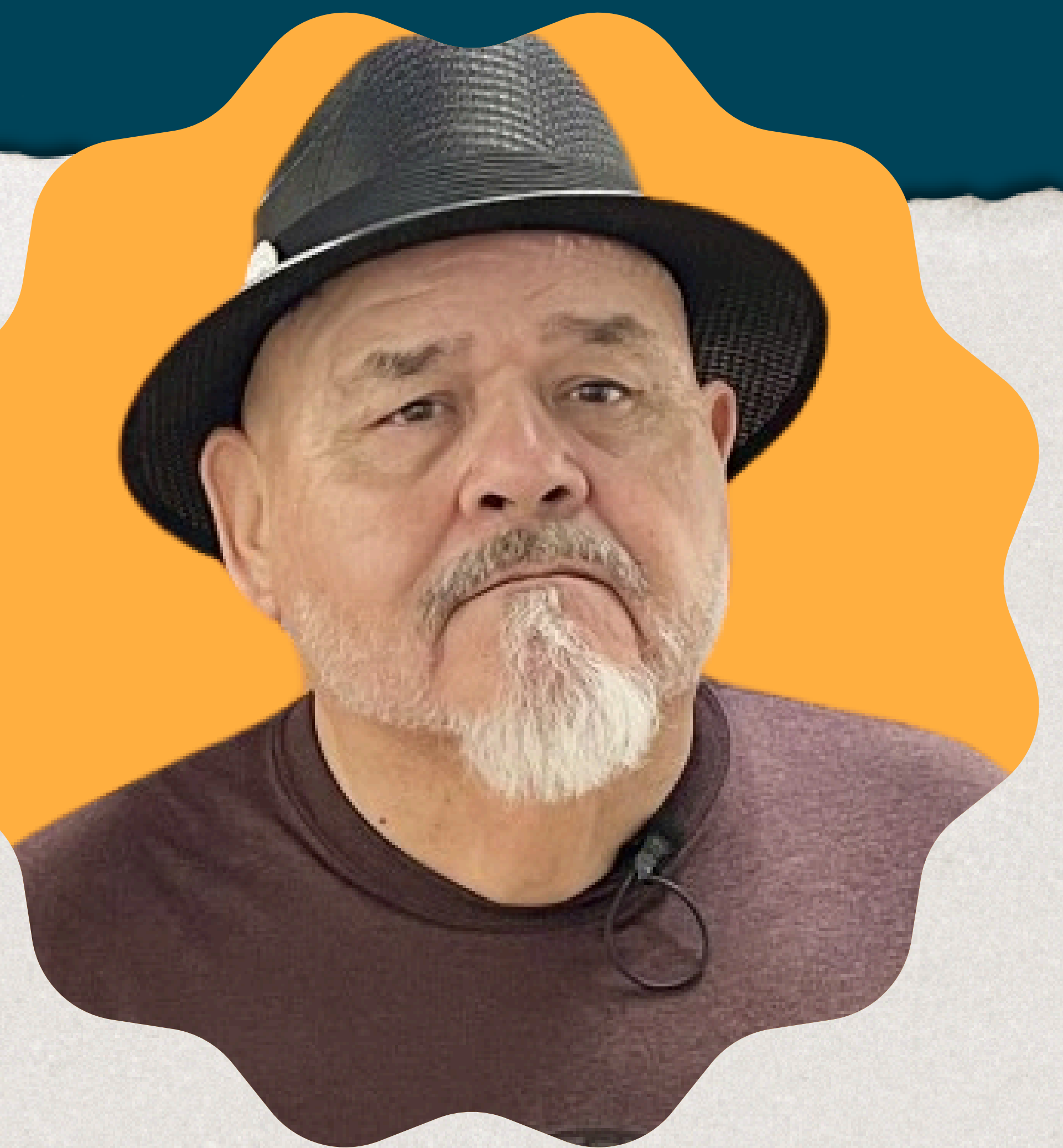


Rigoberto Reyes



VIA INTERNATIONAL 2024 FINALIST

A community organizer with deep roots in San Diego, Rigoberto Reyes has dedicated his life to empowering the communities of the border region. Born and raised in San Ysidro, his passion for activism was galvanized by the national Civil Rights Movement and the work of César Chávez, inspiring him to ride his bike from San Ysidro to the historic takeover of Chicano Park in 1970 as a young teen. It was the first of many forays into the struggle for social justice within San Diego's Chicano community. Over the course of his 40-year nonprofit career with Via International (Via), Reyes has remained a deeply respected leader on both sides of the border.

Early in his career, Reyes led Via's promotora training program in Tijuana and Mexicali, Mexico. He crossed the border daily to support the formation of leadership groups, emphasizing personal development, self-reliance, and community development. Reyes supported the mostly female participants as they worked to support family nutrition, employment, higher education, and small businesses in their communities. In San Diego, Reyes brought these strategies to local Chicano youth in Logan Heights and beyond. A pillar of the Chicano Park community, he has actively supported the Chicano Park Steering Committee, the grassroots organization that curates the largest collection of Chicano murals in the United States. Reyes has launched food security programs, nutrition and ecology trainings, small business incubation services, and cultural programming that centers Chicano activists, artists, advocates, and entrepreneurs.

Reyes has consistently sought to empower mentees and colleagues to change the systems that shape their lives. Through Via's university travel and service immersion program, Reyes has mentored and hosted students from prestigious academic institutions across the country as they visit the border region. He developed a curriculum for this work that centers wisdom keepers in the host community, guiding participants to explore border issues, the true meaning of community, and their own leadership potential.

