cervantes**

Erika is a burgoeoning actor who currently studies acting with Liza Ashton. When not on stage she is an Early Intervention Specialist working with children with disabilities at the Brighton School.



***Maria a childhood friend of Emma's: Taylor Gonzalez***

Taylor is a fifth grader at Leon Valley Elementary. She enjoys theatre arts, science, volleyball, and would like to one day be an art teacher.

**Los Muchachos del Barrio: Cruz Gonzalez**

Nathan Glover

Julia Rodriguez

**Pecan Company Bosses: Richard Fernandez**

David Williams

**Los Musicos:**

Nicholas Valdez

Joaquin Abrego

Quauhtli

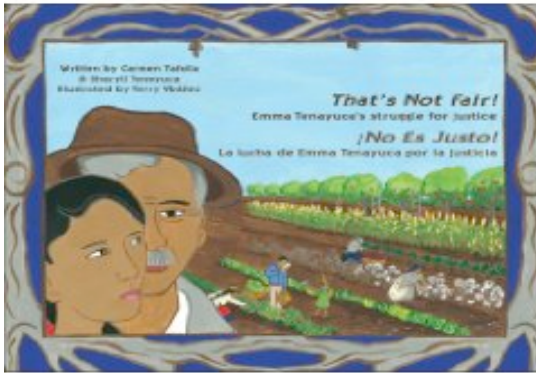
Pablo Mancias

**Director: Joel Settles**

Joel is a San Antonio based theatre artist and educator. He is currently the Theatre Arts Coordinator for the SAY Sí Teatro ALAS program. He has performed and produced original works at The Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center, Jump-Start Theater, The State Theater, Teatro Campesino and SomArts Cultural Center among others. Joel is dedicated to community development through the teaching, presentation, and creation of Theatre and Media Arts.

**Producer: SAY Sí**

SAY Sí is a national-award winning, year round, long-term, non-profit multidisciplinary arts program for student's from San Antonio's high schools and middle schools that provides opportunities for these students to develop artistic and social skills in preparation for higher educational advancement and professional careers. SAY Sí is committed to creating a premier, dynamic and nurturing environment for artistic youth.



## **That's Not Fair! ¡No Es Justo!**

**By authors Carmen Tafolla and Sharyll Teneyuca, beautifully illustrated by artist Terry Ybanez.**

**Book Signing - Thursday, September 17, 2009, following 7 PM premiere performance of the play.**

### **About the Authors:**

#### **Carmen Tafolla**

*The award-winning author of more than fifteen books, Dr. Carmen Tafolla is a native of the West Side barrios of San Antonio and currently teaches at UTSA as Visiting Faculty in Mexican American Studies. One of the most anthologized of Latina poets, she earned in 1999 the "Art of Peace" Award for writings which reflect "peace, justice, and human understanding." Her 2008 children's book, What Can You DO With a Rebozo?, was chosen as an ALA Notable Book, Junior Library Guild Selection, and is on the Tejas Star Award Reading List. Her collection of short stories The Holy Tortilla and a Pot of Beans received the 2009 Tomas Rivera Book Award. That's Not Fair: Emma Tenayuca's Struggle for Justice, the book on which this play is based, was listed by Críticas Magazine among the Best Children's Books of 2008. A friend of Emma's from 1977 to 1999, Carmen Tafolla lives in San Antonio in a 100-year-old house with her husband, children, and many pecan trees.*

#### **Sharyll Teneyuca**

Is a graduate of Rice University and New York University School of Law. She was voted Outstanding Young Lawyer by the San Antonio Young Lawyers Association in 1985 for her work as the founder and director of the Pro Bono Law Project, the first volunteer attorney assistance project for the representation of indigents in civil matters in Bexar County. As a Municipal Judge, she created the Community Service Program, providing an alternative to incarceration for citizens unable to pay city fines. Both programs have been an integral part of the San Antonio community. She has endeavored to carry out her Aunt Emma's legacy of compassion for human beings and dedication to justice. A former Legal Aid staff attorney, she practices law [and makes wonderful pecan pralines] in San Antonio, where she lives with her husband and three sons. She is currently at work with co-author Carmen Tafolla on a full biography of Ms. Emma Tenayuca.

#### **From Booklist**

This handsome picture-book biography in English and Spanish relates the struggle of Mexican American farmworkers in the early twentieth century through the perspective of Emma Tenayuca, who became a labor activist. Growing up in San Antonio, Texas, in the early twentieth century, Tenayuca was shocked by the gross inequality around her, comparing her comfortable home to the extreme poverty of the many families of factory and farmworkers. As a smart, kind teenager, she spoke in public about the plight of the pecan shellers in the factories, and at 21, in 1938, she led 12,000 workers in a strike that forced factory owners to raise wages. Co-authored by the late Tenayuca's niece and one of the activist's friends, the story is heavy on exclamatory messages. Yet the stirring, unfamiliar chapter in labor history and the humanitarian efforts of Tenayuca herself will intrigue children, who will also like the bold, mural-like illustrations, which show a child confronting suffering and growing up to make a difference. Pair this with Francisco Jiménez's personal stories and with *Sí Se Puede! Yes We Can* (2002). Grades 2-4. --Hazel Rochman

## Emma Tenayuca Biography



Emma Tenayuca was born on December 21, 1916, in San Antonio, Texas. The second of eleven children, Emma went to live with her grandparents at an early age. Her grandfather often took her to the Plaza de Zacate (Milan Park), where many political figures of the early twentieth century and exiles from the Mexican Revolution gave speeches about the plight of poor workers. At 16, Emma became involved with the labor movement when she joined a picket line - and was arrested - during a strike against the Finck Cigar Company. By the age of 20, Emma had become General Secretary for ten chapters of the Workers Alliance of America.

Emma was concerned about the extreme poverty and injustice by Mexican American workers. At the age of 21, she led the city's 12,000 pecan shellers in a demand for decent wages and better conditions.

Emma was jailed many times and denied work because of her fierce defense of the poor. After a twenty year exile, she returned to San Antonio, earned a Masters Degree, and became a reading teacher for migrant children. Emma died in 1999, leaving behind a large extended family, many who loved her and learned from her, and a legacy of social change and commitment to justice.