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2019

### Capstone Presentation: "Civic Courage and Social Action in the American Democratic Process: Toward a New Latino Citizenry"

CSUSB - Latino Education and Advocacy Days (LEAD)

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## LEAD Original Programming

### **“Civic Courage and Social Action in the American Democratic Process: Toward a New Latino Citizenry” (2019)**

*START – 00:00:00*

[ Music ]

>> Bienvenidos, and welcome to the next installment of LEAD Media Programming from Studio 54, the campus of California State University, San Bernardino, the digital media platform for inspired educators, leaders, and community activists and advocates, taking our message directly to the people, to the [speaking foreign language]. Thank you for sharing our common interest in the analysis, discussion, critique, dissemination, and commitment to the educational issues that impact Latinos. I'm your host, Dr. Indrek Amadio Jr. [phonetic] and this episode is a syndicated replay from Season 10 of LEAD Summit, 2019. The theme that year was [speaking foreign language], Everyone Counts. Here's a little behind the scenes trivia. The LEAD planners, together with the [speaking foreign language] speakers, panelists and so forth. In any given year, we all get together back at the conference hotel, the evening of the LEAD Summit for a debriefing and hospitality event. As we celebrate another successful event and year, we actually choose the theme for what would become the next year's summit. In that particular year, we were facing a very important and historic election cycle, but also continuously frustrated with the decennial census projections that has always historically underestimated the Latino population growth. This capstone presentation is entitled Civic Courage and Social Action in the American Democratic Process, toward a New Latino citizenry. Education is of economic imperative and the civil rights issue of our generation. It's a right, not a privilege. For the U.S. to create a positive future, it will require Latino citizenry. There's more [inaudible] participatory in the American democratic process, and that is poised to shape the U.S. political landscape through voting and civic engagement. Continue and enjoy the full value and complexity of this episode. We extend our appreciation to all our LEAD sponsors and partners, planners, volunteers, speakers, and panelists. Of course, the production team, the affiliates, and all our town hall chapters. We commend them for lifting their voice and for uplifting the plight of Latinos in education. Thank you. Gracias. [speaking foreign language].

>> Whoo, it's been a long day but well worth it. Okay. This is our Capstone event. It's the Capstone, the thing that you put at the top -- boom, to finish the day. It's my great honor to be up here with this very distinguished group of panelists. I'm going to turn this over to the capable hands of Deborah Gil Halva [phonetic] who is a doctoral candidate, Cohort 11, in our educational leadership program here at Cal State University, San Bernardino. So, Deborah, all yours.

[ Applause ]

>> Thank you, Dr. Amadio. Over the past decades, Latinos have emerged as the largest minority in the nation, with majority populations in many states and regions. And in some cases, the majority demographic among school age children. In many ways, this is our moment, as a major cultural influence on art, music, food, and so forth. Our workers, too, are the backbone of many sectors of the entwining local, regional, state, national, and global economies. Yet the strength of our schools and communities, basically our place in the world, is impossible to evaluate without focusing on the educational outcomes of Latino students. Latinos continue to have some of the highest dropout, pushed out rates, score among the lowest on achievement tests and have low college enrollment and graduation rates. Both Latino students and teachers have a high mobility rate, are located in racially segregated communities with high poverty rates, and attend school with fewer resources, staff, and programs. Education is an economic imperative. The civil rights issue of our generation is it's a right, not a privilege. For the U.S. to create a positive future, it will require a Latino citizenry that more greatly participates in the American democratic process, and that is poised to shape the U.S. political landscape through voting and civic engagement. By 2020, 32 million Latinos, for the first time, will be eligible to vote the largest racial or ethnic group eligible to vote in a presidential election. Immigration is playing a role, albeit a small one. One in 10 eligible voters will be foreign born in 2020, the highest share since 1970. But the share eligible to vote does not necessarily transfer to voter turnouts. The number of Latinos who don't vote, in fact, has been greater than the number who do, in every presidential election, since 1996. Latinos have also been frustrated with the decennial census projections that historically underestimate Latino population growth. The Census Bureau is the primary source of economic and demographic data of the United States. The push to be accurately counted has always been high stakes, because the size of ethnic minority populations directly affects the ability to allocate funding for public services and to influence the way congressional and other voting districts are drawn. This Capstone presentation will be offered by leaders of various Latino civil rights organizations. The fight for civil rights doesn't happen in a vacuum, and in most cases, have fueled and have been fueled by other social justice movements. As we represent a significant portion of this country's future strength, we must achieve a dramatic and powerful change in our communities, one that necessitates civic courage, social action, public service, and creation of leadership opportunities. It is my honor to introduce our panel for today, Lydia Camarillo, Lizette Escobedo, Domingo Garcia. Please join me in welcoming them.

[ Applause ]

[ Silence ]

>> [speaking foreign language]. Gracias. This election cycle for 2020 -- and we need to begin thinking about it today, yesterday, not in 2020 -- it's probably one of the most important election cycles because it also corresponds not only with an election of our lifetime, because at the federal level, the Latino community is under attack. But it also

corresponds with a census count. It is important, that as we organize, and we work together, to increase the number of voters. As it was clearly stated, we're expecting that 18 million of those eligible to vote will be registered to vote by 2020. Is that a figure that's enough for us to have the kind of competitive turnout in states like Arizona, who is now moving from a red state to a purple state in Florida, that will continue to be a competitive state. And in Texas, while a very, very deep red state could be another California state, in this cycle. So we have to work at registering voters, and we have to work at turning out voters. And we expect that, and despite what people say and reporters think, the Latino electorate has grown every four years by two million more registered voters and one million votes cast. The question for us as a community is, can we get to three million or more registered and 1.5 to two more million votes cast, compared to the last presidential cycle? That's our challenge. And that's a challenge that I bring to you as President of [inaudible] as Voter Registration Education Project, and with leaders and other partners like LULAC and other groups around the country, we commit to working to make sure that it is going to be three more million registered Latino voters or 19 million registered Latino voters. Now, people will argue and say there's 27, there's 29, there's 30 million. There's 32 million eligible to vote, because 800,000 young men and women in America turn 18 that are U.S. citizens that we might register to vote. But in states like Texas and Florida and Arizona, we are still fighting electoral barriers, systematic barriers that prohibit most of us from registering to vote. So we must make sure that particularly in those states, we work to abolishing those barriers and working around those barriers. And because it is going to be a census year, we have to start telling our people now not only the lawsuit that we have or one of the many groups and counties and cities that have filed a lawsuit against the Census Bureau, to drop the citizenship question. But we have to work with our communities and our city councils and mayors and supervisors or county commissioners, depending on what state you are, to make sure that people count themselves, count their communities, count their households, but that they're not afraid to do so. California stands to lose four congressional seats. Texas can lose four to eight congressional seats. California is supposed to gain maybe one seat, if we count everybody. Texas is supposed to gain another four seats. It gained four the last time, it will gain another four. And it was a result of the Latino electorate and the minority communities, the black community and other communities. But if we don't have a full count, we will lose everyone. So as we're thinking about how do we organize, we have to do it at the local level first. There are local elections. We have to make sure that everybody is registered to vote. We also have to make sure that in two years and maybe four, how many of those folks that need to be naturalized can be naturalized in time? In 2012, we asked the administration that had just won -- or rather in 2008, I must say. The administration that just won at the federal level. If you invest X dollars to naturalized citizens, we can make sure that Texas will have 2.5 to 5 million eligible voters that can convert Texas. We missed the boat then. We missed the opportunity then. Will we miss it today? We also have to think about the policies. It isn't enough to talk about the voter registration, the mobilization, the census, and redistricting, which will be 2011. But we have to speak about the policies, the messaging to the voters. Everybody talks about how every -- every election, we have to have one or two issues that are important. Well, let's be clear. For Latinos, it's always jobs and education, jobs and education and immigration is

our litmus test. Latinos are citizens who can vote. They vote, but an immigration question and how the candidate responds to our community, whether they want to welcome us or send us back to I don't know where, that's part of the messaging. And if candidates who want to earn our vote do not invest in our community to turn out to vote or candidates who are Latino who think they will have the Latino vote, just because they're Latino. They're sadly mistaken. And we have seen already many, many very, very qualified candidates over our history who have not invested in expanding the electorate first and when mobilizing it, but with a purpose. Latinos want to know, how is my family going to be better, do better? How is my community going to be doing better? They told us we had five minutes, so I was just checking. So, we have to think about the policy issues. We have to think about the messaging, and we have to invest. And let me tell you something. When we [inaudible] Alaska started by just registering voters. Every other door, someone needed to be registered to vote. Now it's every 15 to 20 door, depending on what community you're working in. If you're in a very immigrant community, it can be as many as 40 doors. That means we have to work harder, to find a new voter. It also means that despite what the national politics says or the national pundits, that we don't care. That is wrong. I'm constantly being asked do Latinos not cast a vote because they don't care or because they don't understand the process. Quite the contrary. Latinos very much care, and they do understand the process. And sometimes, just like I can be very cynical about the process, they still understand very clearly that with a vote, it's our ticket to respect and dignity. And if we remind people, that besides employment and jobs and education and immigration is the litmus test, that our vote is in fact our ticket to respect and dignity, then more people will cast their vote. Prop 187 is a perfect example. We knew very clearly that we were going to lose. We did not have enough Mexican registered voters in California, and there wasn't enough of us anyways at the time. Today, California enjoys the largest number of Latino registered voters, over 4.1 million registered Latino voters. And you are voting at a high rate, despite what people say. Yes, there are certain elections that we vote less, like local elections, but that's clear across the country and clear across groups, white groups, black groups, Asians, others, Latinos as well. We vote at a significant number. In a presidential level, we are voting at about 80 percent of those that are registered to vote. However, we get counted by all that are eligible to vote, and if you're not registered, you can't vote, period. In a midterm election, where voting is about 50 percent, unless you are from a red state like Texas, which is at 37 percent. In a local election, you might find here in the city of Los Angeles that 27 to 32 percent will cast their vote. But in Texas, three to six percentage points was cast a vote. It's based on participation. It's based on resources, and it's based on a number of things, but we are voting. We will vote, but we will do it -- why? Because we expect to be treated with dignity, and we will not be told by anyone local, state or federal level. No single person is going to tell us.

[ Speaking Foreign Language ]

[speaking foreign language]. We're here to stay. We're not moving, and we're going to build this country even better with our leaders. Gracias.

[ Applause ]

>> Hello. My name is Domingo Garcia, and I'm the national president of LULAC, and I just noticed that it's about 3:00, and it used to be -- that was back in the 1800, 1900's, that was siesta time. Okay? So [speaking foreign language]. Okay? But this political siesta time is over. Okay?

[ Speaking Foreign Language ]

Anybody ever heard of the [inaudible].

[ Speaking Foreign Language ]

Okay? And that [inaudible], is who we need to be fighting against, because that [inaudible] is a [inaudible] that LULAC has been fighting since 1929, when we were founded. And think about 1929. I'm just going to give you a little, brief history. In 1929, if five Mexican-American males got together in Texas, it was against the law. It was sedition, and you could be lynched for getting together. And the Latinos, those Mexican-American males who form LULAC had to go to [speaking foreign language]. A [speaking foreign language] a hut, to organize, to stop the discrimination and the racism against [speaking foreign language], in Texas. And when we're talking about that, we're talking about segregated schools. We're talking about signs that said no Mexicans, no niggers, no dogs allowed at hotels and restaurants across the southwest. And they got up and fought, because I'm going to talk to you about civic courage. Now, what is civic courage? Civic courage --

[ Speaking Foreign Language ]

Okay? And those are the people that have traditionally led the fight. But people will say, Domingo.

[ Speaking Foreign Language ]

I'm not going to be attacking Columbus, New Mexico, and going up against the U.S. Army.

[ Speaking Foreign Language ]

Better to die on your feet than to live on your knees. You know, Cesar Chavez. I'm not going to march with [inaudible], to Sacramento. I'm not Rosie Castro. I'm not going to take on the establishment in San Antonio. But let me tell you, there are heroes every day, and we need those heroes every day to fight against the oppression, because we've seen the voter suppression efforts. They're trying to rig the system [speaking foreign language] They're afraid of what's happening in California, New Mexico, Texas, and across the country. I'm going to give you a little story. How many of you ever heard of Dodge City, Kansas? You ever heard of Dodge, [inaudible]. Well, in November of 2018, the secretary of state of Kansas, a guy named [inaudible], he lead Trump's Voter

Fraud Commission, National Voter Fraud Commission -- was running for governor of Kansas, and Dodge City is now 63 percent Latino. And what they did was they took the only polling place, in a town of 33,000 people and moved it 20 miles outside the city limits. Okay? Now, literally, if you are a Latino voter in Dodge City, Kansas, you have to get out of Dodge to go vote. Okay? And we got the call. We have a LULAC counsel there in Dodge City. And then we said, okay, we're going to file a lawsuit. Everybody was afraid. This is where I talk about civic courage. Well, you know, I work at the meatpacking plant. I work at the local grocery store, and if my boss or my patron finds out that I'm filing the lawsuit, they're going to fire me. But there was a young man. His name was Alejandro Lopez [phonetic]. He was a high school senior at Dodge City High School. He called us. He said, we filed the lawsuit, and we weren't able to get the lawsuit approved three days before the election, so we ubered the voters to the polls. We rented three minivans, and we took voters to the polls, and to make a long story short, for the first time in the history of Kansas in 30 years, the Democratic women governor got elected with Latino votes in Kansas. Okay?

[ Applause ]

And Alejandro was on The Rachel Maddow Show, and he was a lot of national networks. And we recognized him in Washington, because he was not afraid. [speaking foreign language]. In Texas, the last, what, two months ago, Lydia, the secretary of state said we're 98,000 illegal voters voting in Texas. Well, of course, [speaking foreign language]. There's not 8,000, you know, illegal voters voting in Texas, and we filed a lawsuit, and we had people that stood up and said, hey, I'm a naturalized citizen, and they can't take me off the rolls, just because I'm naturalized. The 98,000 people that we're targeting were naturalized citizens. Now, think about it. If you got a letter in the mail that says you might be committing voter fraud if you voted, and it's 2 to 20 years in prison and a third degree felony, if you do this. Are you sure you're a U.S. citizen? Are you sure you want to vote? And we took on the lawsuit, and we won. And now they're -- we're going to announce probably in the next 24 hours, the secretary of state has backed down and that every one of those letters is coming back and those voters stay in the rolls. But what we're seeing is a continuous effort to suppress our vote, and it's going to take us standing up and fighting at all levels. And this is what I'm going to say -- it's going to take. Let's talk about political, economic, and cultural empowerment is being -- not to be afraid to take on the establishment and saying [speaking foreign language]. And that takes a lot of courage. [speaking foreign language]. And it's not easy sometimes to do that. You know, Rosie, when you heard her talk about Texas, I was there as a [speaking foreign language] 19-year-old, trying to run a primary and having to read the election code. It's not easy. It's not easy when you're a metro organizer, and people are looking at arresting you, because you had a protest on campus. It's not easy. Last year when we were at the border, and we were trying to release babies from a baby jail in McAllen, Texas, and we were able to get them released out. Those things are not easy, but you got to have people that will stand up and fight. So, I want to tell you right now, the current system, the Electoral College system, is rigged against California. Somebody said earlier today that, you know, L.A. County has more people than 43 states. That's correct, but you still only got two senators. In the Electoral

College, the reason Trump got elected was because those rural areas that were made to protect slaveholding states have a disproportionate number of votes in the national election. And therefore, we need to change the Electoral College. They are right when they talk about that. They are right when we talk about having to empower our communities by running Latinos at all office. So, I challenge everybody here, run for office and I'll give you one little example. I got a email. When a 27-year-old young lady in New York City, that she was going to run for Congress and she just needed my help. And could I just send some money? So, I don't know who she was. She was a Latina. She was running New York. I sent her \$1,000 dollars. Her name is Alexandra Ocasio-Curtis, and she got elected to Congress at 28. I'll tell you another story. I have an office in Houston, Texas. Another Latina came to my office. Her name is Lina Hidalgo. She was 27, but she'd already graduated from Columbia, and I believe Yale. And she said she was running for county judge, and an Texas county judge is like the -- you have county supervisors here in California, like the head county supervisor. And Houston has also over four million people, and nobody believes she could win. And the Republicans have controlled Houston for decades. And I said, if you have a dream, I'll help you. And she became the first Latina county judge in Harris County at 27, right now, Okay? And yesterday there was a gas explosion in Houston, Texas, a refinery that was pouring up chemicals of pollution into the atmosphere in Deer Park, Texas, which is majority Latino. And she did a press conference in English and Spanish because she's an immigrant from Colombia. And she said people need to be, you know, check the air, stay inside. Don't go to school. [speaking foreign language]. And a county commissioner from Chambers County said, you're in America, you need to speak English. You shouldn't be giving that in Spanish. And the result was, we led a campaign against him, and he apologized to the county commissioner yesterday. Okay? But those are the little facts that we have day in and day out, and it's going to take us fighting and proving everything we do. For there's voter registration, candidate training, running people for office, raising money for those candidates, and making sure that we have the political willpower and [speaking foreign language]. You know, I used to know Willie Velasquez and worked with him, when I started in college. [speaking foreign language]. So, I encourage all of you that are here today, to make an effort, to make sure that we run more candidates for office, because I do believe that the first Latina or Latino President of the United States has been elected, and I was there when Clinton took the oath of office. I was there when Barack Obama took the oath of office in Washington, D.C. And I want to be there when the first person whose last name might end with an ez, -- you know what ez is? Hernandez, Lopez, Sanchez, Gutierrez, or maybe a Castro or a Garcia or -- will become the next president of United States of America, because that's our goal. And that should be your goal. And I always tell people when you decide why you want to run for office, the only criteria that you should have as a metric, did you do something to help [inaudible] today? Did you improve the education of their children? Did you give them a higher wage, better health care? What did you do to help [inaudible]? And if you did something to help [speaking foreign language]. But if you didn't, then you're in the political office for the wrong reason, and that's why we need to hold the politicians accountable and move our community forward. Gracias.

[ Applause ]

[ Silence ]

>> You didn't say [inaudible]. So, my name is Lizette Escobedo, and I am the Director of the National Census Program for the [inaudible] Educational Fund. You guys talked a lot about census today, and I wore my T-shirt. My colleagues were here today, and I texted them and told them why they didn't wear their tee shirts. So, I'm singled out. So, I wanted to talk -- as I thought about what to bring forward today and talk to folks about today, I really thought, okay, I can talk about what [speaking foreign language] has done, what we've done for civic engagement work, or I can share a little bit about my story and how that folds in to my [inaudible] story and my [inaudible] mission. So, I am a fellow millennial, and I know we always talk about, you know, millennial is this, millennial's that. And I hope that my story will give folks some courage that, as millennials and young folks, we got to step up. So, I'll tell you a little bit about what I'm doing right now. So as the director of the National Census Program for the [inaudible] Educational Fund, I organize our entire national infrastructure for our campaign, to ensure that Latinos and hard to count communities are counted. This means coordinating with our [inaudible] partners, coordinating with our [inaudible] Latino partners, with our media partners, and really pulling together strategies to ensure that everyone in our community is counted and is informed. Part of the battle that we have to fight, is actually sitting down next to the Director of the U.S. Census Bureau and really calling them out and saying, what are you doing about this citizenship question? How are you working with the Department of Commerce, to make sure that the secretary for the Department of Congress is testifying before Congress with the questions that we have. So, a lot of what I do is making sure that our voiceless communities have a voice. And it gives me great pride, because I came from a little city called Bell Gardens, California, in Southeast L.A. So, every time I'm in that room, and I'm fighting for communities like my parents, like my dad, who only went up to the second grade in Mexico and can't read or write Spanish or English, I think about the fact that I speaking for him when I'm at that table, and I think about how all of these little policies and all of these little things and and fixes to the forms, et cetera, that the administration or that the government tries to do has a major impact in our communities, and that me, as a voice for my community, has to be absolutely vigilant in calling folks out that need to get called out. So, part of the work that I do is looking at policy, looking at the operations for the Census Bureau and making sure that I'm asking the right questions about how are you going to count rural communities? How are you going to count farmworker communities? What is the non-respond follow up look like? And how do we keep our communities safe, especially under this administration and under this rhetoric? So, I have the great opportunity to do that piece of work. The other piece of work that I get to do is really ensuring that we have all of the informational infrastructure that our community needs. So, part of our census work is hosting a national information hotline. So, we know that there are trusted voices in the community that our community members will seek out, one of those being organizations, non-profit organizations like ours. And so, we set up a complete hotline infrastructure to make sure that happens, and I'll share that, interestingly, most folks won't get this from when I talk about the census, because I'm absolutely obsessed with the census. But I actually just was

rehired with an [inaudible] educational fund about nine weeks ago. I was working for SEIU, the Service Employees International Union, working with homecare workers across the country, to make sure that they had dignity wages and dignity benefits. I got a call from some of our directors, and they said, hey, you ran the census in 2010 [inaudible]. Can you come back and run it in 2020? We need you. When I started learning more about this citizenship question and started really seeing where it all kind of came from and how we needed to fight it, I left my job. And nine weeks ago, I started with [inaudible]. And so, since then we've been traveling across the country, been informing the communities. We actually have operations not just in California, but in Texas and Florida. We've been working with organizations in New Mexico. In New Mexico, you had an undercount of Latinos of over 52 percent in the 2010 census. So, there is a major need to ensure that organizations, specifically Latino organizations, are ensuring that LatinX communities are counted. And I'll share, you know, and again, I'll take you kind of through my journey, and weave how some of the civic engagement work falls in there, because I really do think that it's important, to talk about what courage means and what it looks like. So, before coming -- going back to the labor union where I was working at, when I came back to [inaudible]. There was a lot of things that I was seeing in my own community. I started looking at my city council. I started having conversations with folks about oil drilling, and why there was a conversation about oil drilling in my community. And I started looking at the makeup of my city council and the fact that, even though the city of Whittier is 70 percent Latino, no Latino has ever sat on its city council, since the beginning of time for my city. Right? And this is my city. This is where I've raised my daughter, who's back here playing on her phone. And so, after so many issues came up and after the fact that I started looking at the history of my city, and the fact that our city council was actually sued under the Voting Rights Act, because they had at-large elections instead of district elections, which the courts determined that really disenfranchised Latino voters in our city. I started going around and telling folks, hey, someone should really do something about this. Like this is not 70 percent Latino, no Latinos on the city council, one Latino, just the last election. What do we do? And so, after many conversations, I decided to be the change that I wanted to see. So, I decided to run for office. Thank you. It was hard. And part of my run for office, I used much of what I had learned when working at my [inaudible] previously, because I did work for [inaudible] in my past life, before coming back. One of the things that I learned from the [inaudible] educational fund was the importance of targeting low propensity Latino voters. These are voters that don't vote every single election. They might vote on a presidential election, probably not in a midterm, probably not in a municipal election. A lot of these folks are not lazy or apathetic. It's just that when political campaigns look at who to target for their outreach, they say, where can we spend the least amount of money? And that's in high propensity voters, which tend not to be Latino. Right? So, what happens is that you have outreach in the community to non-Latinos and a lot of folks who are frequent voters and vote every municipal election and might not look like us and might not have our same interest. So, for my campaign, I decided to do a full shift. I said we're going to target every single low propensity Latino voter, and we're going to target millennials. Everybody thought I was super crazy. And everyone's like, how much money are you going to raise? Because that's a lot of money. And they truly believed in what I had learned at [inaudible] that with invitation,

our community was hungry and was -- and desired to be engaged. So, it's part of my city council race, and I actually took three months off of work and just solely dedicated myself to door knocking and kind of learning the ins and outs. We went from not having an absolute chance, because this person had been in office for 12 years, to being so close that I was getting attack mailers. Right? That's how you know that someone's scared. So, when we got those attack pieces, I started looking like, you know, someone's looking at these numbers and thinking this is -- we're a major threat. Right? When we started doing our own kind of site polling, we realized that indeed we were. And so, when Election Day came around, you know, we all kind of gathered, and I was ready at, you know, 8:00 p.m., when the polls closed to say, okay, well, thanks, everyone. You know, I was ready with my speech and -- but it was tight on Election Day. We didn't get the final results of the entire election until five days later, because it was that close. I lost by four votes, and but it was one of the best experiences that I've ever had. There was a lot of issues that we had. Yes. With the -- there's a lot of things that we need to look at, when it comes to voter protection. We need to look very closely, because sometimes we're -- our communities are being disenfranchised by small print, you know, ballot design. Who's overseeing your elections locally? Is it the county? Is it the city? Who is the city contracting for your elections? Those are very important. That's very important in fine print, that we need to look at. And I had learned all of that by working at [inaudible] and really looking at how we can work with our communities to make sure they have the information to report these kinds of things. You know, so after a long, hard -- long fought battle, we came very close. But what was most important is that we created a movement, a very hungry young Latinos, young millennials. We mobilized the entire Whittier College. And I was able to also run as myself. Right? I wear hoops, and I love them, and I'm not going to take them off for any campaign. Right? So, it was very -- all of those things were very important lessons to teach our community. And so, following my election, I decided to continue to engage my community and a lot of the young women, and my team was actually all young women under the age of 25. That was my campaign manager, everything. That's all we hired. And we started looking at where do we go from here. Right? What kind of movement do we create? So, when I went back to, you know, to the union after I had lost my election, I started looking at where do I want to be at this moment in time? What is a legacy and the story that I want to tell my daughter about what I did, when our -- everything we believe in, and the full count of our community is at stake. And I thought, after I started looking at everything and I started talking to [inaudible], I thought this is a civil rights fight of our time. This is an opportunity we have to fight back and show that we're strong in numbers. Now, we have the potential of a citizenship question, and it's being fought in the Supreme Court and it will be heard on April 23rd. You also have a really interesting case in the state of Alabama, where the state is trying to push -- or at least of various plaintiffs are trying to push, so that no person who's documented and undocumented is counted. We don't believe it will have legs, but that's the rhetoric that we have right now. So, I do believe wholeheartedly that the census enumeration and making sure that every Latino is counted is absolutely the fight for civil rights of our time. So, before working my stint at the union, I was working at [inaudible]. I started off working on our citizenship work. Some of you may have heard of this -- I think it was a really awesome campaign -- called [speaking foreign language]. And I know I came out here. I

remember traveling everywhere. So, what I did is that we looked at what are the elections that are coming up, and where is their opportunity? So, after we did much research, we realized that folks who had the highest propensity of voting were actually naturalized citizens. And we thought, who's tapping into the naturalized citizens, to make sure that we got them on the pathway to voting? And we realized that we needed to energize the community and create this huge campaign. So, in 2006, we saw the immigrant rights marches, and right after that, we started talking. How do we use this energy to create a sense of urgency in our community? We realized that there was over eight million legal permanent residents who were eligible to naturalize, but haven't yet started on the path to naturalization. So, we launched that campaign, and we naturalized over a million that year, who voted the very next election in 2008. After that, I thought, okay, well, what's next? Where do we go from here? So, we launched the [inaudible] campaign, and I stood on board with [inaudible], and I was like, I'm ready, let's go. And we ran our national voter engagement program, which constitutes -- which is part of our retain our low propensity voters. So, we had a get out the vote campaign, et cetera, working with various partners. What we saw is that those folks that we touch, that we called, that we had some interaction with, had a higher propensity to vote than those folks that we hadn't. Right now, one of the things that we're looking at is how does our contact have an influence on other civic engagement work? So, how does it influence them participating in the census? How does it influence them participating in a municipal or in a congressional election? So, after running the various GOTV campaigns, we did a lot of our voter protection work. So, our voter protection work consists of Spanish language -- Spanish speaking Latinos having access to a hotline, where they can report discrepancies. As a result of some of the discrepancies we saw there, there was lawsuits against -- actually against Riverside County, which is right next door, and some other counties and some other localities where we saw that either there wasn't proper poll worker training or folks were just being turned away and asked, you know, for a specific I.D. that in California, you're not required to have I.D. Right? Which constitutes the poor poll worker training. So, a lot of the work that we've done as [inaudible] really has been what I believe that my mission has been in life, which is making sure, that as Latinos, we have a voice, because for so long, we're in communities where chroming plants are placed in our backyard, because nobody's going to say anything about it. For so long, we've had some times municipal governments and folks who didn't hear us all the time. And as part of [inaudible], the other piece that we have is we also train our Latino elected officials who get it -- who get elected into office, who might be someone like me who's never been in office but wants to do right by the community. We have education institutes. We have workforce policy institutes. And so, part of the mission of [inaudible] is to engage the Latino community from citizenship to public service. So, we want to make sure that as Latinos get elected, that they have all the tools at their disposal to make the right decisions for our communities, and to do right by us. And so, I really do think that civic engagement -- and really, us being the ones who shape the playing field, is our fight. And it doesn't matter, you know, how young or how old you may be. This is all of our fight, because it's the future. It's our future, and it's the future of my nine-year-old, who's back here. So, thank you all for having me today.

[ Applause ]

[ Silence ]

*END – 00:44:51*