



MICKEY IBARRA, FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN

Remarks by:
Congressman Joaquín Castro
Latino Leaders Network

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Joaquín Castro: First of all, I want to say thank you Cristóbal, for reminding me that I can never win an election in Florida. Thank you for all of your work on behalf of the Latino Victory Project. You and Henry, and Eva, thank you for everything you are all doing on behalf of the community. To Mickey Ibarra, Mickey congratulations on 30 wonderful years of being such an incredible champion for the Latino community. Thank you for everything that you have done. And to the wonderful representatives who are here from organizations like LULAC, and NCLR, perhaps MALDEF, and others, the Dream U.S. congratulations for the work that you're doing and thank you very much for the work you've always done on behalf of Latinos throughout the United States, we owe you a debt of gratitude. Thank you.

Well, I guess, you know, these days when I'm in Washington, I always clarify that I am Joaquín Castro, I'm the congressman, not the HUD secretary, or the former mayor of San Antonio. You know, for the longest time, I used to tell people that there were two ways to tell my brother Julian and I apart, even though we're twins. The first way was for many years Julian was married and I wasn't. He got married in 2007 to his wife Erica, and they have a six-year old daughter, Carina and now, a two-month old son, Christian. So for about, I guess about five or

six years, Julian was married and I wasn't. So you could just look at our ring finger and tell who is who.

But, believe it or not, after I came to Congress, shortly after I came to congress, I actually convinced somebody to marry me. And in 2013, my wife, Ana and I, married, and we now have a young daughter of our own, Andrea Elena. And so now, there really is only one way to tell Julian and I apart, and when you see the secretary, you can remind him that I told you that I'm a lot better looking than he is. I'm just kidding. It is an honor to be here. Mickey thank you for the award and for the recognition, I appreciate it. Yes, I represent San Antonio Texas in the United States Congress. Thank you.

This 20th congressional district is a district of legends. It is the district that was represented for 30 something years by a gentleman, by the name of Henry B. González. In fact, in 2014 there was delivered in my office a very thick book that I still have on the office coffee table of Hispanic-Americans in Congress and the only picture, the largest picture, the only picture on the cover is a picture of Henry B. González representing Latinos in Congress.

His son, Charlie González, a friend of ours, you honored making you honored Charlie, just before he retired which was the last time I was here addressing this crowd, I believe in late December 2013 or early January 2013. Charlie served for me several years after that, and then I took over at January 2013. And I couldn't be more proud to represent part of Texas and my hometown of San Antonio because in the Latino community, San Antonio was the home of many firsts.

It was the place where MALDEF was born, the place where the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, HACU was born. It was the city where Southwest Voter Registration, created by Willie Velasquez, was born and all the wonderful work that they've done to register Latinos throughout the United States. It was also the place where a group of parents in the Edgewood Independent School District rose up and challenged the school finances to mend taxes because they believe that the difference between the money received by wealthy and poor districts was unconstitutional. That case went all the way to the United States Supreme Court in the late 60s or early 70s. And in that case a 5-4 decision in EISD versus Rodríguez, the Supreme Court said that education is not a fundamental right.

But the parents in Edgewood, and by this time and other states throughout the country, didn't stop there. They took their fight in to the state legislatures and the state supreme courts and finally in Texas in the late 1980s, the Texas Supreme Court declared that education was a fundamental right under the Texas constitution and the parents in Edgewood and throughout the United States in different states at different times won that battle. And it's still one that continues today. And so I'm very, very proud to represent my hometown.

Now, you know, we think of places like San Antonio and El Paso and Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, New York, we have thought for a long time of these cities as naturally having large Latino populations. But more and more we know that Latinos are growing up in places like Georgia, North Carolina, Nebraska, Utah, that's right, Salt Lake city, Minnesota, and all over the United States.

So not only are we growing in different areas but our community, which is now 17 percent of the United States, is also in many different fields. We have, for many years, been doctors and lawyers, in business, engineers, in many, many different fields. And so, you know, when I think about my family's success and the good fortune my brother and I have had, and I look around the room here and the people that I've met and the stories that I know, I think about what a debt of gratitude we owe to the many people in our families that came before us.

When my brother spoke at a Democratic national -- that's right -- you know, one of the differences between Julian and myself, sometimes people will come up to me and say, "I loved your speech at the Democratic National Convention". And then I'll have to say, "Well, I didn't give the speech. I did the two-minute introduction but my brother gave the long 20-minute speech, right?"

Part of his speech was something that he and I had worked on and what we fundamentally believed--what he said was that the American dream is not sprint or even a marathon, it's a relay. That our families don't always make it there in a span of one generation but each family passes on its successes to the next generation. And the reason that we believe that, and the reason my brother said that is because it was true in our family.

My grandmother, Victoria Castro, the story that my brother told, was the first in our family to come in the United States

from Coahuila, México. She was from a very small town called San Pedro. My grandmother was six years old when she came to this country. She came with her younger sister, Trinidad, not because they wanted to but because both their parents have died around the time of the Mexican Revolution. My grandmother came because the closest relatives that could take her in were not in Mexico but were in San Antonio, Texas, and that's how my family ended up settling there.

You know, back then, it was a lot easier to come to United States even for people coming from México, believe it or not. In fact, this is something that my family had never done but right before my brother spoke at the DNC in 2012, there was a genealogist, I believe from the Huffington Post, they made him another outlet but I think it was the Huffington Post, who went back and traced my grandmother's history and found the document that allowed her to come into this country. And there was a document that was from -- she came through Eagle Pass, Texas, on the Texas-Mexican border. And there is a line in that document that asked the purpose for which she was coming and written into that line, it said, "to live". She was coming to live.

My grandmother worked as a maid, a babysitter, and a cook. Her entire career, her entire adult life and even as a child, to do everything that she could to give my brother and I -- actually, well her only child, my mom first -- the best of life that she could possibly have. And my parents were the first in their families to go to college, and they did the same thing for my brother and I. The reason that Julian told that story back then, and that I tell it to you now, is not because I think that story is special but because that is a story of so many of our families, who worked so hard over the years to do everything that they could to give their kids and their grandkids a better chance in life than they had.

Then my mom was the first in our family to get involved in politics. People wonder, you know, my brother was elected to the San Antonio city council at 26 years old. I was elected to the state legislature at 28 but it was my mom who ran as a young woman of 23 years old for the San Antonio city council. She ran under a party that was called Raza Unida party. Back then in Texas, believe it or not, everybody was a Democrat. And in the Texas legislature, there were literally, out of the a hundred and fifty state reps, less than ten republicans back then. And

my Mom ran for city council at a time when cities had still not created single member districts so you were still running at at-large elections and in a place system. My mom came in second, I think, out of six or eight candidates back then. And as a young woman, it was a big step for her because not only were there very few Latinos on the city council but there were also very few women who dared to run for office, who dared to challenge the system back then and take a chance at running. So I felt like an old man at 28 when my mom had ran at 23 years old. But she did so because back then, the place where we grew up, the west side of San Antonio, like so many places in this country, never received its fair share.

She had been born into a time when in Texas there were still signs that read "No dogs or Mexicans allowed" and she was working to change that. And the people that she worked with in the party were working to change that. My mom eventually became a Democrat again. She continued to be active not only in Democratic party politics in helping women candidates and Latinas but also in doing things like supporting domestic violence efforts, in building up libraries and all of these wonderful things that she's been able to do over the years. But it was for my brother and I, she and my dad who worked for years as a teacher in the Edgewood Independent School District for 26 years. And before that he had started a small school in part of a group that started a small school called Jacinto Treviño College in Texas that was to educate Mexican-Americans in Texas. And it lasted several years and then finally succumbed due to a lack of funding back then in the 1970s.

But this was the household that we grew up in. A household that believed that when a government works right and through public service you could do great things in people's lives and I still believe that today. And when people ask each of us who were involved in government or in our communities what we believe about the role of government in American life, I believe this, based on my experience. I believe that what makes our country special is that together as Americans, in my grandmother's generation, in my mom's generation, and even in this generation, we have come together to build what I call an infrastructure of opportunity in this country.

Think about that for a second, what I mean is just as that there's an infrastructure of streets and roads and highways that

helps all of us to get where we want to go on the road. The beauty of America is that there is an infrastructure of opportunity that helps people to get where they want to go in life. And that includes great public schools, and universities, a strong healthcare system, and an economy that's built around well-paying jobs so that when people work hard they can support themselves and their family members. That is the America that we have sought to build over the years. That is the reason that people have come from México and Latin America and Europe and Asia and all over the world because we are the preeminent nation of opportunity. And so the call to all of us, not only in congress or as elected officials, but as Americans, is to do every single thing that we can to build that infrastructure of opportunity, to preserve it, to grow it, and to make sure that just as my grandmother and I my parents made sure for my brother and I that for all us, the infrastructure of opportunity is there for the next generation of Americans. Thank you all very much for this honor. I appreciate it.

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