



Fiesta® San Antonio Commission  
THE ORDER OF THE CASCARÓN 2020 NOMINATION FORM

NOMINEE INFORMATION

Name of Nominee: Ray Chavez  
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E-mail: rayjr2138@att.net  
Affiliated PMO's: Fiesta Conquistador

NOMINATOR INFORMATION

Name of Person Making Nomination: LINDA SKOP  
Address: 305 Wildrose City: San Antonio State: TX Zip: 78209  
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On a separate sheet:

In 400 words or less, please describe the volunteer contributions that your nominee has made to Fiesta®.  
Please include:

- 1) Detailed information on the volunteer role that your nominee has played in the Fiesta® celebration. Give specific details on how your nominee's efforts have had an impact on the Fiesta® celebration in a positive and long lasting way. Elaborate on specific volunteer duties and responsibilities nominee has undertaken. under Ray's direction, Conquistador has given AIDS Related Charities over 2 1/2 million dollars
- 2) The length of time that your nominee has been involved in these volunteer activities. Give specific years nominee was active in these activities. 1959-1965 1983-Present
- 3) If your nominee served in a specific leadership role during Fiesta®, i.e., Fiesta® royalty, president of a Fiesta® organization, chairman of a Fiesta® event, etc., indicate how their volunteer involvement has gone beyond the normal responsibilities of that role. Please see Reversal Report attached

Please submit your Nomination Form and essay by noon on February 13, 2020 in person or by email to:

Fiesta® San Antonio Commission  
2611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215  
[amy@fiestasanantonio.org](mailto:amy@fiestasanantonio.org)

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Rivard Report | (<https://therivardreport.com/cornyations-longtime-coordinator-a-ray-of-sunshine-in-san-antonio/>)

## COMMENTARY

## Cornyation's Longtime Coordinator a 'Ray of Sunshine' in San Antonio



REV. GAVIN ROGERS | OCTOBER 27, 2018



COURTESY // RAY CHAVEZ

Ray Chavez (center) helps coordinate Fiesta Cornyation in the mid-2000s.

## UPDATED NOVEMBER 26, 2018

For Ray Chavez, everyone is royalty. In a city where various organizations appoint kings and queens, dukes and duchesses, Ray values the divine in everyone – gay or straight, male or female, rich or poor. The man who satirizes San Antonio's social elite has become a living local legend and the crowner of misfits, malcontents, and mystics.

The lead coordinator for Fiesta Cornyation (<http://fiestacornyation.org>), turned 80 this month and continues to shape San Antonio's cultural landscape.

On Sunday, Ray celebrated his birthday with friends at the Bonham Exchange, where his self-portrait has been on display in the video bar since 1981. The party was for him, but the humble and shy man wanted it to be about others, especially his beloved Fiesta Cornyation community. That night, Ray announced the King Anchovy for 2019's festivities: Mindy Miller Hill, director of destination sales at the JW Marriott Resort. Now she joins the list of kings that honor the rogue in all of us.

EDWARD A. ORNELAS FOR THE RIVARD REPORT

Cornyation coordinator Ray Chavez celebrates his 80th birthday.

EDWARD A. ORNELAS FOR THE RIVARD REPORT

Dancer Vincent Gates (left) kisses Ray Chavez during his 80th birthday celebration.

Ray was born in 1938 across the street from Burbank High School. His father was a carpenter and his mother a baker who made beautiful wedding cakes, helping the family pay for his private education. He graduated from Central Catholic High School and studied art and painting. He also loved all things Fiesta. He recalled his father taking him to the Fiesta parades to watch the spectacle and pageantry.

"We used to sit near the Esquire Tavern so my father could easily use the restroom and more importantly drink a beer," he said.

Ray's memory of those early Fiesta events never left him and has always influenced his life, art, and love for people. After high school, he attended San Antonio College and got a civilian job working at Kelly Air Force Base. After one year, he joined the Army. After the service, he went back to Kelly to work as an industrial engineer technician.

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"It was great job back then," he said. "I got to wear a fancy white shirt and tie and have my own parking spot."

He worked that job for 13 years until he realized that he wanted a more creative life. He bought a van and traveled around the country selling his paintings with fellow artists. His artwork was representational and influenced by psychedelic pop artist Peter Max. His artwork sold well and he was able to make a good living doing the thing he loved – painting.

COURTESY // RAY CHAVEZ

Ray Chavez in his Kelly AFB work attire in 1968.

COURTESY // RAY CHAVEZ

Ray Chavez with one of his paintings in 1967.

"I bought my house because of the artwork I would sell," he said. "Life has been good to me. I am always at the right place at the right time."

In 1959, Ray got involved in a small production of No Time for Sergeants produced by the San Antonio Little Theatre, now The Public Theater. While helping with the production, he became aware of Cornyation, a show the Little Theatre also produced. Cornyation was a satirical production that started in the early 1950s at the Arneson River Theatre during A Night In Old San Antonio (NIOA). It spoofs local and political events, the San Antonio elite, Fiesta royalty, and the city's outlandish traditions. It is often called the "cheapest and raunchiest show" of Fiesta.

For Ray, the production has always highlighted San Antonio's diversity by honoring its many creative facets within the artistic and theatrical community. He remembers skits featuring "The San Antonio Consternation Society," "The Chamberpot of Commerce," and "The San Antonio Caviars." Instead of the Coronation of the Order of the Alamo, it was the Corynation of the Order of the Acorn.

The first court of Cornyation was the "Court of the Cracked Salad Bowl," and atop the salad bowl was the anchovy. Thus began the annual tradition of King Anchovy's reign over the event featuring local skits, satirical courts, and jesters. Past Kings include former U.S. Rep. Charlie Gonzalez, City Manager Sheryl Sculley, restaurateurs Steve Newman and Jody Bailey-Newman, entrepreneur and philanthropist Henry Muñoz, and former City Councilwoman Debra Guerrero. However, most past kings don't necessarily have name recognition because the Kings Anchovy don't have to be well-known or famous to be included in the royal line.

When he first participated in Cornyation, Ray helped with lights and other technical aspects of the 1959 show. He would later become more involved with design and costuming.

"It was a blast," he said. "We would sew the performers up into these lavish costumes and then have to un-sew them out so they could use the restroom mid-show. Then [we'd] turn around and sew them back on to continue the show. It was such a fun moment, and the energy was fantastic."

Around 1964, Cornyation was put into limbo after the San Antonio Conservation Society, which runs NIOSA, thought the show had become "too modern" and would not allow the show back at the Arneson. After one year at the former Villa Fontana restaurant in Southtown, the show went dark.

Years later, after a few trial runs, Ray, local educator Bob Jolly, and others revived the show in

"Ray was the catalyst for Cornyation's modern success," said Dawn Brooks Baamonde, a past co-ee of the show. "He helped keep track of the ticket sales, fundraising for the San Antonio Aids Foundation, Beat AIDS and other charities, and coordinate and manage all of the designers who write and design the show.

"Without him, the show would have never been reborn and sustained the acclaim. Ray has always kept the show framed around inclusiveness, satire, and the humor that is found in all of us San Antonians."



BONNIE ARBITTIER / RIVARD REPORT

King Anchovy LII dances on stage during Cornyation at Charline McCombs Empire Th In his tenure as the show's coordinator, Ray has helped it grow out of the Bonham Exchange, then Beethoven Hall, and land at its current location at the Empire Theatre, which hosts six performances in three nights every year during Fiesta.

"There are many people who make Cornyation possible, but none like Ray Chavez," said past Queen Anchovy Jody Bailey-Newman. "I always tell the cast of my Corynation skit, 'Ray's will be done' and "All things Ray!"

Although modern-day Cornyation is one of Ray's lasting legacies, he sees it differently. Cornyation is about people, about laughter, and about life. "Nobody directs or has a legacy on that," Ray said.

Since becoming a full-time artist and reviving the show, Ray keeps involved in the San Antonio community, helping raise money for great causes and promoting the city he loves. He owns and operates a Fiesta medal business that designs and creates artwork for many of the medals that

He also makes time for painting, designing scarves made out of vintage T-shirts, and helping with estate sales. Alfred Martinez, a close friend of Ray, says "you always want to go to a party with Ray. Everyone knows him and his contributions to San Antonio."

"When I was new to San Antonio, he was one of the first to truly welcome me into the community. That's just who he is as a person. He always makes people feel right at home."

Ray says he still loves "playing and winning bingo at Alamo Beer, cooking, drinking good tequila, and using lots and lots of glitter." He is a jack of all trades.

Life according to Ray "is about learning to laugh and to see the positive points in life. As a gay, Latino man I have never allowed the negative to bother me. Just use the climate of today, I could allow myself to be miserable and spiteful, but I would rather see the sun shine, see the positive, laugh, and have a good time.

"I know it sounds silly, but I always want to be a ray of sunshine."

Click through the gallery below to see more images of Ray Chavez.



COURTESY / RAY CHAVEZ

Ray Chavez with a friend in 1971.