**MEDIA ADVISORY**

Corrine Folmer, Ed.D., Superintendent

1450 Herndon, Clovis, CA 93611-0599  
(559) 327-9000

**March 8, 2024**

**For Immediate Release**

Contact: Chief Communication Officer Kelly Avants, APR   
Phone: 559-327-9092 Email: kellyavants@cusd.com

**Google Folder with photos, video clips, b-roll**:  [here](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1hhVooSvhZEWStrA_9-aKA50hpF_9C1DL).

**Student makes author visit, curriculum possible**

*'House on Mango Street’ writer shares candid story,*

*encouragement at Clovis North March 8*

Today, around 150 freshmen English 9 students had the rare opportunity to meet the author of a book they have been studying when renowned writer and poet Sandra Cisneros spoke at Clovis North High School – and it was all thanks to a fellow student who had an ambitious idea last summer.

Cisneros’ award-winning book “The House on Mango Street” contains short vignettes about the coming-of-age story of a Mexican-American girl over the course of a year and her observations about social class, race, gender and culture. Students at Clovis North read the book earlier this year as a result of senior Surabhi Khanna who wanted to increase students’ experiences reading books written by people of color. As president of the student club, “The Coloring Book,” where members meet at lunchtime to read short stories by authors of different backgrounds, she wanted to do more.

Surabhi chose Cisnero’s book that's on Clovis Unified School District’s approved list and shared her idea to develop curriculum for it with teacher Chad Hayden, who was her speech and debate coach. He was excited about the project and was her sounding board through the summer as she jumped into creating vocabulary review, writing question prompts and identifying associated reading materials to put the narrative in context of the time.

Both Hayden and fellow English 9 teacher Shelby Fechtman put Surabhi’s work into motion this school year, teaching her unit and reading Cisneros’ work, in their four English 9 classes.

Those students had many questions for the author Friday as she shared her own journey of coming into an understanding of using her “superpowers” of writing and love to make life meaningful.

“Why had I never seen my community written about with love?” she asked. It was a question that she said helped her find her path to tell the stories in “The House on Mango Street” that reflected people whom she loved and knew.

“The stories are easy to read,” Hayden said, “but they can challenge one’s thoughts and cause one to reflect. They are deep.”

At the presentation, Cisneros read a portion of a new draft narrative she is developing, and then answered questions from Surabhi and students. “What were the challenges of growing up Mexican American?” “Did your parents support your dreams?” “What author influenced you?”

Cisneros encouraged the room of teenagers to spend time truly getting to know themselves, to find their own superpowers, and to be aware that they are the author of their own stories. “You may have a cliffhanger at the end of a chapter, but remember, there is another chapter then waiting to be written. This is the story of YOUR life.”

And of Surabhi and her project, she was thrilled to see it all come together. “I was so honored to meet her in person.”

Said the author of the student, “She’s a true 'Esperanza' character that’s going to get up to make change and not wait for someone else to do it.”

**+++**