

Choco Gonzalez Meza

Biography

Choco Gonzalez Meza was born in Zaragoza, Coahuila, Mexico in 1952. At the age of 3, she along with her 4 siblings and parents immigrated to the United States to live in Uvalde, Texas and later moved to Eagle Pass, Texas where she graduated from high school in 1971.

After graduation, Choco moved to San Antonio, Texas to attend St. Mary's University. As a student, Choco worked for Dr. Charles Cotrell, then head of the Political Science department, who later served as President of the University. As his Research Assistant, Choco translated a manual on the use of Section 5 of the Civil Rights Act. Rosie Castro, mother of San Antonio's Mayor Julian Castro and Choco assisted Cotrell in drafting the 10-1 single member district plan which was adopted in 1977, a historical benchmark for San Antonio. The single member district plan elected the first minority majority San Antonio City Council.

After graduating from St. Mary's University in 1977, Willie Velazquez recruited Choco to serve as National Research Director for Southwest Voter Registration Education Project. Choco spent four years developing data profiles to target voter registration drives, publish manuals on "The Texas Delegate Selection Process" and the "Latino Vote in the 1980 Presidential Election"; and in 1980, Choco identified 66 counties which had violated Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act for not drawing new political districts after the release of new census data; she successfully drew the first redistricting plan for Sonora County and worked with the Texas Rural Legal Aid and MALDEF in drawing numerous redistricting plans for school, city, county, legislative, and congressional districts.

In 1981, Choco was named Executive Director of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). During her seven year tenure, she increase their programs, day care slots, and after school program sites, and was responsible for the purchase of a second YWCA site. As the only Hispanic Executive Director of a YWCA in the United States, she served on numerous national committees and was sought by the National YWCA President on helping to increase Hispanic membership nationwide.

Partnership for Hope, a Rockefeller Foundation Project, recruited Choco as Executive Director in 1988. The focus of the organization was to conduct research on poverty indicators and analyze the long term economic and social implications in San Antonio. The research findings would assist policy makers in framing legislative and administrative recommendations in order to reduce poverty. Choco coordinated the publication "Pride and Poverty in San Antonio" which became the basis for the funding community to re-think their funding priorities, non-profit organizations to establish programs that would best meet the community needs, and elected officials and appointment commissions to examine their legislative and administrative strategies to reduce poverty and create a pathway to success.

In 1992, former Mayor Henry G. Cisneros tapped Choco to join him at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) where he served as HUD Secretary under President Bill Clinton. Choco served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Relations, the liaison to the White House and all federal government agencies regarding the administration's programs and initiatives. Choco worked with elected officials and public interest groups on a national basis. In addition, she served as the Secretary's representative to Hispanic organizations, to the National Association of Black Elected Officials, and to Puerto Rico.

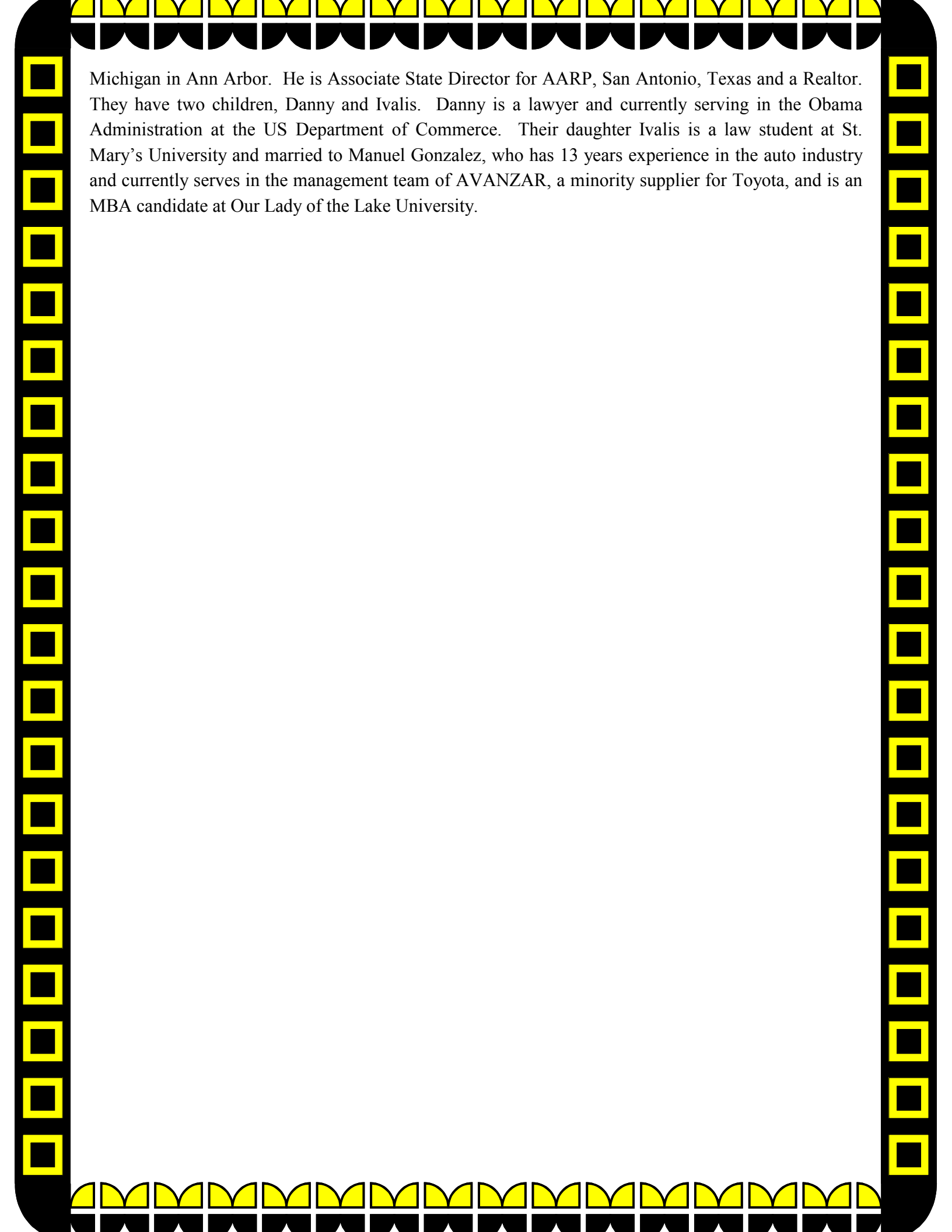
By 1996, Choco returned to San Antonio where she served as Senior Vice President at the San Antonio Housing Authority. In 1998 she became a licensed Realtor and spent seven years as one of San Antonio's top Real Estate agents with RE/Max Associates. She was named Rookie of the Year, became the Office Manager after one year of service, served as a 100% Top Producer Agent every year, named Top Platinum 50 Realtor Finalist several years, and was in the top 100 San Antonio Agents in the List of Lists by the San Antonio Business Journal.

In 2005, she returned to assist Henry Cisneros, Founder and Chairman of the Board of Directors of American Sunrise, as its President. The organization, modeled after the Children's Harlem Zone in New York City, serves students, adults, and families in the Westside of San Antonio. In this role, Choco rehabilitated 12 homes which were sold at affordable prices; spearheaded the acquisition of two structures to be developed into additional Learning Centers to increase student enrollment; assisted in helping over 30 senior home owners with emergency rehab projects; provided ESL and Citizenship classes for adults; and was successful in setting up the Si Se Puede Technology Center and the ACCD Community Technology Center. American Sunrise is the only Texas project with an AmeriCorps Public Allies project serving 75 students between the ages of 18 and 30 years of age over a three year period.

In 2010, Choco established CGM Consulting, a 100% woman owned business. The company's mantra of *"Working to Grow Your Ideas"* works with clients creating new ventures or expanding their successful business model to the next achievement level. The company is primarily focused on intergovernmental affairs, organizational management, and political advisory services. Her 35 years of professional experience with a deep network of contacts at local, state, and national level position the company to collaborate with other firms throughout the United States and internationally. In August 2011, President Barack Obama appointed Choco to serve as a member of The Commission on Presidential Scholars.

Throughout her adult life Choco has participated in the political process as a voter, campaign manager and coordinator in local, state, and national campaigns. She is a current member of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), State Democratic Executive Committee (SDEC), a Texas Democratic Party Majority Builder, and the current County Chair of the Democratic Party of Bexar County. Choco is best known for her belief that the strongest form of patriotism is through full participation in the electoral process.

Choco has been married for 38 years to Daniel S. Meza who shares her passion for community and political activism. Daniel is a graduate of the University of Texas in Austin and the University of



Michigan in Ann Arbor. He is Associate State Director for AARP, San Antonio, Texas and a Realtor. They have two children, Danny and Ivalis. Danny is a lawyer and currently serving in the Obama Administration at the US Department of Commerce. Their daughter Ivalis is a law student at St. Mary's University and married to Manuel Gonzalez, who has 13 years experience in the auto industry and currently serves in the management team of AVANZAR, a minority supplier for Toyota, and is an MBA candidate at Our Lady of the Lake University.