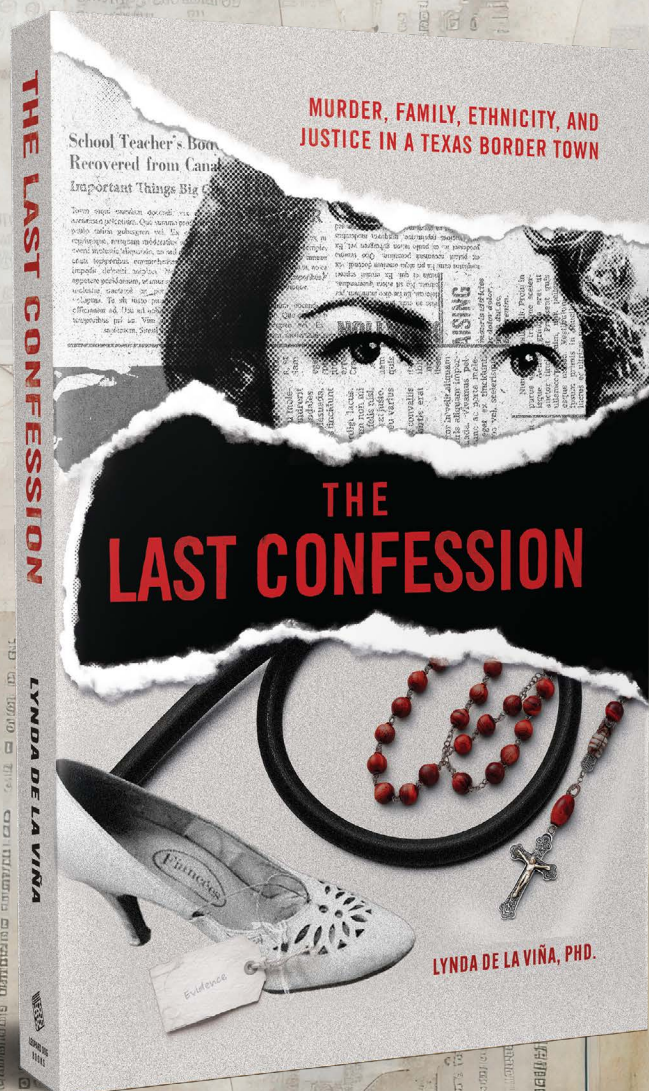


# MEDIA KIT



## MEDIA CONTACT

Angela Bell

[abell@booklaunchers.com](mailto:abell@booklaunchers.com)

“An engrossing true crime story. A new classic of the genre, this book jumps to the head of the pack among new true crime reads.”

—Don Murphy, producer of *Natural Born Killers*, *Real Steel*, and the *Transformers* series

# THE LAST CONFESSION

*Murder, Family, Ethnicity,  
and Justice in a  
Texas Border Town*

AUTHOR  
**Lynda de la Viña, PhD.**

 [thelastconfession.com](http://thelastconfession.com)

 [@lyndadelavina](https://www.instagram.com/lyndadelavina)

 [lynda-de-la-vina-33380b7](https://www.linkedin.com/in/lynda-de-la-vina-33380b7)

## TOPICS INCLUDE



TRUE  
CRIME

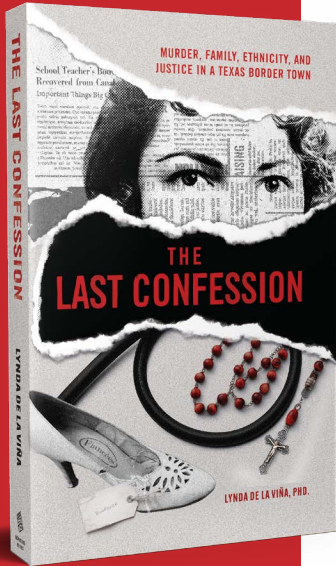


HISPANIC  
& LATINO



VIOLENCE  
IN SOCIETY

# ABOUT THE BOOK



**Title:** *The Last Confession: Murder, Family, Ethnicity, and Justice in a Texas Border Town*

**Publisher:** Leopard Dog Books

**ISBN 13:** Paperback: 978-1-965639-01-6; ebook: 978-1-965639-00-9; Hardcover: 978-1-965639-02-3

**Format:** Paperback; ebook; Hardcover

**Price:** Paperback \$19.99; ebook \$9.99; Hardcover \$29.99

**Pages:** 276

**Publication Date:** October 13, 2026 (for eBook and hardcover editions)

## A TEXAS MURDER, A PRIEST AND THE 60-YEAR COLD CASE THE CHURCH COULDN'T BURY

In 1960, Irene Garza was murdered in McAllen, Texas. The prime suspect was a Catholic priest. What followed was not only a brutal crime, but a 60-year investigation marked by silence, institutional power, and a conviction that would become the oldest on record.

In *The Last Confession*, Dr. Lynda de la Viña—cousin to Irene Garza—reveals the inside story of a Texas murder the Catholic Church helped conceal. Blending true crime, memoir, and investigative reporting, she traces the decades-long fight for accountability in the Rio Grande Valley. Dr. de la Viña draws on meticulous research and personal memory to expose how legal barriers, district attorney refusals, church governance, and political ties obstructed justice for over half a century.

As a family member who lived under the shadow of this crime and a retired professor trained to analyze systems of power, Dr. de la Viña brings both emotional truth and factual precision to this historic conviction.

## INSIDE, YOU'LL DISCOVER:

- How a 1960 Texas murder became one of the longest-running cold cases in U.S. criminal history—and why it took 60 years to convict.
- The documented inner workings of Catholic Church governance and how institutional silence protected a priest.
- The role of grand juries, district attorneys, and investigative process failures that delayed justice.
- The psychological manipulation and shifting confessions of Father John Feit.
- How one South Texas family refused to let corruption erase their cousin's memory.

More than just a true crime book, *The Last Confession* is a record of perseverance, faith tested by power, and justice finally restored.

## BOOK AVAILABLE FROM

[amazon](#) [BARNES&NOBLE](#) [Apple Books](#) [Chapters](#) [Indigo](#) [BAM!](#) [INDIEBOUND](#)

CLICK HERE TO  
DOWNLOAD  
HIGH-RESOLUTION  
AUTHOR PHOTO  
& BOOK IMAGE

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

## TOPICS INCLUDE

**Dr. Lynda de la Viña** is dean emerita of the University of Texas at San Antonio and at Johns Hopkins University. She's also the first Mexican-American woman to earn a PhD in economics in the United States. A nationally respected economist and public servant, she has spent her career examining how institutions shape policy, power, and public accountability.

Her mission as an author is rooted in both scholarship and family history. In *The Last Confession: Murder, Family, Ethnicity, and Justice in a Texas Border Town*, she brings analytical rigor and personal conviction to the decades-long investigation into the 1960 murder of her cousin, Irene Garza. Drawing on her expertise in economic systems and governance, Dr. de la Viña documents how institutional structures, legal barriers, and silence delayed justice for nearly 60 years. Her purpose is clear: to preserve the historical record, honor her family's perseverance, and ensure that truth is not lost to power.

Born in Edinburg in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, approximately 20 miles from the Mexican border, Dr. de la Viña earned her bachelor's degree in government and economics from the University of Texas–Pan American (now the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley), and her master's and doctorate in economics from Rice University. She served as deputy assistant secretary for economic policy at the U.S. Department of the Treasury during the Clinton administration from 1998 to 2001, becoming the first Mexican American woman at the secretarial level of the Treasury. She later served as senior policy analyst for the U.S.–Mexico Chamber of Commerce and as full professor and associate dean at Johns Hopkins University, where she chaired the Department of Finance and International Business.

Dr. de la Viña resides in San Antonio, Texas. She is the mother of two adopted children and grandmother to four grandsons. A lifelong tennis player and sports car enthusiast, she enjoys British television mysteries, classic films, and writing. Readers can learn more about her work at [TheLastConfession.com](http://TheLastConfession.com) and [vinjer.com](http://vinjer.com).



Dr. Lynda de la Viña talks about how her family exposed the truth behind Irene Garza's murder, revealing how institutional silence delayed justice for sixty years and how persistence finally brought accountability.

- The Irene Garza Case: A Priest, a Murder, and 60 Years
- Justice vs. the Church: How Institutional Silence Protected a Killer
- A Valley Remembers: The Murder That Changed South Texas
- A Case That Wouldn't Die: How a Family Helped Solve a 60-Year Murder
- When the Victim Is Family: Writing True Crime from the Inside
- Faith Betrayed: When Power Failed a Mexican-American Community

# BOOK EXCERPT

## Chapter 1. The Assault on America

It was an unusually grey, cloudy morning in the lower Rio Grande Valley. The workday was beginning in Hidalgo County, and the smell of fresh breakfast tacos lingered in the air. As usual, Beatrice Garcia, a beautiful young Mexican-American woman with long black hair, said goodbye to her family before leaving for work. “*Adios Papa ya me tengo que ir!*” (I’ve got to go!) she said as she walked briskly out the door. When she passed the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in McAllen, Texas, she made the sign of the cross as she had been taught in catechism classes. Then she hurried down the sidewalk to the retail shop on Main Street where she worked.

As Beatrice was walking, out of the corner of her eye, she noticed a black car moving slowly very close to her. A voice called to her in a soft monotone, “Beatrice.” The driver knew her name! She turned to look and, although she didn’t know him, saw the driver was a priest. Since he was a man of the church, she approached the car to speak with him. The priest said his name was Father Feit, and he asked Beatrice if she needed a ride, since he had noticed she passed the church every day. He looked at her through his black horn-rimmed glasses with intense, dark eyes, and then quickly asked her to get in.

Beatrice felt uncomfortable and nicely declined. She remembered her Catholic upbringing to always be kind to priests, but there was something about his eyes and the black car that unsettled her. He then told her how pretty she was and that he liked her black hair and black dress. More uncomfortable, Beatrice felt her heart beating faster, and she backed away as the priest stared at her as if his eyes penetrated her body. He said, “I want to take pictures of you at the cemetery in your black dress.” Beatrice’s mind could not grasp the strangeness of his request, but his dark gaze said it all. She recoiled and began to run as quickly as she could back to her home. As she ran, gasping for air, she thought, “He has been watching me...he has been watching me.”

A few days before, 27-year-old Father John Bernard Feit had been shadowing another girl. On March 23rd, 1960, Father Feit had parked a borrowed blue-and-white 1956 Ford Tudor on 15th Street in Edinburg, Texas, a city bordering McAllen, and waited for a pretty young co-ed to walk to the outdoor bathroom (outhouse). He had been watching the girl for weeks. Her house was directly across the street from Edinburg’s Sacred Heart Catholic Church, where Feit was serving as a supply priest, filling in when needed by the full-time parish priests.

Father Feit had singled out the girl from among the Edinburg Sacred Heart congregation, noting that she lived conveniently near the church. Every afternoon the girl walked from her small clapboard house to the outhouse. Outhouses were not uncommon in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas in 1960. The Valley, as it was

commonly referred to by locals, had the highest poverty level of any region in the state, and many families didn’t even have running water or electricity.

Father Feit sat waiting in the Ford and thought about the girl. She was Mexican-American, fair and slender, with black hair. He liked black hair especially if it was long. Her back reminded him of the bending palm trees that lined Highway 281, the road that led from the Rio Grande Valley to San Antonio, Texas, where he had studied for the priesthood. He had been watching her even during church services and was especially attracted to the “click, click, click” of the girl’s high heels when she walked back to her pew from the communion rail during Mass. Feit knew his interest in the girl was sinful, but he also knew that if he wandered slightly from the path of righteousness he could quickly make his way to the shelter of the all-powerful Catholic Church. After all, he was a priest, God’s representative on earth.

The girl, Maria America Guerra, known as America, was from the small town of Fronton in Starr County, the county to the west of Hidalgo, and was living with a family in Edinburg as she studied for her degree in education at nearby Pan American College. America walked out of her house at about 4:30 in the afternoon of March 23rd, 1960. As she entered the outhouse, she noticed a man with black hair and black horn-rimmed glasses was sitting in a blue-and-white 1955- or 1956-model car parked adjacent to the outhouse. He was watching her.

Later, after eating her *sena*, her early dinner, America called several girls and invited them to go to the church with her to pray, but they were all busy, so she went alone, even though the image of the man was still in her mind. As she walked across the street, she noticed the same car parked between her house and the church, but the man was gone. “Where is he?” she murmured, glancing around, and quickly approached the church.

“As I entered the church, I noticed a man sitting alone in one of the rear benches on my left,” she later told investigators. “This man also had black hair and black horn-rimmed glasses, and the thought that it was the same man that I saw earlier entered my mind. But being in a house of God, I dismissed any thoughts of foul play.”

A woman America did not know was kneeling at the altar, praying. America approached the altar herself, knelt down, and began to pray. The other woman soon stood up and left the church. Moments later, America heard the footsteps of someone approaching from the back of the church.

She looked behind her to see who it was. It was a man, the same man who had been sitting at the rear of the church when she entered. He was wearing a light beige shirt and black pants. She was gripped with anxiety and terror: she could not move.