

# HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH: VALLEY LUCHADORES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentleman from California (Mr. CÁRDENAS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Evelyn Cortez-Diaz as a Valley Luchadora, Valley Fighter.

Evelyn is a civil engineer with more than 25 years of experience in the water industry, water conservation, water quality, pipeline design and construction, environmental compliance, recycled water, water rights, groundwater remediation and groundwater planning.

She is the highest-ranking Latina at the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, which is the largest municipal water and power utility in the United States.

She is also the first Latina and second woman to be appointed Director of Water Engineering and Technical Services.

In her role, Evelyn leads a team of over 400 engineers and technical professionals to safely retreat, store, and transport water for the 4 million people of the City of Los Angeles and the thousands of businesses that they serve.

□ 1745

At LADWP, Evelyn helped launch the Society of Women Engineers and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers chapter to support its employees and inspire the next generation of engineers and STEM professionals.

She immigrated to the U.S. from El Salvador when she was 12 years old and was placed in remedial English classes to become fluent in English.

At a young age, she knew she wanted to help make the world a better place. She aspired to protect the environment and decided to focus her studies on water resources and environmental engineering.

After she graduated high school as 10th in her class with a 4.3 GPA, she earned a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering at the University of California, Los Angeles.

In 2015, she published her book, which chronicles her family's immigration story and journey to U.S. citizenship.

Evelyn Cortez-Davis, thank you for sharing your story and for your commitment to conservation and our environment and to all the people of Los Angeles. It is my honor to recognize you as a distinguished community leader and luchadora this Hispanic Heritage Month.

HONORING MARGARET "MAR" DIEGO

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Margaret "Mar" Diego as a Valley Luchadora.

Mar is the co-owner and operator of Dough Girl, a small business pizzeria located in Sylmar. She grew up in San Fernando Gardens, a low-income housing project in my district.

Her business, Dough Girl, is much more than a local valley pizzeria. Mar

is a proud employer of formerly homeless and incarcerated individuals, two demographics of people who traditionally struggle to find stable employment and who are often ignored and tossed aside.

A formerly incarcerated person herself, Mar understands the obstacles people face as they work to rebuild their lives after serving their time in the system. Through her restaurant, she continues to pay it forward and makes a positive impact in her community.

Mar can often be found on the street, finding and hiring employees on the spot. She gives people a second chance and a job, training to help them succeed and be productive members of the community.

Most importantly, she gives them the opportunity to rebuild their lives. She has made her restaurant a positive rehabilitation-oriented space.

Upon her own release from prison, Mar attended the prestigious Cordon Bleu culinary arts school and continued to blossom from there. She has a one-of-a-kind inspirational story and has traveled the world, visiting 16 countries on her culinary journey.

She received notable praise and appeared on television with well-known celebrity chefs such as Wolfgang Puck and Roy Choi.

Her restaurant, Dough Girl, has given her the chance to elevate and formally showcase her culinary skills and positively benefit her community.

Mar is an inspirational chef and philanthropist who envisions her restaurant as a home for amazing food and a place where people develop vital life skills. She continues her work and is developing a curriculum centered around the teaching of essential life, culinary, and entrepreneurial skills.

Thank you, Mar, for your commitment to paving the way forward, making a positive impact in our community, and uplifting others to give them a second chance.

Thank you for being a caring and loving person. It is my honor to recognize you as a distinguished community leader and luchadora during this Hispanic Heritage Month.

HONORING VERONICA PADILLA-CAMPOS

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Veronica Padilla-Campos as a Valley Luchadora.

Veronica continues to serve the community she grew up in and has been fighting for environmental justice in the San Fernando Valley for the past 25 years.

She grew up in Sun Valley and is a daughter of hardworking parents. Her dad was a gardener, and her mom worked at a local factory.

A graduate of UCLA, she has experience in the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors, including environmental consulting, GIS mapping, and work for the Los Angeles Housing Department.

Throughout the last decade, Veronica has played a crucial role at Pacoima Beautiful, a grassroots environmental justice organization in my district that provides education, impacts local pol-

icy, and supports local arts and culture to promote a healthy and sustainable San Fernando Valley.

She joined Pacoima Beautiful as deputy director in 2010 and has served as executive director since 2013. During her leadership, she has spearheaded environmental cleanup and safety campaigns in some of the poorest and hardest-impacted areas of Los Angeles County.

Previously, she helped lead ICON CDC, a community-based, not-for-profit organization that serves small business owners and entrepreneurs, and serves on the North Valley Area Planning Commission for the city of Los Angeles.

In 2020, Veronica joined the South Coast Air Quality Management District as a board member, after being appointed by the speaker of the California State Assembly.

In her role as board member, she continues her commitment to building people power and improving the lives and voices of her community. She creates equitable, healthy, and safe neighborhoods every single day by her commitment to the community and the wonderful work that she does.

Thank you, Veronica, for your countless years of public service. It is my honor to recognize you as a distinguished community leader and luchadora during Hispanic Heritage Month.

HONORING CORINNE SANCHEZ

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Valley Luchadora Corinne Sanchez for her decades of service in our community.

Corinne is the daughter of a World War II veteran of the Pacific front in Burma and a mother who worked at the Santa Fe Railroad.

Corinne attended Long Beach State University, where she became a student leader and was involved in the creation of the Chicano/Chicana studies program and social justice organizations. There were only three Chicanas that started the United Mexican American Students, UMAS, in 1967 at Long Beach State University, and Corinne was one of them.

Corinne is a lifelong trailblazer. Upon her graduation, she worked for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and then went on to travel throughout the Midwestern and Southwestern U.S. to promote the creation of Chicano studies departments in universities and colleges.

She then began her work for El Proyecto del Barrio, a not-for-profit, community-based organization that provides health and human services to communities with underserved populations. As president and CEO, Corinne oversees expanded services in comprehensive primary healthcare, employment, childcare, and perinatal social services.

After realizing her dream of becoming an attorney, she, alongside eight

other women, founded and served as president of the Latina Lawyers Bar Association to help advocate and educate for the advancement of Latinas in law.

Corinne has always been a strong leader in the community. She has held numerous roles in various commissions and associations for many years.

In more than three decades of service, Corinne has never forgotten her roots. She has worked to make the community a better place for thousands of underserved families and individuals.

Her advancements are a testament to how hard work, inspiration, and perseverance can make a difference in helping people realize the power of their dreams.

Thank you, Corinne. It is my honor to recognize you as a distinguished leader and luchadora this Hispanic Heritage Month.

HONORING KRISTY SANDOVAL

Mr. Cárdenas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Kristy Sandoval as a Valley Luchadora.

Kristy is a Los Angeles-based, self-taught artist from Pacoima whose murals have put the city of L.A.'s art on the map.

She grew up in Pacoima and studied at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, where her community and personal experiences influenced her work.

In the last 15 years, she has painted more than 50 murals. Her art, including pieces titled "Decolonized" and "A Womyn's Place is in the Struggle," brings awareness to social justice issues and focuses on female empowerment.

Kristy, along with other artists, helped kick-start the transformation of a corridor in the Northeast San Fernando Valley known as the Mural Mile, a 3-mile stretch of Van Nuys Boulevard that has nearly three dozen murals.

These murals brought Kristy international recognition, and she was the first female participant at the Mural Istanbul Festival in 2015.

She received the Phenomenal Woman Award in 2016 from the Department of Gender and Women's Studies at California State University, Northridge, and has presented her work and spoken at various universities, museums, organizations, and events and in the media.

In 2017, she worked with Amnesty International through their Art for Amnesty campaign, creating art pieces representing individual political prisoner cases from around the world.

Kristy believes in the healing power of art and continues to paint murals, direct and develop arts programming, and much more.

Her contribution to the Mural Mile has changed the face and reputation of Pacoima from a place that people would avoid visiting to a neighborhood where sold-out mural tours stroll down the streets. Her art shows our neighborhood as the beautiful, unique place that it always has been and truly is.

Thank you, Kristy, for your transformative artwork. It is my honor to

recognize you as a distinguished community leader and luchadora during this Hispanic Heritage Month.

HONORING DANNY TREJO

Mr. Cárdenas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Danny Trejo as a Valley Luchador.

Danny is one of the best-known actors in film, a community leader, a champion of the arts, and a dear friend of mine.

His prolific career in the entertainment industry came from hard work and an atypical road to success. Danny's path has led him on an incredible journey, rising from serving time in prison to a Hollywood star and to a real-life hero when he rescued a baby who was trapped in the child seat of an SUV that collided with another vehicle in Sylmar just a few years ago.

Danny grew up in an environment where crime and drugs were common. He ended up involved in drug dealing and robbery. It is well known that Danny was sent to prison for these crimes. He survived prison riots, solitary confinement, and a terrifying brush with death row.

Throughout the 1960s, Danny was a regular in the California prison system until he was released on parole in 1969. It was then that he decided to change his life for the better.

After coming out of incarceration, he worked odd jobs in construction, gardening, sales, and labor while spending his evenings in recovery meetings and mentoring kids to keep them from making the same mistakes he did.

Danny was introduced to the acting world as an extra but was exclusively cast as an imposing gang member for years before he grew into the leading actor we all know and love today.

His very real background story has made him one of Hollywood's most recognizable character actors. He has grown into a professional actor working alongside and with the likes of Al Pacino, Nicolas Cage, and the filmmaker Robert Rodriguez, all while inspiring young people with his story.

Danny Trejo's transformation from juvenile delinquent to Hollywood star is an impressive example of personal growth and improvement that gives hope and inspiration to everyone.

Danny's extraordinary success continues in his businesses. He founded a restaurant chain in honor of his mother and created his own brand.

Danny has never forgotten who he is and the impact he makes in our neighborhood. He continues to be accessible in the community and frequently volunteers his time, and he is a regular at the annual Pacoima Christmas Parade.

Thank you, Danny, for your contributions to the arts and continued commitment to community service. It is my honor to recognize you as a distinguished leader and luchador during this Hispanic Heritage Month.

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PEOPLE OVER POLITICS

Mr. Cárdenas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I am so proud of what Democrats have accomplished and de-

livered for working families across our great country.

Since the beginning of the 117th Congress, since January of last year, Democrats have taken action on legislation that puts people over politics. We are lowering costs, creating better-paying jobs, and making a real positive difference in the lives of every hard-working American.

In the northeast San Fernando Valley alone, we have created 30,000 new good-paying jobs and countless workforce training opportunities for our community.

We know that additional jobs will come to our neighborhoods with the recent passage of the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act.

Soon, we will begin to see more of our family, friends, and neighbors become plumbers, pipefitters, electrical workers, steelworkers, laborers, electricians, and engineers, and so much more.

These investments will help us fight the climate crisis, rebuild our roads and sidewalks and grow our clean energy economy.

But that is not all. In just one year, we have helped 13,000 entrepreneurs, many of them women and people of color, in the northeast San Fernando Valley build their small businesses from the ground up. That means 13,000 new, local mom-and-pop shops serving our community, employing our neighbors, and helping grow our economy.

This is all thanks to our partnership with President Biden. Since he took office, we have created 10 million jobs across the country, dropping the unemployment rate to 3.7 percent, the lowest rate in 50 years. We are seeing the best economy for American workers in decades, with people getting higher wages, better benefits, and better jobs across the country.

While we are seeing progress in the fight against inflation, we know that there is much more work to do. The good news is we are finally starting to see gas prices drop after Putin's price hike.

Families across the country will soon start to get some additional relief with the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, which lowers the cost of prescription drugs, makes health insurance more affordable, provides credits for electric vehicles, and more.

From day one of the 117th Congress, we have successfully worked day in and day out to fulfill our promise to the American people. I am so proud of our work, and I look forward to continuing to help families in the northeast San Fernando Valley prosper now and into the future.

INFLATION REDUCTION ACT CLIMATE WINS

Mr. Cárdenas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the profound, positive impact that the Inflation Reduction Act will have on all communities

across the Nation, including my district, the northeast San Fernando Valley.

Anyone can see that the climate crisis has already taken a huge toll on communities like mine. From poor air quality, droughts, and extreme heat to the constant threat of wildfires, my district has known the realities of climate change all too well and for far too long.

But our experiences are not isolated. Over the past 5 years alone, the United States has experienced over 90 climate disasters. As we witness the destruction caused by Hurricane Fiona and Hurricane Ian, it is clear now more than ever that aggressive action to fight climate change is necessary.

Last month, we delivered the single biggest climate investment in U.S. history by passing the Inflation Reduction Act. That is a big deal, especially for communities like mine.

Growing up, I remember not being able to play outside because the air quality was so, so bad back then. For many of us, it was normal to have someone in our family or a friend have serious respiratory problems like asthma. The fact is that our children deserve to live in a community that is safe and free of toxic pollutants.

Thanks to the Inflation Reduction Act, we are going to be on track to reduce emissions by roughly 40 percent by 2030, a necessary step to clean our air and prevent the worst effects of climate change.

One of the ways we are going to be able to do this is by electrifying our heavy-duty vehicles and school buses, an investment that I am so proud to have led with our United States Senator from California, ALEX PADILLA.

We are also lowering costs for hard-working American families by making rebates and tax credits available to electrify home appliances, install rooftop solar, electrify air-conditioning and heaters, and make electric vehicles more affordable.

We are putting environmental justice communities first and investing \$60 billion to reduce pollution to make clean energy more accessible and to provide a better quality of life in lower income neighborhoods across the United States of America.

The best part is we are making polluters pay so that communities like ours don't have to continue to bear the brunt of climate change.

The Inflation Reduction Act is a transformative law and will do so much good for families in the San Fernando Valley. It ensures that all people, regardless of ZIP Code, can access cost-saving solutions that will help us fight the climate crisis together. It means that our friends, family, and neighbors will be able to breathe clean air and drink clean water.

This is just the beginning of the work that we are going to continue to do. We will continue to fight to make sure we keep climate action front and center in the job that we do for all the people of this great country.

#### MY LIFE HAS BEEN BLESSED

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment of personal privilege to say thank you to the community that I was born and raised in and for which I have the honor to be a United States Congressman.

I would like to also recognize that I am so, so blessed to have been raised by my two parents, Andres and Maria Cárdenas, who came here as immigrants from Mexico. They never dreamed that any one of their 11 children could have such an honor.

They taught me and my brothers and sisters simple values that have served all of us well and that serve me well to have the honor of being a United States Congressman and serve the northeast San Fernando Valley.

I also want to thank my constituents for having the confidence in me to represent them here in Washington, and I pray every day that I do the job that they have sent me to do, to make their lives better and to help them live a good and clean life.

I also want to take a moment of personal privilege to say how blessed I feel to have such a beautiful, amazing family. My wife Norma, who has been so supportive; our four children, Vanessa, Cristian, Andres, and Alina; my son-in-law, Brian; and our amazing, beautiful grandchildren, Joaquin and Jimena. These are blessings that I have been so, so honored to have in my life.

I am so, so fortunate and blessed. To be able to speak on this floor, to be a Member of Congress is so humbling. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to express how much I care about the leaders of my community and how grateful we are for them and for the honor to be a Member of this prestigious and amazing body, the House of Representatives of the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### REVERSE THE CURSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PETERS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ARRINGTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I and my colleagues are going to spend the next hour raising to the attention of every American the large and looming crisis that hangs over the heads of our fellow Americans, but especially the next generation of Americans on account of our ever-growing, massive, almost incalculable national debt at \$31 trillion and counting; with a projection of \$16 trillion over the next decade. By the way, half of that will be interest payments on the debt, without a single dollar or dime going to something productive, to help a soldier or a sailor or a senior with a safety net program. It will be servicing the debt of this country.

I believe this is the long-term greatest threat to America. As Admiral

Mullen stated when asked by the defense community what the greatest national security threat was, he replied: The national debt is the greatest national security threat.

Why?

Because a debt crisis in any form will undermine our ability to provide for the common defense and have a military and weapons systems that will be sufficient for the ever-evolving and growing threats, especially the great power threats like China.

It will undermine economic security and prosperity, and this land of opportunity, this American promise for our children and grandchildren. I don't believe there is a more important issue.

In his Farewell Address, George Washington, our first President and one of the Founding Fathers, the Father of America, mentioned foreign influence, factions that divide us and weaken the bonds of American unity, and American oneness, but then he mentioned, "... avoiding likewise the accumulation of debt not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertions in time of peace to discharge the debts which unavoidable wars may have occasioned..."

Translation: You may have to borrow money when you are in a world war, but just like the last time we were over 100 percent debt-to-GDP, our Nation was willing to make the cuts to expenses and bring down the debt when we were in peacetime.

We are now at 128 percent over the size of debt relative to our economy in World War II. We are carrying the largest debt in the history of the United States, and we are not at war. The horizon and the trajectory, not only over 10 years, but if you look at 30 years, it is over \$120 trillion in additional debt. It is mind-boggling. It is unconscionable. And I think it is immoral to hand a country—in such shambles fiscally and so bankrupt—to the next generation, and just literally wipe out their future and the blessings of liberty and opportunity that every generation of Americans have inherited to date.

George Washington says we should avoid these things. We should bend the expense curve. We should bring down debt, and not ungenerously throw that debt upon posterity, the burden, he says, "... which we ourselves ought to bear."

I see that every day in Congress. Instead of us bearing the burden by paying for the government that we believe the American people want—I am not so sure they want this government, this ever-expanding government—but when we are giving that government to them, we ought to pay for it and not defer the taxes on the next generation.

That is not the American way. That has not been the American tradition of our lawmakers. We are in a real bad spot and it is going to take courage. It is going to take courage from everybody, regardless of party, to find a way not only to start paying for things through expense cuts, and in the case