

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Latino Education and Advocacy Days (LEAD)
Video Recordings

Arthur E. Nelson University Archives

2016

Featured Address: "Hon. Antonio Villaraigosa, LEAD Summit VII"

CSUSB - Latino Education and Advocacy Days (LEAD)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/lead>

Recommended Citation

CSUSB - Latino Education and Advocacy Days (LEAD), "Featured Address: "Hon. Antonio Villaraigosa, LEAD Summit VII"" (2016). *Latino Education and Advocacy Days (LEAD) Video Recordings*. 19. <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/lead/19>

This Video is brought to you for free and open access by the Arthur E. Nelson University Archives at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Latino Education and Advocacy Days (LEAD) Video Recordings by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

LEAD Original Programming

Featured Address: "Hon. Antonio Villaraigosa, LEAD Summit VII" (2016)

START – 00:00:00

[Music and Wolf Howls]

>> Bienvenidos, and welcome to the next installment of LEAD Media programming from Studio 54, 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 [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. Enrique Murillo, Jr., and this episode is a syndicated replay from season seven of LEAD Summit 2016. The theme that year was "Black, Brown, Indigenous Unity," acknowledging the shared educational disparities. This here was a featured address by the Honorable Antonio Villaraigosa, who served as the 41st mayor of Los Angeles, California, and at the time was the national chairman of the advisory board for education posts. 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, production team, affiliates, and town hall chapters, and we commend them all for lifting their voice and uplifting the plight of Latinos in education. Thank you, gracias, [foreign language].

>> You know, thank you, Juan, for that -- Dr. Sanchez [assumed spelling], for that introduction, and you know what he didn't say was, Santa Teresita was a Catholic school in Ramona Gardens. Ramona Gardens was a housing project, among the poorest, among the most violent, one that I went to some 15 years before you did, but one that gave us an education. You know, I've often said -- and thank you so much for the generosity of the introduction -- that I went to Catholic school for most of my life. I went to Santa Teresita. I went to San Antonio de Padua in Boyle Heights. I went to Delores Mission in the other projects. I went to Cathedral High School, and I went to Roosevelt High School. But I was kicked out of Cathedral High School, and I dropped out of Roosevelt. So I've often said that it was a Catholic school that gave me a foundation, but it was a public school that gave me a second chance. You heard me -- and I didn't realize that we were going to watch that video, poor audio quality, but what I enjoyed about that video were those young people. You see, wherever I go, and whenever I speak to young people, I always speak with the conviction that every one of them can make it. That they can reach for the stars, and follow their dreams in this great country, and today, I want to talk about historically what's the path been to that opportunity. What's the path been to reaching for those stars, and following your dreams? We have something else in common. We actually weren't a statistic. I went to

Roosevelt High School that had a 75% dropout rate -- 75%, when I went in 1969, and '70, and '71. You know, when you think about that, you realize that so few of us were making it back then. I've often said that I'm here today because there was a Civil Rights Act. There was a Voting Rights Act that opened up the country to me. I went to school, as I said, dropped out of one high school, graduated, finally went back to school, went to school at night, graduated with a 1.4 grade point average, went on to East L.A. College. You laugh, but, you know, that was the time. Went to East L.A. College, got a 3.6 or something, and -- because they were setting high standards, by the way, and not low standards. Because they were challenging me, as I was challenging those young people. And I went to UCLA on an affirmative action program. I always say that, because I think it's important to acknowledge that I wouldn't have gotten there if there hadn't been a civil rights movement that opened up the country and our universities to people like me, to African-Americans, to people of color who were poor. And I tell people, you know, some people would say I came in through the back door. One thing's for sure, I got out the front.

[Applause]

And, you know -- and I don't say this -- I say this to tell the story, not about me. I say, you know, I got out the front door, and I'm the only person to have been both speaker of the California State Assembly and mayor, to have graduated from UCLA, or for that matter, from any -- from any UC, as I understand it. Why do I share that story? For the same reason that we're here today. I understood early on that I didn't get into that university because I was the smartest guy in the class. I got into that university because people fought for my right to be there, to open it up. We went to school together, as a matter of fact, Doctor. We were there at the same time, at UCLA. We all understood it. We understood that we had a responsibility. I've often said, when people have said that I broke in so many glass ceilings, including the glass ceiling of becoming the first mayor of Los Angeles in 133 years, I say, you know, I'm here today on the shoulders of others. I got here not because I was anybody special. I got here because I got an education, because I could read and write, because they gave me a shot, because I had that opportunity and I took it. So I've often said, I think you agree, or you wouldn't be here today, that the role of the first is not to bang on your chest and say how great I am. The role of the first is to open up the door for the rest. Do I have a witness? Do I have a witness? Thank you very much. And that's your role. So many of you are educators. You're advocates. Others are students, but we're here today because we understand that in this great country of ours -- and like the president, I believe that America is a great country. I don't buy this idea that you hear from a certain candidate that we got to make America great again. America is great, but that doesn't mean that America's perfect. From the very beginning, when we talked about and founded this great nation, and said that all men are created equal, we didn't include women in that equation. We didn't include African-Americans and slaves in that equation, Native Americans in that equation, and in fact, it was just property owners they were talking about. I was invisible to them at that time, and so, how do we -- how did we continue to make us more perfect? We continued to struggle, to bring life to that Constitution, to bring meaning to all men and women, and created equal, are created equal, with an emphasis on "all."

Today, we see a movement called Black Lives Matter. And I say to people, I don't understand why it's so difficult for people to say black lives matter, why they feel it's important to say, well, all lives matter. We know all lives matter. But when blacks go to prison at a rate eight times higher than the rest of us -- well, not than us [laughter]. We're not far behind, by the way, which is the point I'm getting to. So I say to people, yes, black lives matter. And so, recently, I was at a rally called Black Minds Matter. You see, when people don't have skills, when they don't have an education, when increasingly it's so difficult to find a job, when you do find a job, you can't make ends meet, you lose hope. You lose hope. And that's why I want to talk about education today. You see, I understand how you get to opportunity. I understand how you get to the dream. I'm living it. Many of us here are living it, but we have a responsibility to those who aren't. And the path to opportunity has always been the same. It's been education. When I share my story, it's not much different than your story. Many of you grew up in communities that had been left behind, that had been locked out. Some of you, if not all of you, or a good portion of you, are the first in your family to go to college, sometimes the first to graduate from high school. We know what the path is. When I speak to this issue of education, I have one. My children have one, but too many people that look like me and you don't. And we've got to do something about that. When I got elected mayor of Los Angeles, and everybody wanted to make a do about I was the first, and I saw that everybody serving me looked like me -- everybody serving me and working, you know, with their hands, and struggling, looked like me. They might've been a different shade of brown, but they came from the same kind of circumstance that I did. When I figured out early on that L.A. had a 44% graduation rate, second-largest city in the country, the largest city in California, the motor force of the southern California economy, and 44, nearly half of our kids -- well, more than half of our kids were dropping out. Only 44% were graduating, and I said, this is a crisis. We got to do something about this. We can't just sit on our thumbs and twiddle them, and, you know, hope it away. We've got to treat this as the crisis that it is. And so, back then, I said to people, this is a civil rights crisis. When the face of the people who aren't graduating are black and brown, when young Latino and African-American students in the fourth grade, about 15% of them at grade level, about a 38% different than whites -- math, a 31 to 33% point difference than whites. And I said, this isn't healthy. In a city where 67% of us come from Latin America, Asia, and Africa, if those kids aren't making it, we're not going to make it. I tried to always speak to the better angels of people, not to be divisive. I said, I would care about those kids if they were all from Europe, if they were all from some other place. We all have to care about them, because we're in this boat together. So we've got to row in the same direction. So the challenge of education is the most important issue of our time. It's the civil rights issue of our time. I already just shared with you the face of the people who aren't making it are browner, and blacker, and poorer than the others who are. It's the democracy issue of our time, because if you can't read and write, and you don't have an education, you're not going to participate at the polls. You're not going to be involved like you could. In a democracy, you need an informed citizenry. It's the economic issue of our time, because today, we not only have to know how to read and write. In the new economy, we have to know about computers. We have to know math in a different way than we did in another time. This issue is the most important challenge of our time. So I wanted to be here to acknowledge you, to

thank you for your work. You see, you understand as I did. It's not enough to be the first. I love to talk to young people who tell me, "I'm the first to graduate from college in my family, or from high school in my family." And I always say, thank God, you know. Thank God. Thank your mother and your father, or your uncle and your aunt, if you didn't have one, whoever helped you get there, because you didn't get there on your own, either. We all got there on the shoulders of others. And oftentimes, I'll say to them, what does your mother do? My mother works in a hotel. I said, so your mother makes minimum wage, works eight hours a day. What does she do after that? She comes home and cooks. And what does she do? She helps me with my homework. I said, you are here on the shoulders of your mother. You are here on the shoulders of others. And while many of you in this generation don't understand that you're here because of the civil rights movement, let me share with you. Thirty, 40, 50 years ago, you didn't see the faces that you see at the Cal State system, at the UCs. You didn't see them in our universities. And so, this issue is critical. What do we do about it? Organizations like Education Trust of the West are arguing that we have to really focus on the kids who have been left behind. You know, we spend less for education than most states in the country. We've gone anywhere from 48, 45, 42, as high as 36, but we haven't returned to the days when you and I went to school, when we were in the top five in per-pupil spending. We've got to fund our schools again. We've got to invest in our kids again. Those beautiful kids you saw in that picture, they don't have to be your kids to understand we've got to invest in them. We've got to help them be successful. We've got to train our teachers. We've got to pay them more. We've got to honor our teachers.

[Applause]

And let me be clear. We've got to honor their unions, and support collective bargaining. I support collective bargaining, but we also got a challenge, all of us. We've got to challenge our administrators. We've got to challenge our teachers. We've got to challenge our parents. You know, I didn't just -- oh, by the way, I talked about the 44% graduation rate. Eight years later, after battle after battle after battle on behalf of poor kids, we increased that graduation rate to 72, 72%. Thank you for that, but you know what? I always tell people, that's just mediocrity. That's a C average. We want every kid to graduate. We want every kid to have a skill. We want every kid to be able to go to college or have a skill. And so, while we made progress, it was after battle after battle, and we still have a lot of work to do. My own schools -- I took over -- I don't know if you know -- 17 schools, 16,000 kids, and I said, you know, I want the poorest schools. I want the schools of Watts. I have Jordan High School in Watts. I have Markham, and Gompers in Watts, two middle schools of Watts. I have five, now six, six elementary schools in Watts. I said give me my alma mater. Give me Roosevelt High School. By the way, I graduated in 1971 when we had a 75% graduation rate -- I mean 75% dropout, a 25% graduation rate. Guess what it was by the time I became mayor, some 40-some-odd years later? What do you think it was? No, it wasn't worse. It was now a 35% graduation rate. We'd gone up 10 points in 40-some-odd years. So I said, give me that high school. Give me Mendez High School, the feeder high school in Boyle Heights. Let me -- let's work together to see what we could do. What was the first thing we did? We empowered parents. You know, you and I went to Santa Teresita. It was in the projects.

It was a violent area. Do you know my mother used to go at night to my school? She used to walk through the projects. She didn't have a car. The bus didn't take you there from City Terrace. She had to walk through the projects at night. I would walk with her. She'd walk to the projects after work, after making dinner, because you know what? Education was important to her. So you know what we said to all our parents? We're going to have a parent college, and at the parent college, we're going to teach parents their rights, their roles, and their responsibilities. Because we all have responsibility, and I said -- I told you, I support unions. I support teachers' unions, so I said, I want unions for parents. I want parents to be able to have an organization where they could fight for their kids, too, where they could be on an even playing field. And then, we said, "We're going to invest in teacher training. We're going to invest in technology." Education Trust of the West is focused on a plan that looks at some of the ways successful schools can be more successful. You know, because -- did you hear me with those young people when I said, do you believe in you? Do you believe in you? And they had to say to me, I believe in me. We said, in our schools, we're going to set high standards. So Roosevelt High School, we broke into smaller schools. One of them had 100% graduation rate last year, 100%. The others averaged around 75%. Mendez High School, 82% graduation rate. San T in downtown, when we took it over, it had a 27% graduation rate. Today, it's 74, 73% graduation rate. How did we get there? We set high standards. We said, we're not making excuses. We said, you know, foster kids can learn. Poor kids can learn. Kids without a father like me can learn. We can learn if we set high expectations for them. We can learn if we invest in them. We can learn if we give them the tools to succeed, if we involve their parents, if we train their teachers, if we set accountability for all of us. So I said I support unions, and I do. But I've also challenged all of us. You know, imagine if you had a job where every decision is based on how long you've been there, and not how good you are. Or imagine if you had a job where you just had it for life, no matter how successful you are at the job that you do. I tell people, I had left mayor with about a 58% approval rating, which means half the people liked me, half the people didn't. A little more than half, thankfully. I said, imagine if I had run for a third term, and said, vote for me. I've been here the longest. No. That's not the way it works. And so, we got to -- those of us who are progressive, who do believe in workers' rights, also got to challenge, and say, we believe in workers' rights, but we also believe in civil rights. And we believe in the rights of poor kids to succeed. And we want to set high expectations on our administrators, on our teachers, on our parents, and on our students. We want to set high expectations, because we want success. That's the way America gets to a more perfect union. You're hearing today. You know. How many of you have gone to college, and are still paying your student loans? You know that many people today are paying their student loans into their 40s? Into their 40s, and so, they don't have enough money to buy a home, because they're paying their loans. We got to make college affordable again.

[Applause]

And while not everyone needs a free education, poor people do. We've got to have access to enough scholarships and loans that are reasonable so that poor people can go to school, so that we can live the dream, so that we're at a point where we can say,

"Hey, if you work hard," like I told that young person, those young kids -- I said, if you work hard, and you play by the rules, you can make it. You can be an astronaut. You could be a lawyer, or a doctor, or a teacher. You could be a mayor, a governor, or the president of the United States. That's why this issue is so important. I wanted to be here with you, and thank you for the work that you're doing, because you understand how important this issue is. Let me explain to you -- if we don't do something to give more people hope, to give more people skills, to give more people the shot at the American dream, you're going to continue to see what you're seeing in our presidential politics today. Where people come and say to people, "You know" -- people running for president, or senate, or governor, or mayor, saying to people, "You know, I have the solution. I know why you're struggling every day. I know why you're not making it. I know why you're working harder every day, and you're not doing as well as you did 10 and 20 years ago. It's because there are too many of those people here, too many immigrants here, too many Mexicans here, too many blacks, and Muslims, and disabled people, and"-- they're dividing on the head of the pin all the things that make us different, instead of doing what leaders should do, bringing us together. Padre, Father, what is the role of a shepherd? To bring the flock in, all of the flock. Father, when we bring the flock in, do we say, I only want the white sheep? No, we say, I want the black sheep, I want the brown sheep, I want the one-eyed sheep, I want the three-legged sheep. I want all the sheep. That's what a leader does. And so, if we want -- if we want to get out of the kind of hate-filled politics that you see today, then we got to have answers, and the answer's education. The answer is investing in people again. The answer is saying, "You know what? If you work hard, and you play by the rules, you can make it in this great country." Some of you know, and it was just announced I'm going to be getting married. And my fiancée, Patricia Govea is here with me. And I said in Mexico, when we met, at the Feria Internationale de los Libros [assumed spelling], I said, you know, my grandpa came from Mexico 100 years ago. He came from a country of rich and poor, and he went to America to find a better life. He went with a -- came to America with the shirt on his back. He worked in the fields, in the early 1900s. He started a small business. Imagine this in the early 1900s, a Mexican with no education or very little education, with the shirt on his back, but hard work and a great country, built a small business into a thriving business, became a successful businessman, living a middle-class life. Put my mother in a Catholic boarding school, the top boarding school, Via Cabrini Academy for Women. Lost all his money in the Depression, lost his younger wife, left with two children, working at night. He put them in a foster home, but he put them in Catholic school, and he visited them every week. I'm here on his shoulders in a great country, but if we want to make our country more perfect, we're going to have to invest in more people. We're going to have to realize the dream again. We can't go back to where we came from, where it's just rich and poor. We've got to be in a place where we invest in work, where we honor people who work, where we give them the opportunity to succeed, and when they do, we give them a better life. That has always been what the dream has been about. Come here to this country, no matter where you come from, no matter what your circumstances. Come here with a dream and a willingness to work, and to educate yourself, and to be better, and you will make it. That's why we're here. That's why education is so important. So I want to leave you with this. We are not here today just to come and meet, and commiserate. We're here

today to lead, and we're here today to act. We have got to demand from our politicians. We have got to demand from our representatives investment, investment in people again, good answers, honest answers, not the divisiveness that we see, but inclusiveness, like the shepherd, father, bringing us all in, investing in our people, and particularly investing in the ones who have been left behind. You know, I tell people my son, Antonio, my daughters -- they're beautiful kids. Sebastian's a great, wonderful kid, but they've had opportunity. We want all of our kids to have opportunity, not just our kids. And that's why we're here. You know, there's a bill before the legislature right now that's calling on the state to begin to change the paradigm where kids aren't reading in the fourth grade, where disproportionately, they are Latino, and they are African-American. And that is unacceptable in a state where, together, they're about 50% of the population, 39 Latino, eight African-American, together about 50% of the population, and they can't read and write in the way that they need to to be successful. We've got to change that paradigm. We've got to do something about that. And so, I leave you with this. If we want to lead, we got to act. We got to be bold. We got to be as big as the crisis. We don't want to fight with anyone. I certainly didn't. When I said I left with a 58% approval rating, part of the reason why I did was because I took on those fights. I stood up for Watts. I stood up for immigrants. I stood up for the Dreamers. I stood up for the people who couldn't fight for themselves, or couldn't speak for themselves, because I understood that I had that responsibility. You have that responsibility. Thank you so much, muchas gracias, [foreign language]. Thank you very much. Thank you, muchas gracias. Thank you very much. Thank you, muchas gracias. Let's go lead. Thank you very much. Thank you. Gracias. Thank you.

>> All right, y'all, Lubbock, Texas, previously from east Los, by the Tepeyac. I was at Cito's [assumed spelling] last night. My sisters told me that Tepeyac was closed on Tuesdays. Yes, it is. Did I -- y'all weren't -- courage, candor, and optimism.

[Applause]

We wanted to begin -- we wanted just to try to take a few questions for the mayor, and we wanted to begin with a question from our online community. Enrique?

>> Check. Yes, this question is, Mayor Villaraigosa, what advice would you tell your younger self? That was the question.

>> Well, look, I didn't mention her today, and I'm very surprised, because I almost always do. You know, I grew up in a home of domestic violence and alcoholism. My father beat my mother, and left when we were five, and I had a great mom. I had a really great mom. She raised four kids on her own. She always told us to be proud to be Americans, but also to be proud of where we came from, from Mexico, to be proud of our roots and our culture. And she worked her whole life, and I think what I'd tell my younger self was, I probably wasn't as appreciative of her and her sacrifices. I was a problem child. I got in a lot of trouble as a young man. So when I said that I graduated with a 1.5 grade point average, I'm not proud of that, or 1.4 grade point average. What am I saying? I wish -- I think I would've said to my younger self, you know, don't be so

angry. Embrace the love you have, and don't make excuses. I think early on, as a young boy, I made excuses, and then I realized that anger wasn't getting me anywhere. I was - had gotten kicked out, dropped out, fought all the time. You know, we both grew up in a tough area, and I was a tough kid. So I'd tell my younger self, replace that anger with love, and challenge yourself.

[Applause]

>> Mayor, now that I've known that you moved around schools, not necessarily voluntarily [laughter], we apparently have one more thing in common. So [laughter] -- bueno. We wanted to take some questions from our audience, just one or two, and I believe we might have a microphone.

>> Barbara Babcock [assumed spelling], a proud resident of San Bernardino. Mayor, we walked together for the opening of the women's center downtown a couple of years ago. I want you to help my city, San Bernardino. Everybody was here December 2 for a month or so. We need spokesmen like you to help us get what we deserve, because everybody is saying, "Oh, we'll give you anything. What do you want?" We don't even know what the hell to ask for. We really don't. And we should be asking for tens of millions. My city is poor. It's bankrupt emotionally and morally at times. We got rid of some jerks [laughter]. We did. I was involved. I -- you're known by the enemies you keep, but we need you to help be a spokesman for my city, because we deserve the best.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you. It's good to see you again. Let me just say, I was here two weeks ago at the San Bernardino Democratic Club, where the three of us were present. And one of the things I shared, and the connections we're making here -- in the U.S., when you look at the top 300 cities with the highest poverty rate, 77 of the top 300 of them are in California. Three of the top five are in the Central Valley. San Bernardino is in the top 10. Los Angeles is 14th. There's a connection -- it's at that economic issue of our time, with education and poverty, economic success. When I became mayor, I said, you know, I want to be -- everybody -- there was a -- if you remember back then, the folks, it was a lot of talk about being the first, whether I would be a representative of more than just my own community. You remember this one. You guys, too, you remember this one. You know, would I represent black people, as an example. Would I represent whites? And because I went to Catholic school, and I know the role of the shepherd, I said I want to be a mayor for everybody. I want to be a shepherd that brings all of us in. But, you know, I also said that a great city is a city where we're growing together. So I said, if I spend more time in the parts of the city that have been left behind, it's because they need me more. I think you're right. San Bernardino needs a leader who will stand up for San Bernardino, who will stand up for the fact that it's a great city, but it's been left behind. We haven't invested in this part of the state in the way that we should. We haven't invested in the Central Valley, in Watts, on the east side. I want to be a leader for everybody, but I think it's really important that you particularly speak out for those

who have been left behind. So thank you for that question. I think you're right. I think this part of the state does need someone who's willing to focus on the people -- the hardworking people, the hardworking people that live here, the people that maybe don't have a job right now, but would work if we were creating more jobs in this area. So I intend to be that person.

>> Thank you, Mayor. Now, just -- we're going to bring this session to a close, and I know you have so many more questions. Just as a point of privilege, I just want a round of applause for all the people that have helped to organize the event, the cameramen, security. There's young Edgar [assumed spelling], Edgar, a product of San Bernardino, and all the people that are helping to put this together. We want to thank them, and now, let me turn it over to the executive director, Dr. Murillo.

[Applause]

>> That was good. Yeah. Let's give him applause.

[Applause]

>> When are you announcing your governor --

>> Oh, you want to take that, or no? Right now?

>> Well, you know, I'll just say, I know there's press here, so I'll just say this [laughter]. I got a lot of service left in me. But I'll also say this. I think too many people run for office because they can, because they enjoy the perks, the privileges, the power, if you will, and I've always believed that power's a gift from the people. So you've got to do good with it. You've got to speak up for those who don't have it. So there will be announcements. The joke was, the other day, we expect an announcement from Villaraigosa, but it wasn't the one we expected [laughter]. He announced he was getting married [laughter]. When's the next one [laughter]? So, you know, sooner rather than later, but on my own schedule.

>> There you go. Okay. Gracias. Antonio, we're going to ask you to come step forward. Juan, I'm going to ask you to help me. With much gratitude, Antonio, for your accomplishments and service to our community, we would like to award you our LEAD Education and Advocacy Medallion of Honor.

[Applause]

>> Well, look, thank you for this. I accept it on behalf of the Dreamers.

[Applause]

When I mentioned how many of our kids we're leaving behind, I think it's important for us to remember that many of them are Dreamers, who know no other country but this

one, came here because their parents wanted to give them a better life. And I noticed that you had a Dreamers office, right here.

>> Yes.

>> And I said, you know, whoever is going to be the next governor ought to have a Dreamers office in every college, every high school, every school in California. So I thank you, and I do urge everyone of you, because you're here today because you want to lead. Let's -- let us fight for an America that brings us all in, for an America that seeks to be more perfect by ensuring that the dream isn't elusive, something from the past, but a goal for today and the future. Thank you so much.

[Applause]

END – 00:48:53