

TORRES, ALVA (1932–)

Born in 1932, fourth-generation Tucsonan Alva Torres became a vocal community activist and historical preservationist when she initiated a battle over space and memory demanding that historical structures in the Mexican American community be preserved. Concerned that the historical treasures of the Mexican and Mexican American past were in danger of destruction, Torres was able to unite a group of women in collective action. Dubbed the Society for the Preservation of Tucson's Plaza de la Mesilla, or La Placita Committee, the group became the city's most vocal and public critics of urban renewal. Testifying to the importance of public sites that commemorated the city's Mexican American heritage, and the community's involvement in the city's development, the group succeeded in preserving the site, deeming it a historical treasure and signifying it with English and Spanish historical markers. Torres was recognized for her efforts, and was selected Woman of the Year by the Tucson Advertising Club in 1976. She became a journalist and worked for the Legalization Amnesty program for the Catholic community. In 2002 Torres received the YMCA's Lifetime Achievement Award for Women Who Make Tucson Better.