



**Raul Yzaguirre**  
**U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic**  
**July 11, 2013**  
**Rittenhouse Hotel**

Ken Trujillo: Thank you, Mickey. Mickey and David were commenting on how well behaved this crowd was, and I'm a bit embarrassed I have to say. This really is a well-behaved crowd, Mickey. I don't understand it. I think they're intimidated by you. Or perhaps it's the presence of greatness. But Mickey and Your Excellency Audrey, I guess I have to say, yo, welcome to Philadelphia.

While we're here today to honor Raul Yzaguirre, I have to say I've got to recognize the person that made this tribute possible. I don't think we could pass without recognizing a little bit of Mickey's contributions, because they are really a legion. Some of you know that Mickey served in the Clinton White House as the director of Intergovernmental Affairs for Bill Clinton. So in that role, Mickey was the White House liaison with the nation's mayors and governors. What you don't know, a couple of you heard the story but most of you don't know, is that Mickey also played a critical role here in Philadelphia in a couple of pretty significant events.

First, when I was City Solicitor, Mickey was instrumental in convincing me and then Mayor Street to join with Secretary Andrew Cuomo in settling our handgun lawsuit against Smith & Wesson. It was a historic settlement that was brought about largely by the intervention of Mickey Ibarra when he was the director of Intergovernmental Affairs. Mickey was also on point with Ed Rendell, when Ed Rendell, was mayor in getting the National Constitution Center here in Philadelphia so much so that Ed Rendell made it a point to let Mickey know that he wanted to give him a personal tour of the National Constitution Center. So guess what? About five years ago sure enough Ed Rendell gave a one-on-one tour to Mickey Ibarra to show him some

of his good work. So, Mickey, thank you for what you've done not just for the Latino community and for our country but, yo, you are a Philadelphian.

As Mickey said, and a few of you have heard me say before, our stories are critical particularly in an era where we have a cacophony of technology that seems to drown out any ability to build personal relationships, where folks communicate more by tweet than by talk. Maya, to embarrass you a bit, I was reminded of this especially when we went last year to see the fireworks. My daughter, my lovely daughter Maya who most of you know I love an awful lot, is there taking photographs of the fireworks in order to send them to her friends to show what she's experiencing as opposed to experiencing them. Right? It's more important these days to chronicle what we have done, and what we're doing, and what we've seen than to enjoy it. It's more important to communicate our points and our things that we're doing and what we've ate, like anybody really cares, than to actually enjoy what we're eating. In that kind of an era, the telling of our stories - Mickey, you are a 100 percent right - is critical in us understanding each other.

Now, like Jim Eisenhower, my friend, I love a new audience. Since a few of you have not heard the story, I want to tell you about a quick one of my life. And, Bonnie, you'll like this. My father was an evangelical minister, and when I was 5 years old I said I want to be a preacher. In fact, I want to preach tonight - and this was for the Christmas service - so my father said okay. He put a little chair behind the pulpit. He put me up there. I looked. There was about this many people. I looked around and said, "Arrepientanse pecadores y no miren tanto para acá." For those of you that are linguistically challenged, that means repent you sinners and don't look up here so much. That was my last sermon. I decided I wanted to be a lawyer instead.

Wikipedia says in its understated sometimes way Raul Humberto Yzaguirre is an American civil rights activist. Currently a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations, he previously served as the president and CEO of the National Council La Raza from 1974 to 2004. On November 30, 2009 he was nominated to be

the ambassador to the Dominican Republic, and was confirmed by the Senate on September 29, 2010.

What Wikipedia doesn't tell you is what we know, and that is that Raul Yzaguirre is a giant. He's a servant. He's a warrior. He's a hero. I know of no person that's done more to better the lives of Latinos in the United States than Raul Yzaguirre. During his 30 years as the CEO of NCLR, Raul helped extend federal civil rights laws; restored benefits for legal immigrants that were eliminated in 1996; expand access for Latinos to early childhood education, elementary education, and secondary education; pushed through an executive order on Hispanic educational excellence; expanded Earned Income Tax Credit for working families; helped mold NAFTA and to ensure that it was meeting the needs of the Latino community.

In short Raul built NCLR and through NCLR, its affiliates, to become the most powerful voice for the Latino community in the United States. The consistent presence at the NCLR Conference of presidential candidates, of the who's who of America, not just America but presidents from Mexico and from around the world, really showed and continued to ably demonstrate what Raul's work with NCLR has meant. So, yes, he truly has shown himself to be a giant in the United States and across the world, but he's a servant as well.

Although his influence and his career has spanned really a legendary span around this country, you need only spend a few minutes with Raul to understand his humility, his depth, his love, not just of mankind but of people, of individuals. I have heard it said that some people love mankind, but there are people they can't stand. That's not Raul. In fact, Raul's journey into the civil rights movement began at the ripe old age of 15, Maya, when he organized the American GI Forum Juniors - an axillary of the American GI Forum for Hispanic veterans. It isn't often said but Mickey and Raul, veterans, spent four years with the U.S. Air Force Medical Corps.

Raul is a warrior over, and over, and over again. Raul challenged the status quo time after time. Even when it was against his own best interest, his own personal interest, he

never shied away from taking on friend or foe if he felt it was important for our community. Over the years Raul spoke out against President Carter's immigration proposals, against President Bush for his stance on affirmative action, against President Clinton's nominations or lack thereof when they didn't reflect sufficiently the Latino communities, and he has never shied from criticizing companies when their working conditions do not do justice to our community.

Raul is a hero. Last night I was reminiscing that when I first met Raul I was a young lawyer at the Schnader Law Firm. In one of my very first activities, I was a spokesperson for a fight against official English here in Pennsylvania. Raul came to Philadelphia to help and did, in fact, defeat that legislation and it's never passed in Pennsylvania. Over the years he has done that countless times. Not in Pennsylvania. He does it in California, New Mexico, Texas, Florida. You name the city, you name the state, Raul is there and he's been a hero quite literally riding in to help save the day.

I told my daughter, Maya, I wanted her here today because I wanted her to meet a true American hero. I wanted her to meet the person that, next to my father, I admire more than anybody in the world. Mickey, I thank you for giving me the honor of paying tribute to a giant, a servant, a warrior, my hero - His Excellency Raul Humberto Yzaguirre. Thank you, Raul.

## End of Ken Trujillo's tribute ##

Janet Murguia: Hello everyone. I hope you are all enjoying this wonderful event. I truly regret that I'm not able to be there in person to honor someone I consider not a Latino leader but *the* Latino leader, Raul Yzaguirre. As you know, Raul was my predecessor as president and CEO at NCLR. I will always be grateful for his advice, wisdom, and generosity not only during that transition but in the years since. Raul's legacy at NCLR is still felt today. He took a regional organization, focused on one community - Mexican Americans in the southwest - and transformed it into the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States. I don't think people fundamentally understand what it takes to build something

like NCLR. It came at great personal cost and sacrifice to both Raul and his family, that is why we were so honored to name our own national headquarters as the Raul Yzaguirre Building.

Raul was and remains a visionary. At a time when Latinos were not on anyone's radar screen, he understood that our rapid growth meant that someday we would become a force to be reckoned with. He realized very early on that our strength as a community would lie in unifying all the different Hispanic subgroups across the country into one common community with a common agenda. When people speak of the Latino community today, it is in many ways the culmination of Raul's vision decades ago.

Raul has added greatly to his legacy the year since NCLR in fighting vicious anti-immigrant policies in Arizona and serving his country with great distinction as our nation's ambassador to the Dominican Republic. I think Henry Cisneros puts it best. Raul is our North Star - strong, constant, and never wavering from his dream of seeing the Latino community take its rightful place in American life. Congratulations again, Raul, for this well-deserved honor. We love you.

## End of Janet Murguia's tribute ##

Arturo Valenzuela: Thanks so much, Mickey, for that. And thank you so much for inviting me to this event. It means enormously for me. I must warn you though, Mickey, now that I'm back at Georgetown University, I speak only in 50-minute segments. So forget the 3-minute rule. No. For me, it's a real privilege. I've admired Raul Yzaguirre for all the reasons that Ken just mentioned, and Janet as well, for so long. I was surprised when I was appointed to the State Department in the first Clinton administration. I became the highest ranking political appointee among Latinos in the State Department at the time as deputy assistant secretary of state.

One day I got a call from Raul Yzaguirre. He says he wanted to talk. What he was really keen on was to see how Latinos might be able to play a bigger and greater role in international affairs and foreign policy issues. We had an interesting conversation at the time. He was trying to revive the Hispanic

Council on International Affairs, which is something that he did at that time. He was keen on trying to see whether the community could focus more on the Americas and to support our foreign policy objectives in the Americas.

As a visionary, he understood that the well-being of many of the countries from which we come from is dependent on smart and effective U.S. foreign policy. So I was so impressed by Raul because I knew of him as somebody who went on strikes and fought for all of these various different causes that Ken mentioned, but he was also this visionary who was seeing this community grow, expand, mature and deserved a role in the foreign policy arena as well. From there, actually later on, he and Jose Villarreal convinced me to go on the board of NCLR. In fact, we began to work on the board of NCLR to try to see how we could add an additional component to the work that the organization was doing to strengthen the Latino communities' involvement in international affairs.

I later went back to Georgetown after that experience and, then as Mickey just said, went into the White House. I continued to work with NCLR on international affairs issues, left, went back to Georgetown again, and then was appointed by President Obama as assistant secretary. I can't tell you how proud I was when the President of the United States decided to appoint Raul Yzaguirre ambassador to the Dominican Republic. This is a whole phase of his career that most people don't realize. This is Raul Yzaguirre, the internationalist. In fact, we even served on the board of NDI - the National Democratic Institute - at one particular point.

He always had this vision. He's appointed ambassador to a country that is important to the United States. It's important because also of the enormous presence of the Dominican community in the United States. I see Cid Wilson who was on the board of NCLR or is in the board of NCLR here. It was just a terribly proud moment when I heard that he was going to be nominated by the White House. I had control as assistant secretary, some control, over the appointment of career people. But the White House reserve the appointment of political appointees, so this was an appointment, and Raul Yzaguirre did in the Dominican

Republic what he has done throughout his whole life. He was an exemplary phenomenal ambassador.

Since my three minutes are almost up, Mickey, I'll just simply end by saying this. It just so happens that two days ago I was at a luncheon in a Washington restaurant and somebody comes up to me and says, oh, can I talk to you? My name is so-and-so. I'm a congressman in the Dominican Republic. He said I was one of your students at Georgetown. Actually he was in the law school. He did take a class with me. I barely remember this chap. He said I'm here with the delegation from the DR and we very much like to meet with you. I said, look, I'm sorry. I have to leave town. I'm going to a tribute for Raul Yzaguirre, in fact.

He later sent me a note. In fact, this note that he sent me perhaps summarizes better than I could what Raul meant in his service in the Dominican Republic. This young congressman of the PRD, of the opposition party, writes to me and he says, "El Embajador Yzaguirre en su paso por la Republica Dominicana rindió una magnífica labor llena de respeto y compromiso." That really struck me. *Respeto y compromiso.* Respect and commitment. That's the tribute of a great ambassador. Thank you.

## End of Arturo Valenzuela's tribute ##

Raul Yzaguirre: I remember going to a meeting when I was like 10 or 11 years old where the leaders in our community, the Mexican American leaders, were trying to elect a constable who was from our community. [Indiscernible] Tom Mayfield, a former Texas Ranger who came in with his deputies and beat up on the meeting and threw everybody out. I went to school and there learned about freedom, and justice, and the American way. Then at night I would see these kinds of oppressive actions. So I became aware that there was a difference in terms of power and structure.

You have to be an optimist to be in the civil rights movement. When I was a young teenager organizing with Dr. Garcia with the American GI Forum, they used to give you a certificate of

appreciation, I never got one of those certificates of appreciation and it devastated me at first. I said this is unjust. How can I be working for justice and be working in an unjust situation? Then I said wait a minute, wait a minute. Why are you doing this? Are you doing this to get attention? Are you doing this to get recognition? If you're doing it and that's what you're about, then do something else.

When I first came to the National Council of La Raza we were thought of as a Mexican American organization, and indeed we were. I offered a another different vision of what could be. I said what unites us as Latinos is much more important than what divides us. So we began to turn the National Council of La Raza into a pan-Hispanic organization. It was very difficult at first. I had a lot of oppositions from my own community saying let's worry about Mexican Americans first, and then we'll worry about somebody else. And I felt that we needed to walk together. Now it's widely accepted. Everybody talks about Latinos as a community. Our kids will have no problem being first identified not as Mexican Americans or as Puerto Ricans or Cubans but as Latinos.

We decided that we were going to get an executive order on Hispanic education because we were falling so far behind. When I broached the idea with the White House, I was told that I was crazy. There will be a cold day in hell before the President of the United States would sign such an executive order. A few months later, maybe six or seven months later, George Bush, the first, signed an executive order just as we wrote it. I met his chief of staff later on and asked him what the temperature was in hell. Martin Luther King said that you should judge a person by the content and the character and not by the color of their skin. I think in this era we need to say judge a person by his actions and not by his accents.

No más quiero decirles que estoy muy agradecido, muy agradecido y muy agradecido. We are a powerful community. We can do great things. I'm not fighting for just our community. I'm fighting for our country. The two are identical. They follow each other. We can be a great community and be a great country at the same time.



Thank you, Mickey, for doing this. Thank you for all the accolades, for all the friendships. And thank you for coming out here today. We need unity. We can have unity if we can learn how to appreciate each other. Muchas gracias y buenas tardes.

## End of Transcript ##