

# TALKING



*The Cheapest Thing In The World*



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Hannah Kerns

Austin, Tx  
St. Edward's University

*I would like to take the time to thank the three wonderful women that helped make this book possible. Thank you Edaena, Glynisha and Patricia for sharing your stories with me. None of this would be possible without you*



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# Intro

As more people scramble to break off their piece of prime East Austin real estate, tensions within the community between middle class newcomers and those living in Austin Housing Authority units continue to rise. Negative views towards individuals that use the Housing Authority have begun to intensify as Austin continues to grow. The goal of this book is to bring attention to the vibrant community in East Austin. More specifically, The Housing Authority units, Santa Rita Courts. I wish to present “the” stories of three women who have lived in Austin and have seen the effects of gentrification on the community. I have asked them to share parts of their lives with me, and they were all glad to participate. I would like to thank all of them for helping me present their community through personal accounts. This book is the first of multiple that will analyze common stereotypes and misconceptions of families that use this program. In-depth interviews, peer reviewed studies and visual depictions will reflect the sense of community, family and rich culture that is held by these East side residents. ❀



# EDAENA

19 years  
Austin, TX

## Adaena

(ah-de-ena) offers me a seat on her porch, next to her vividly green plants and blooming flowers. After sitting down, we dive into what she spends her days doing. “I go to Austin Community College to get my GED so I can work with the city as a bilingual interpreter,” she happily shares. She goes to the Austin Public Library to use the computers and work on homework. She also visits her family in Mexico every couple of months. “I miss my family, but I visit them often,” she says. Edaena has lived in East Austin for 19 years with her two children. In the course of her time in Austin, she was only able to afford housing on the East side of town, so she has only moved twice. The East side has been her home the entire time she has been in Austin. During her free time she likes to take walks around the neighborhood and spend time studying. “It is very beautiful here,” she says with a grin on her face. “People are really nice here.” Edaena only had one negative thing to say about the East Austin community during our interview. The dangers of living so close the metropolitan area was a concern of hers, especially regarding her young teenage boys. She began sharing her plans for moving if things didn’t change soon within the neighborhood, “I might move to Round Rock with my children. It is just too dangerous downtown.” Moving to a different city is a possibility for many East side residents. Even those who have lived in Austin for longer than Edaena. ✨















# NISHA

6 years  
Austin, TX

Nisha, stood around her siblings on their back porch as she offered to take part in my interview. We sat down and began discussing the changes she has seen in her hometown. “I was born in Austin, but moved to Houston when i was a child,” she says. “But we moved back when I was eleven and even then, things changed a lot.” When asked how, she mentions the amount of new houses that are sprinkling the neighborhood. We move on to the next question after quickly discussing all the new neighbors she has talked to, and how everyone is friendly. “Everyone here is really close,” She says as she reads over the interview questions. “This is a big community, you’ll see kids playing outside all the time, and most of us around here go to church.” She recalls all the times church groups visited the community, and happily shared with me that she had just gotten baptized a couple weeks before the interview date. I ask her if she would change anything about her hometown, in response she quickly discussed how affordable housing in Austin is becoming more scarce. “This used to be the cheap part of town. It’s getting more expensive and soon housing won’t be very easy to get, the city needs to build more apartments that people can afford.” Finding affordable housing has unfortunately become a common topic among East Austin residents. The problem of gentrification is becoming so significant that even the population of young people in Austin are feeling pressures to be able to afford a place to live. ✨

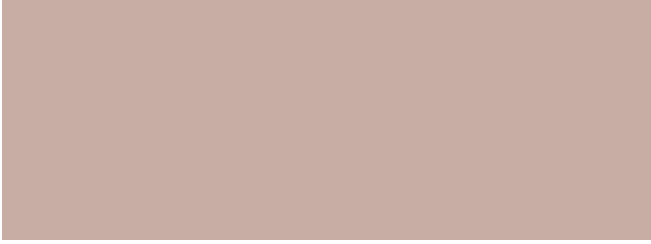
















# PATRICIA

47 years  
Austin, TX

Patricia, happily sits down with me after I ask her for an interview. We sit down on her front porch and watch children frivolously run around the neighborhood. She shares with me that she has lived in Austin her entire life. With four children and a job with health care, she is often taking care of others and is very busy. When trying to relax and take some time away from her busy life she likes to take her grandchildren to the park, “It’s very beautiful here,” she pauses, “I love East Austin.” During the interview she recalls the famous “Keep Austin Weird” slogan. “When people say that, they’re talking about here.” With the diverse population East Austin has, I nod in agreement and she continues. “People really shouldn’t judge others when they come over here. Since you get a bunch of different people over here you never know who you’re going to meet,” she says. Patricia has a positive outlook on newcomers that are quickly buying their piece of Austin. However, she also mentions the fear of not having a place to live, a problem many East side residents have faced. “I feels like they are trying to move us out sometimes, but I’m staying where I was raised at. If they knock these buildings down, they are going to have to put me somewhere, because I’m not going anywhere.” Growing up in East Austin her entire life, she beamed with pride while discussing her hometown.





# “I’m Staying right here”

When asked what her plans were for the future she smiled, “I want to buy a house. I’ve already raised all of my children and they have children now, too. I want to be able to leave something behind for them when I die,” she says. Patricia has 10 grandchildren, all of which she takes turns caring for and spending most of her time with. While tying up the interview I asked one more question and the answer was a bittersweet one. “How do you think East Austin is going to change in the next five years,” I ask. “You know what,” she says, “I really don’t know baby, but I do hope it changes for the better.” Hope is a common topic for East side residents. No matter what they face in this developing neighborhood, everyone continues to hold hope close to their hearts, and it creates a beautifully diverse neighborhood that everyone wants to be a part of. It’s important to protect the sense of community that lives in East Austin. ❀









“It’s all  
brick.  
Black  
brick,  
brown  
brick,  
white,  
brick.”



