



REMEMBERING LINDA BRIDGES



Linda Bridges
1949—2015

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” - Martin Luther King, Jr.

If this is true, then we have lost a giant. Linda Bridges, president of the Texas AFT, passed away in her sleep on January 13, 2015. A native of Corpus Christi, Linda began her career as an elementary special education teacher in her hometown. During her time as a teacher, she and group of members of the local CTA tried to obtain a contract for educators with the

Corpus Christi ISD. This attempt was crushed by the other organizations and so it spurred the group to charter the Corpus Christi American Federation of Teachers. Linda Bridges was elected as the first secretary of the newly formed union and then as the Executive Vice-President during the following election. She assumed the presidency of the Corpus Christi AFT in 1981. It was a position she held for 24 years until she was elected to serve as the president of the Texas AFT in 2005.

Linda was never one to back down from a challenge, especially when her efforts meant helping those who needed it most. Becky Moeller, president of the Texas AFL-CIO and one of Linda's best friends, has a favorite story to tell. After hearing about the unsafe working conditions at a maquiladora plant in Mexico a group of labor leaders wanted to tour the facility, but they were not allowed in by their corporate owners. Not ones to be discouraged, they came up with a plan to dress up as nuns and brothers and were successfully granted access to the plant. It was then that they were able to see just how harsh those conditions were and what it was they could do to help. She cared about improving the quality of

life for workers not because it was a job, but because it was the right thing to do. Her tireless dedication to dignity, fair wages, and safe workplaces are what drove her to keep fighting, even when the cause seemed hopeless.

It was under Linda's direction that the Texas AFT grew from 48,000 members to more than 65,000, becoming the largest affiliate in the Texas AFL-CIO. She wanted to make sure our educators had a voice. In 2011, when state legislators cut \$5.4 billion from public education that led to thousands of teacher layoffs and no increases to TRS, she was asked why the Texas AFT continued to fight. Her response was, "Because our kids are worth it."

Our kids are worth it. You're worth it and together we can make a difference. In honor of Linda's legacy to the labor movement, let's keep on fighting for what is right.

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To Be of Use *
by Marge Piercy

The people I love the best
jump into the work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim of with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half submerged balls.
I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a
heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things
forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.
I want to be with people who submerge in the task,
who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who stand in the line and haul in their places,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.
The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine and oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.

*This poem was used by the Corpus Christi
American Federation of Teachers and CWA
memorial for Linda Bridges on January 22, 2015 in
Corpus Christi, Texas.



To see teachers, auxiliary personnel, parents and students gathered together to raise their collective voice in support of education was important to Linda Bridges. Help us continue the tradition on Monday, March 9th. There are some very crucial issues concerning funding for public education, standardized testing, classroom size, Teacher Retirement Systems, etc. and our lawmakers need to hear from you. We have several meetings set up with our local representatives, so take this opportunity to make a big impact on the bills that get passed.

We will be joining other AFT members from all over the state on March 9, 2015 for Texas AFT's Lobby Day. We are chartering a bus to and from Austin, providing you with all meals, and you will receive a Local 6329 Lobby Day t-shirt.

It is free to attend, but you must RSVP. Call us at (956) 682-1143 or sign up at <http://goo.gl/forms/uME5DA6HXN>.

You are more than welcome to bring guests.



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