

## Marcela Davison Avilés

Marcela Davison Avilés is a prominent American essayist, independent producer, attorney, and Latino cultural dramaturge and advisor based in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her national Op-Ed opinions appear online in [ModernLatina.com](http://ModernLatina.com) and in print in the Mercury News. Her guest columns and features have been published by [CNN.com](http://CNN.com), HipLatina, the American Banker and Harvard University's Revista Magazine.

### Early Life

Davison Avilés was born in the border town of Nogales, Arizona to Nona Avilés Davison, an educator and Robert Beatty Davison, a civil servant. Both parents were born and raised in Mexico as children and became naturalized American citizens. Her maternal grandfather, Jesús Avilés, was a businessman / cowboy and President of the Guadalajara Charro Association. Her maternal great uncle and godfather, Mosén Francisco de Ávila, was a well known Mexican poet from the Sonoran region. Her Mother's family are also early pioneers of Nogales, Arizona and opened Escalada Brothers Mercantile there in the 1880s. Escalada Brothers is still in operation and is run by Davison Avilés' cousin, Kathleen Escalada. Davison Avilés essays are often reflective of her Mexican heritage and Latino/Hispanic cultural topics.

In 1980 she graduated from Harvard College, cum laude, in Fine Arts and in 1984 from Stanford Law School.

### Early Career

Davison Aviles practiced law in the financial services sector for ten years, specializing in bank regulatory matters and international banking transactions.

In 2002 she was hired to lead the Latino Community Foundation in San Francisco.

### San Jose Mexican Heritage Festival

In 2004 Davison Avilés was recruited to lead the San Jose Mexican Heritage and Mariachi Festival as Executive Producer and CEO, and produced the award-winning event for ten years. Under her leadership the festival became a national destination; its music events and related mariachi music education program received national honors for artistic excellence during her tenure, receiving prestigious recognition and support from The National Endowment for the Arts, the City of San Jose, the White House Initiative for Educational Excellence for Hispanics, the Hewlett Foundation, the Packard Foundation and the TomKat Foundation, among other prominent arts and philanthropy organizations.

In 2008 she recruited singer and activist Linda Ronstadt to become Artistic Director of the Festival.<sup>1</sup> During Ms. Ronstadt's tenure, the Festival achieved national prominence, presenting ground-breaking "heritage concerts" that often addressed important social justice issues or illuminated the heritage music of Mexico with staging and repertoire that was both unique and comprehensive. In 2009 Ms. Davison Avilés also facilitated Ms. Ronstadt's testimony before

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/21/arts/music/21brow.html>

Congress, which the Los Angeles Times called “remarkable,” on the need to support arts education.<sup>2</sup> Davison Avilés retired from the Festival in 2014.

### Television and Film Projects

In 2006 Davison Avilés was hired by Disney executive Nancy Kanter to provide Latino cultural insights and advisory services on a new bi-lingual pre-school program called Handy Manny.<sup>3</sup>

After Handy Manny concluded its three year season, she continued to advise Disney on various Latino creative and marketing projects.<sup>4</sup> In 2013 she joined the production team at Pixar Animation Studios as a consulting advisor and Latino cultural dramaturge for the animated feature film “Coco.”<sup>5</sup> She also provides cultural insights and advisory services for the Disney Channel program “Elena of Avalor.”

In 2011 Davison Avilés co-produced with Suzanne St. John Crane and CreaTV a documentary about the women revolutionaries of the Mexican Revolution, featuring activist Dolores Huerta and Linda Ronstadt. The film won national honors from the National Alliance of Community Media.<sup>6</sup>

### Commentary and essays

In 2010 Davison Aviles began writing guest Op-Eds for the San Jose Mercury News.<sup>7</sup> Her commentary expanded to such forums as [CNN.com](http://www.cnn.com), MOSH.US, HipLatina and [ModernLatina.com](http://www.modernlatina.com) and her Op-Eds have also been published by the American Leadership Forum and the American Banker. Her feature articles have appeared in ReVista Magazine.<sup>8</sup>

### Filmography

Las Soldaderas - The Women of the Mexican Revolution - 2011

Coco - 2017

Handy Manny - 2006-2010

Elena of Avalor - 2015 - present

Vamperina - 2017

Stuck in the Middle - 2016 - pilot

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLo6o\\_ayKZ0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLo6o_ayKZ0)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm3168702/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.tbo.com/events/disney-defends-new-hispanic-influenced-princess-541465>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2016/12/pixar-coco-gael-garcia-bernal-dia-de-los-muertos-miguel>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20110627006990/en/Linda-Ronstadt-Dolores-Huerta-Documentary-Wins-National>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.mercurynews.com/author/marcela-davison-aviles/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://revista.drclas.harvard.edu/book/el-camino-project>

References: