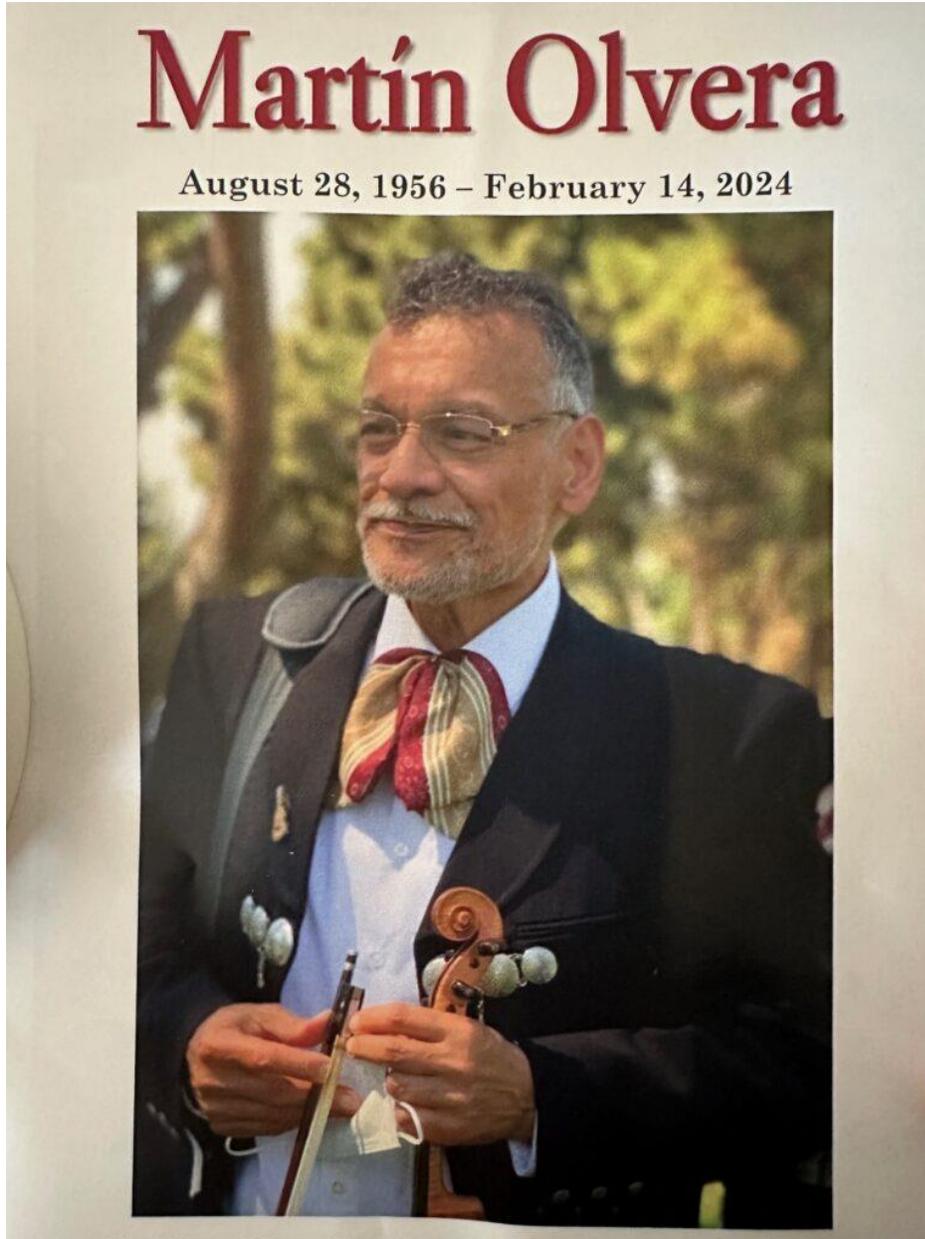


Beloved Teacher Colleague's Shocking Passing

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Martin Olvera was not just a teacher in the next classroom, he was a friend and colleague that had an huge impact on my teaching career, but especially my students. I heard of his shocking and sudden death just a week ago and wrote this piece to remember what he did, not just for me but for *our students* and the people who knew this great man.

With 200 mourners attending a beautiful Sky Rose Chapel in Rose Hills Cemetery and Mortuary, the service started with Martin's favorite Mariachis piece. His twin brother had two

words, just two words that described Martin exactly. Like the Sky Rose Chapel, Martin was both “amazing and complex.” The memorial venue was a perfect reflection of Martin’s life.

Martin was everything and everywhere in life and gave whatever he had at once to whoever he met. And he did everything 100%! He was a musician, teacher, Godfather, uncle, friend, and a music and dance teacher of many. He was a script author, board member, mentor of his musical genius, and generous with his time and money. He was the ultimate performer, not just with the Mariachi. He sang not just for singing’s sake but classical opera! Martin did everything with passion. He was not afraid. Honesty and truth-telling were his magnificent contributions to the human spirit.

While sitting and listening to well-deserved accolades, I thought of how lucky I was to have worked with this genius as a team teacher for ten years at two schools, Hoover St. and Politi Elementary. He was also an excellent elementary teacher. I was happy that my students experienced and benefited from a brilliant Spanish teacher who knew how to teach both reading and writing. Martin learned Spanish as an adult! He traveled to Mexico to understand and feel the language within the beautiful Mexican traditions and culture. Furthermore, he researched the ancient Mesoamerican library system to bring back materials to our students to create their pre-Columbian Codex (scrolls). After all those years working with Martin, he inspired me to write a Los Angeles Times Op-Ed piece defending the Los Angeles Unified School District’s bilingual program.

Even though Martin’s memorial service was about losing a great man, after all that was said about his life, the message and the feeling from the mourners was that Martin would not stop performing. He died the way he lived, still teaching a mentee how to sing from his deathbed and asking mourners to donate to one of his favorite charities in leau of flowers. His life should inspire us to live our lives with more passion, optimism, and promise. Martin was happy in life and his transition. He accepted his fate with the ultimate courage to experience his physical pain, not to prolong his life. When we shed tears about our loss, rest assured that the “amazing and complex” Martin will be there with tissue in hand with his January 20, 2024 celebrated smile.