

1 A MEMORIAL

2 HONORING VICTORIA CHAVEZ, GINA MICHELLE VALDEZ, CINNAMON ELKS,
3 JULIE CYNDIE NIETO AND THE NINE "JANE DOES" OF THE WEST MESA
4 MASS GRAVE.

5
6 WHEREAS, in 2009, the Albuquerque police department
7 unearthed the remains of thirteen individuals buried in an
8 apparent mass grave on the west mesa of Albuquerque; and

9 WHEREAS, it is believed that most of the remains belong
10 to women who were buried there by the same individual or
11 individuals; and

12 WHEREAS, according to a February 2016 *Albuquerque*
13 *Journal* story, only one Albuquerque police department
14 detective remained assigned to investigate the deaths of the
15 women buried in the west mesa mass grave; and

16 WHEREAS, Victoria Chavez, who was last seen in 2003 and
17 reported missing in 2004, was the first woman whose remains
18 were identified by police; Gina Michelle Valdez, who had been
19 missing since September 2004, was the second woman whose
20 remains were identified by police; Cinnamon Elks, who had been
21 missing since 2004, was the third woman whose remains were
22 identified by police; and Julie Cyndie Nieto, who had been
23 missing since 2004, was the fourth woman whose remains were
24 identified by police; and

25 WHEREAS, the Albuquerque police department compiled a

1 list of women who have been reported missing, which includes
2 Darlene Maria Trujillo, missing since 2001; Sonia Bernadette
3 Lente, missing since 2002; Monica Diana Candelaria, missing
4 since 2003; Jamie Barela, missing since 2004; Virginia Ann
5 Cloven, missing since 2004; Doreen Márquez, missing since
6 2004; Anselma Guerra, missing since 2004; Evelyn Jesúsmaria
7 Salazar, missing since 2004; Veronica Romero, missing since
8 2004; Anna Vigil, missing since 2005; Shawntell Waites,
9 missing since 2005; Nina Herron, missing since 2005; Felipa
10 Gonzales, missing since 2005; and Leah Rachelle Peebles,
11 missing since 2006; and

12 WHEREAS, families of missing women from across
13 New Mexico file missing persons reports with police, to no
14 avail, and these families continue to search, in agony and
15 without support, for their loved ones; and

16 WHEREAS, according to the federal bureau of
17 investigation's national crime information center, there were
18 eighty-eight thousand eighty-nine active missing person cases
19 reported in the United States as of December 2017; and

20 WHEREAS, the women whose remains were identified in the
21 west mesa mass gravesite were depicted by both the police and
22 the media not as victims of violence and crime, but rather as
23 criminals themselves; and

24 WHEREAS, the labeling of these victims creates an
25 atmosphere of ambivalence with regard to the crimes that have

1 been perpetrated against them, while also denying their
2 humanity and their role in our communities as daughters,
3 mothers, sisters, cousins, nieces and granddaughters; and

4 WHEREAS, the deceased and missing women of New Mexico
5 deserve diligence and respect under the law and in our public
6 discourse, while their families deserve the right to carry
7 their memories with dignity; and

8 WHEREAS, communities across New Mexico are seeking
9 further details and a more thorough explanation of the
10 Albuquerque police department's and the federal bureau of
11 investigation's treatment of the crimes committed against
12 these women, in relation to the collection of evidence at the
13 mass grave and in relation to the methods that were used to
14 determine the facts of the disappearances; and

15 WHEREAS, New Mexico persistently has one of the nation's
16 highest rates of women living in poverty, one of the highest
17 rates of female homicide victims and the second-highest
18 domestic violence rate in the United States; and

19 WHEREAS, thousands of New Mexico women are not safe in
20 their own homes, in their intimate relationships or in public
21 spaces, and they lack the resources they need to escape the
22 cycle of violence that traps them;

23 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE
24 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that, in recognition of the heinous
25 crimes that have been perpetrated against Victoria Chavez,

1 Gina Michelle Valdez, Cinnamon Elks, Julie Cyndie Nieto and
2 the nine other "Jane Does" of the west mesa mass grave and in
3 recognition of the missing women of New Mexico whose loss
4 continues to be felt in communities across the state, the
5 Albuquerque police department and the Bernalillo county
6 sheriff's department be urged to proceed with due diligence
7 in resolving these murders; and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the mayor of Albuquerque and
9 the members of the Bernalillo county board of county
10 commissioners join in the effort proposed by this memorial to
11 ensure that these crimes are thoroughly investigated and that
12 the resources of the federal bureau of investigation, the
13 Albuquerque police department and the Bernalillo county
14 sheriff's department be employed in the most expeditious
15 manner possible; and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the media change its focus
17 from an emphasis on the victims' characters and lifestyles to
18 the provision of details of the heinous crimes that resulted
19 in the mass grave on the west mesa of Albuquerque; and

20 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the state of New Mexico
21 ensure that services be available for addiction treatment and
22 rehabilitation for women in need of such services and that
23 state policy and funding be directed toward providing those
24 services to the women who need them rather than toward the
25 criminalization and incarceration of those women; and

1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all New Mexicans be
2 encouraged to show their support for women who are victims of
3 violence or who are missing and for their families; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
5 transmitted to the mayor of Albuquerque, the chair of the
6 Bernalillo county board of county commissioners, the chief of
7 the Albuquerque police department and the Bernalillo county
8 sheriff. _____

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