

Speaker Biographies

In Order of Appearance



Carlos Andrés Gómez is the author of the coming-of-age memoir *Man Up: Reimagining Modern Manhood*, released by Penguin Random House. Named 2016 Best Diversity Artist by Campus Activities Magazine and Artist of the Year at the 2009 Promoting Outstanding Writers Awards, Gómez costarred in Spike Lee's #1 movie *Inside Man* with Denzel Washington, Jodie Foster, and Clive Owen. A former social worker and public school teacher, Carlos has lectured and performed at more than 400 colleges and universities, facilitated countless workshops, and delivered numerous keynotes and commencement addresses. He continues to tour the globe.



Cristela Alonzo made TV history in 2014, by being the first Latina to create, produce and star in a network TV sitcom, "*Cristela*," an achievement which caps a whirlwind year. She released "*Some of the Hits*," her first stand-up CD through Comedy Central, was a viewer favorite as a featured guest host on ABC's "*The View*" and made her feature film debut in the recent (2016) *Angry Birds* movie. She's performed at the Melbourne Comedy Festival, the Bonnaroo Music Festival and is a favorite at the Just for Laughs Festival in Montreal. She also taped "*The Half Hour*," her first half-hour special in Boston, which premiered in June 2013 on Comedy Central. Cristela is based in LA and when not on tour, can be found performing at various clubs around town, including her home club, the Comedy & Magic Club in Hermosa Beach, CA.



Alejandra Ceja was appointed by the White House in 2013 to serve President Barack Obama and the U.S. Secretary of Education as the executive director of the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. In this role, Ceja works closely with the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics and the Federal Interagency Working Group on Educational Excellence for Hispanics in an effort to increase the educational attainment and life outcomes of Hispanics across the nation. Prior to this role she was the Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary of Education at the U.S. Department of Education. Her previous professional experience includes serving as the Senior Budget and Appropriations Advisor for the House Congressional Committee on Education and Labor and as a Program Examiner for the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Ceja is a native of Huntington Park, CA, though her family's roots trace back to Michoacán, Mexico. She received her M.P.A in public administration at Baruch College, City University of New York, and her B.A. in political science at Mount St. Mary's University in California.



Rosie Rios is the 43rd Treasurer of the United States and is most recently known for initiating and leading the historic efforts to place a woman on U.S. currency for the first time in over a century. As Treasurer, Rios oversaw the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the United States Mint, and was a key liaison with the Federal Reserve. Her career has focused on real estate finance, economic development and urban revitalization in both the public and private sectors. She is a graduate of Harvard University and was recently selected as the first Latina in Harvard's 380-year history to have a portrait commissioned in her honor.



Dr. Lisette Nieves is an experienced social entrepreneur and public sector leader. She's currently a Founding Partner at Lingo Ventures, where she provides consulting services to the nonprofit and public sector. Previously, Dr. Nieves served for two years as a Distinguished Visiting Professor in Public Policy at the City University of New York at Brooklyn College. She also led the launch of a pilot workforce and community college partnership in Miami and Philadelphia and served as the founding Executive Director of Year Up NY. She served as the Chief of Staff at the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) for the City of New York and at the Corporation for National Service. Her board affiliations include the Fund for the City of New York, Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School Advisory Council, Stand for Children, Edwin Gould Foundation, Guttman Community College and Commissioner for the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. Dr. Nieves holds a B.A. from Brooklyn College, a M.P.A. from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University and a doctorate in Higher Education Management at the University of Pennsylvania. She is a Truman Scholar, Rhodes Scholar and an Aspen Pahara Fellow.



Dr. Cinthia B. Saturnino is currently an Assistant Professor of Marketing at Northeastern University. She will be joining the faculty at the University of Connecticut in the Fall of 2017. She earned her PhD at Florida State University and her MBA from the University of Florida. Dr. Saturnino was the 26th Hispanic American female to earn a Ph.D. in Marketing, and was recently recognized as a 2016 Emerging Scholar by *Diverse Magazine*. Since 2010, she has been an active volunteer for the PhD Project, and is the founding co-chair of the Committee for Hispanic Excellence in business. Dr. Saturnino's research focus is on examining how social systems and social structures impact innovation, performance, and sustainability, and she has co-authored several award winning articles. Her industry experience includes more than a decade as a strategic planning and CRM professional. Dr. Saturnino is a founding partner of Cordoba-Parsons, a consulting company.



Gabriella Gomez is the Deputy Director of Postsecondary policy and advocacy and leads the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation’s team that is responsible for developing and executing engagement strategies to support the scaling and sustainability of the foundation’s work towards the overall Postsecondary Success agenda. Prior to joining the Foundation, she worked at the U.S. Department of Education, leading the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs, and most recently served as the Acting Assistant Secretary for the Office in charge of the overall budget and policy efforts for the agency.

Gomez’s other experiences include serving as the lead higher education policy advisor for Chairman George Miller (D-CA), on the U.S. House of Representative’s Committee for Education and Labor, as well as a lobbyist for the American Federation of Teachers, and as a legislative assistant in the U.S. Representative **Ciro Rodriguez (D-TX)**. She is a graduate of the Harvard School of Education and Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles, CA), and is a recipient of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute’s Fellowship.



Dr. Sobeyda Gomez-Chou was born in El Salvador and raised in Houston, Texas. She is a first-generation high school and college graduate having earned a B.S. in Biomedical Engineering at the University of Texas at Austin. Her interests in STEM led her to pursue a Ph.D. in Cancer Biology, which allowed her to conduct research on pancreatic cancer at the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. Dr. Gomez-Chou’s experience as one of the few minority students in her STEM educational career inspired her to contribute to K-12 STEM education. She now serves as a high school math teacher in Oakland, California.



Dr. Yolanda Flores Niemann is a Professor of Psychology at the University of North Texas (UNT). Previously, she served as Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at UNT, Vice Provost and Dean at Utah State University, and held numerous administrative positions at Washington State University, including Chair of the Department of Comparative Ethnic Studies. Her most prominent research areas include the effects and social ecological contexts of stereotypes, especially in academia, and the psychological effects of tokenism on faculty of color. She has been awarded over 42 million dollars in federal grants for outreach programs to facilitate entry into and success in higher education for low socioeconomic status students. Her numerous publications include multiple books, journal articles, and book chapters. Her most recent book (with co-editors), *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*, has received much national and international attention.



Veronica Melvin is President and Chief Executive Officer of LA's Promise. Passion, activism, empowerment and learning are four key qualities that are present throughout Veronica Melvin's dedicated work in the fields of education and health for children and families. Melvin has a solid track record of building effective coalitions comprising educators, students, parents, and community stakeholders who make a firm commitment to work collaboratively to constantly improve teaching and learning in public school settings. Melvin received a Presidential appointment as the Commissioner for the

President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. Melvin earned her Bachelor of Arts in Political Economies of Industrial Societies from UC Berkeley and her Masters of Public Policy from UCLA's School of Public Affairs.



Dominican-American actress **Aimee Carrero** currently voices Princess Elena, Disney's first Latina princess, on the hit animated series, Elena of Avalor. She also stars as Sofia Rodriguez on the FreeForm sitcom Young & Hungry. Carrero's other recent television credits include recurring roles on "Blindspot" and "The Americans."



Humanitas Award nominated writer **Silvia Cardenas Olivas** is currently the Head Writer and Co-Producer on the hit animated series, Elena of Avalor, featuring Disney's first Latina Princess. An alumna of the Disney-ABC Writers Program, the Warner Brothers Writers' Workshop and the National Hispanic Media Coalition's Television Writers Program, Olivas began her career in television as a stage manager on "El Show de Paul Rodriguez." She served as a writer-producer on the hit series "Moesha," and wrote and co-executive produced "The Brothers Garcia," for which she was nominated for a Humanitas Award.



Diana Trujillo was raised in Cali, Colombia, and grew up with a passion for space travel and exploration. After graduating from high-school, she decided to move to the United States to pursue her dream of working for NASA. Since 2008, she has worked at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, contributing to both human and robotic space missions. Currently, she is Mission Lead and Deputy Team Chief of the Engineering division of Curiosity, NASA's next generation Mars rover. She is responsible for ensuring that Curiosity's day-to-day plan meets the science objectives while maintaining rover health and safety. In this mission, she has also served as Surface Sampling System Activity Lead, Dust Removal Tool Lead Systems Engineer, Flight Ground Systems Engineer, and Vehicle System Testbed Mars Surface Lead. Diana earned a BS in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Maryland, with additional studies at the University of Florida. She is also a graduate of Miami-Dade Community College and the NASA Academy.



Vanessa Casillas is a third generation brick mason and has been a union bricklayer for 11 years. As an apprentice, Casillas competed in bricklaying competitions every year of her apprenticeship program, placing in the finals each year, including 1st place locally and eventually moving on to compete at the International level. As a member of the Ho-chunk Tribal Nation and as a Latina, Ms. Casillas is adamant in her commitment to ensuring access, opportunity and equity for women and minorities in the skilled trades. Casillas currently serves on the Board of Directors for Chicago Women in Trades, where she is a fierce advocate for inclusion and equality for women breaking

barriers in the non-traditional careers. In addition to her role as a Board member, she volunteers countless hours to supporting, teaching, and mentoring new and aspiring tradeswomen. Vanessa is a member of the National Taskforce on Tradeswomen Issues, where she dedicates her time and talent to ensuring women across the country are treated fairly in the construction industry. While living in Minneapolis, Ms. Casillas served on the Advisory Committee for Women Wear Hardhats Too.



Tina Tchen is an Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff to the First Lady Michelle Obama. Within the Obama Administration she also serves as the Executive Director for the Council on Women and Girls and the past Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement. Tchen was previously a partner in corporate litigation at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP. In that capacity, Tchen represented public agencies in state and federal class actions, including the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, the Illinois Department of Public Aid,

and the Chicago Housing Authority. Tchen is the recipient of many awards, including the Leadership Award from the Women's Bar Association of Illinois (1999); "Women of Achievement" award from the Anti-Defamation League (1996); and Chicago Lawyer "Person of the Year" (1994).



Dr. John B. King, Jr. is the U.S. Secretary of Education, a position he assumed in January 2016. In tapping him to lead the U.S. Department of Education, President Obama called Dr. King "an exceptionally talented educator," citing his commitment to "preparing every child for success" and his lifelong dedication to education as a teacher, principal, and leader of schools and school systems. Before becoming Secretary, Secretary King had served at the Department since January 2015 and carried out the duties of the Deputy Secretary, overseeing all preschool-through-12th-

grade education policies and programs as well as Department operations. Secretary King joined the Department following his tenure as the first African-American and Puerto Rican to serve as New York State Education Commissioner, a post he held from 2011 to 2015. King began his career in education as a high school social studies teacher in Puerto Rico and Boston and a middle school principal.



Cecilia Muñoz is the Assistant to the President and Director of the Domestic Policy Council, which coordinates the domestic policy-making process in the White House. Prior to this role, she served as Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs. Before joining the Obama Administration, Muñoz served as Senior Vice President for the Office of Research, Advocacy, and Legislation at the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the nation's largest Latino civil rights organization. Muñoz is the former Chair of the Board of Center for Community

Change, and served on the U.S. Programs Board of the Open Society Institute and the Board of Directors of the Atlantic Philanthropies and the National Immigration Forum.



Denice Frohman is an award-winning poet and educator, whose work explores the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and the “in-betweenness” that exists in us all. She's the 2013 Women of the World Poetry Slam Champion, 2014 CantoMundo Fellow, 2013 Hispanic Choice Award, and 2012 Leeway Transformation Award recipient. Her poem "Dear Straight People" went viral with over 1.5 million YouTube views. She has a Master's in Education and was also the former Program Director at the Philly Youth Poetry Movement. She has performed and taught poetry across the country and internationally in arts venues, rallies, K-12 schools, colleges, and

detention centers. Her work is predominantly focused on social change and seeks to challenge the borders that divide us. As a queer woman from a multi-cultural background, her work is about identity, challenging dominant social constructs and oppressive narratives, and claiming the power to be who you are.



Dr. Nancy E. Brune is the Executive Director of the Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities, a statewide policy research center providing independent, data-driven analysis on issues of tax and fiscal policy, education, and economic development. She also serves as a Senior Fellow at the UNLV William S. Boyd School of Law. She is the author of over 70 peer-reviewed journal articles, reports, essays, blogs, and op-ed pieces on topics ranging from economic security, health outcomes, education, energy security, and public security. Her work has appeared in the IMF Staff Papers, Social

Science and Medicine, Foreign Policy Analysis, and Americas Quarterly. She is an adjunct instructor at the College of Southern Nevada and Nevada State College. Dr. Brune is also the Commissioner for the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.



Andrea Pedraza is founder and owner of CocoAndré Chocolatier, a family-owned specialty chocolate shop located in Dallas' Bishop Arts District. Andrea Pedraza is an accomplished master of truffle creation and chocolate design, brings a delicious old-world charm to her craft. Today CocoAndré Chocolatier produces some of the finest handcrafted chocolate delights in the world, selling the delectable treats from the quaint family-owned retail store to legions of fans and scores of businesses throughout Dallas and across America. In 2015, she looked to acquire a loan to expand her business and found PeopleFund, who provided a loan through the Tory Burch Foundation Capital Program, enabling her to purchase additional equipment and open an updated storefront.



Beatriz Acevedo is the founding partner and president of mitú, the most influential digital media brand for Latino Millennials. She's a digital pioneer, Latin media expert and multi award-winning producer. She's passionate about empowering Latino youth to become entrepreneurs and works hard to diversify Hollywood through mitú's accelerator program, providing the next generation of Latino content creators with resources and mentorship to succeed by doing what they are passionate about.



Luisa Santos was born in Bogota, Colombia and has lived in Miami since she was 8 years old. She attended the Honors College at Miami Dade College and later Georgetown University where she graduated with a degree in political economy with a minor in education, inquiry, and justice. During her senior year at Georgetown, Santos discovered liquid nitrogen's potential to revolutionize the ice cream experience. Merging her passions for sustainable, value-driven business and a mission to reinvent the way America thinks of ice cream, she decided to launch Lulu's Ice Cream.



Dr. Marie T. Mora, a nationally recognized labor economist, has been invited to share her research expertise on Hispanic socioeconomic outcomes across the country, including with the White House Council of Economic Advisers and the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. Her publications include the award-winning book *Hispanic Entrepreneurs in the 2000s* (Stanford University Press, with Alberto Dávila); over 40 journal articles & book chapters; and two co-edited volumes. Marie's current book project (under contract with Lexington Books, with Dávila and Havidán Rodríguez) is examining the socioeconomic effects of Puerto Rico's economic crisis. Marie is a member of the BLS Data Users Advisory Committee and Director of the NSF-funded American Economic Association's Mentoring Program. She previously served on the AEA Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession and was President of the American Society of Hispanic Economists. Her recent

honors include the 2016 Outstanding Support for Hispanics in Higher Education Award from the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, and the 2015 Cesar Estrada Chavez Award from the American Association for Access, Equity, and Diversity.



Dulce Ramirez is a proud Southeast Los Angeles native from Lynwood, CA and an undergraduate student attending California State University, Dominguez Hills. She is a current policy intern with the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. As a community organizer and activist, she has brought student voices to the forefront of the education policy debate in Los Angeles by inspiring students to address the Los Angeles Board of Education on college access issues and mobilizing students to lobby elected officials on school finance reform by running multiple successful campaigns. As a previous campaign manager for Students for Education Reform in California, Ramirez continues to work with other college students to build power and create change for educational justice and equity by attracting student interest to complex and politically charged policy issues such as school finance, ethnic studies, and suspension policies. Ramirez is dedicated to her community and continues to ensure that more students from underserved communities have the option to access all the privileges of a post-secondary education.



Pamela Silva Conde is a Peruvian American six-time Emmy award-winning journalist and co-anchor of the Univision Network's weekday newsmagazine, "Primer Impacto" one of the highest rating programs in the United States and in 12 Latin-American countries. Since she joined the show in 2011, she has covered major national and international news stories; most recently, she reported on every angle of the terrorist attack at the Boston marathon, live from Boston. Silva Conde graduated with honors from Florida International University with a degree in Broadcast Journalism and earned a graduate certificate in Bilingual Communications from St. Thomas University. In 2012 she received a Master's Degree in Business Administration (MBA) from Florida International University.



Catherine M. Pino is Founder and CEO of D&P Creative Strategies, a minority certified LGBT and Women's Business Enterprise Company founded in 2004. Catherine has extensive experience working in the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors. She served as the Deputy Director of Urban School Reform for the Carnegie Corporation of New York and a liaison to the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) organization's board and corporate advisors. She had dedicated her professional career to work in the communities she cares about deeply serving as a board member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, GLAAD, the Nielsen Hispanic/Latino Diversity Advisory Council and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR). Currently, she is a board Member of the Arcus Foundation and she is Senior Advisor to the Director of the CIA for

Diversity in Leadership. She has Executive Produced six films for HBO & PBS American Masters including; The Latino List 1 & 2, The Out List, The Women's List, The Boomer List and The Trans List.



Ingrid M. Duran is CEO & Founder of D&P Creative Strategies founded in 2004 to increase the role of corporate, legislative and philanthropic efforts in addressing the concerns of Latinos, women, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) communities. Prior to starting D&P, Ingrid was President & CEO of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. Ingrid ran the Washington, D.C. office of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, and worked on Capitol Hill for 6 years. She was tapped by President Bill Clinton to serve on the President's Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS, and was appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the

Minority Veterans Advisory Board. She was the first Latina to serve on the board of the Human Rights Campaign and also served on the boards of the National Hispana Leadership Institute (NHLI), Futuro Media Group, The NCLR Action Fund and GLAAD. She has Executive Produced six films for HBO & PBS American Masters including; The Latino List 1 & 2, The Out List, The Women's List, The Boomer List and The Trans List.



Vanessa Vasquez is a Mexican-American actress raised in Houston, Texas. She studied at the University of Houston and Stella Adler Acting Academy in Hollywood. Vasquez received a 2015 Emmy nomination for her portrayal of Camila Barrios on the Hulu original series East Los High. She also received Best Actress in a feature film nomination for a 2015 Imágen Award. She is the first national spokesperson for IGNITE National encouraging young women to run for elected office and become civically engaged.



Jaqueline Cortez-Wang is the Deputy Director for the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics which works to strengthen the Nation by expanding educational opportunities and improving educational outcomes for Hispanics of all ages. A passionate advocate for underrepresented communities, Cortez-Wang has successfully led key initiatives and projects at the local and national levels throughout her professional career centered on the ideal that everyone deserves access to a quality education and the opportunity to live up to their true potential. Cortez-Wang previously served as the Hispanic Communications and Outreach Director at the U.S. Department of

Education and as Senior Supervisor for the Human Research Program Education and Outreach team at NASA. A proud daughter of immigrants from Mexico and a Houstonian at heart, one of Cortez-Wang's proudest achievements was leading the strategic development and execution of youth education programs focused on motivating young students to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics that ultimately benefitted youth internationally.



Ginette Magaña is an Associate Director in the White House Office of Public Engagement. In this role she is the White House's primary liaison to the Latino community and on immigration related issues. She comes to the White House from the Department of Homeland Security, where she served as the Deputy Press Secretary for the Department. Prior to her role in the Administration, Magaña worked to create access to health care for those who need it most through her roles at Enroll America and Central Health. Previously, Ms. Magaña oversaw women's outreach for the 2013 Presidential Inauguration Committee and served in numerous leadership roles on various campaigns, including the 2012 Presidential campaign. Throughout her career Ms. Magaña has worked to engage and mobilize the public around key issues of importance to the Latino community.



Nely Galán is a self-made media mogul. She was the first Latina President of Entertainment for a U.S. television network (Telemundo). She is an Emmy Award-winning producer of over 700 episodes of television in Spanish and English, which she produced through her multi-media company Galan Entertainment. Galán is also the founder of the nonprofit The Adelante Movement, which seeks to empower and train Latinas economically and entrepreneurially. She is the author of The NY Times bestselling book SELF MADE, Becoming Empowered, Self Reliant, and Rich in Every Way (2016) Random House, about the revolution in women's entrepreneurship led by multicultural women in the US and emerging women around the world.



Elena of Avalor. Set in the enchanted fairytale land of Avalor, Disney's "Elena of Avalor" tells the story of Elena, a brave and adventurous teenager who has saved her kingdom from an evil sorceress and must now learn to rule as crown princess until she is old enough to be queen. Elena's journey will lead her to understand that her new role requires thoughtfulness, resilience and compassion, the traits of all truly great.