

Working Title: "Helen Miller Bailey: *The Pioneer Educator and Renaissance Woman Who Shaped Chicano(a) Leaders*" by Rita Joiner Soza

Foreword

While not new to The Golden State, I am relatively new to *El Pueblo de La Reina de Los Angeles*, better known as Los Angeles or LA. The majority of my youth and adult life have been spent in San Francisco and the Sacramento region, where I began my service as an educator and then administrator in public higher education. What brings me to LA is my new role as Chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District, the nation's largest and, perhaps, most diverse community college district; it also educates the country's poorest community college students with over 65% of the students living at or near the poverty line.

I am a first-generation immigrant, English-language learner from a working class family. Like so many students of the Los Angeles region, my parents came to this country with little formal education. And like my own parents, these parents hold onto the dreams and aspirations of their children with a firm grip, all for the opt chance that the next generation will be better off than the one before. Access to higher education and the opportunity that followed was the door to personal discovery and professional exploration, and to renewed hope that was counter to the generations of poverty and isolation that my family and my ancestors unselfishly endured. Along my educational journey, I greatly benefited by being challenged and supported by great teachers.

As educators, I believe that it is our collective responsibility to purposefully serve our higher education community and, at the same time, to challenge it. We have perhaps the best opportunity to eradicate and overcome social and racial injustice, and to empower the least educated and poorest in our communities. Los Angeles provides a fortuitous opportunity to continue my life's work to serve others through education.

This is where college educator and scholar, artist and Renaissance woman Helen Miller Bailey comes in. Better known as "Doc Bailey" or "Doc," she, too, believed in simultaneously serving and challenging education and in empowering others—in this case, the students at East Los Angeles College. Through her activism, art and scholarship, Doc Bailey influenced a generation of public servants, business professionals, lawyers, educators and civic activists who attended "East," several of whom went on to local and national prominence. Author and professor Rita Soza is one of Doc Bailey's former students and she has done a fabulous job in describing the life and lessons of this remarkable human being. In doing so, she beautifully captures the voices of those influenced by Doc, known as a "teacher's teacher," who left an indelible print and transformed the lives of scores of students.

Doc Bailey was a trailblazer and was way, way ahead of her time. Long before the civil rights movement and the educational opportunity programs that followed, Doc Bailey was challenging working-class kids from the "east side" to know their history, language and culture. With a missionary zeal, she pushed her students to go to college, to give back to the community, and to serve a greater social purpose. Doc Bailey brought the world to East Los Angeles through her many excursions around the globe. She was fully aware that many of her students had never been outside of their neighborhood. She returned with film, photos and drawings of the many people and cultures that diversify and beautify this world. She

provided legitimacy and relevance to the interdisciplinarity of Chicano/Mexican studies, ethnic studies, global studies and women's studies, and exposed her students to being global citizens.

Doc Bailey was a "hands-on" educator, contributing her own and convincing others to give money for student scholarships. She also drove students to nearby colleges and universities, making the vastly unfamiliar familiar. In doing so, she bolstered their confidence and self-respect and, as a result, countless first-generation college students entered and graduated from the region's most prestigious institutions.

The results of Doc Bailey's influence and selflessness are truly amazing and inspirational.

I had recent occasion to visit and tour East Los Angeles College, one of the nine colleges within the Los Angeles Community College District. At the center of this east side educational jewel sits the Helen Miller Bailey Library, a beautifully designed, airy, multi-story bastion of teaching and learning – a fitting tribute to pioneering and courageous woman, educator and philanthropist. I walked through the library thinking of how Doc Bailey would react and respond to the sea of dark-haired, brown-eyed students studying, thoroughly engaged with computers, with notes and books spread out over large tables. I smiled and I know she is smiling, too, and would be very proud that the seeds she planted many decades ago today are flourishing.

Clearly, the life and legacy of Doc Bailey endures at East Los Angeles College and in the Los Angeles region.

Un fuerte abrazo,

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