



Henry Cisneros
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Henry Cisneros: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Willie, thank you. Thank you. Please sit down. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Willie, that standing ovation was for you. Mickey Ibarra has done a lot of smart things in his life like create the Latino Leaders Network and like bring it to Los Angeles. But the smartest thing that I'm most grateful for is that he asked Willie Brown to introduce me today.

So many titles, Mr. Speaker, you can see it was a double entendre. Mr. Speaker, not just Speaker of the House of California, Speaker of the Assembly but one of the best speakers in America. Mr. Mayor, Your Honor, but I think the appropriate title is the one that they give to officials in the Commonwealth countries of Canada and New Zealand and Australia, which is when a person has been a mayor, they refer to them as Your Worship.

Willie, thank you very, very much. You know, it's a beautiful story the way you tell it. I mean there are pieces here and there that are not exactly right. But I'll live with it. And I could have sat there for another hour and listened to you. And thank you specially for making the trip down.

Mickey, thank you for the honor, all of this is about Mickey Ibarra. Mickey pulled this group together. Mickey pulled this event together. What a wonderful assemblage of friends and associates and acquaintances for so many years. Thank you all for being here. And Mickey, thank you for doing this.

Mickey, asked me today to talk about personal things. And I'll spend a couple of minutes doing that. But Mickey's story is a pretty incredible story. He grew up in Utah in foster homes, he

and his brother who is here. Mickey was the older brother by 11 months. They struggled their way through life and worked their way through high school and football and college. Mickey became assistant to the President of the United States when Bill Clinton named him to that position in the White House. His brother has been very successful in business. And Mickey never, never quits. So ladies and gentlemen, let's just hear it for Mickey Ibarra and all that he's done in his time.

Mickey was an assistant to the president at the same time that Janet Murguía was in the White House and at the same time that Maria Echaveste was the Deputy Chief of Staff. She had been an assistant to the president as well. President Clinton did a good job of naming some very good people like these folks to those positions at the White House. Mickey, thank you for your continuing work of this nature.

Obviously, I want to recognize Gloria Molina. Gloria, thank you so much for your years of service. Gloria is just a stalwart of honesty and conviction and determination. Such a special human being who all of these years in every position she has ever held - the assembly, the city council, and then a path breaking supervisor - no one will be able to match what she has done over these years. Gloria, congratulations, I speak literally the truth. No one will be able to match it because all future supervisors will have term limits. And Gloria has been able to serve a very long time and do it very, very well and leave a tremendous legacy.

I do want to recognize Mayor Villaraigosa who is not here. Part of what I wanted to do today was to just to kind of share some interactions of a personal nature and one of them involves Mayor Villaraigosa and Gloria Molina. When Mayor Villaraigosa and Xavier Becerra were coming up together and it looked like there was a collision about to occur, because they were both going to run for mayor, we met at Gloria's home in an effort to try, as friends, just kind of sort out how this might occur. Gloria did a great job. She brought me into that discussion. We met at Sunday mornings like at 7:30 in the morning over *pan dulce* in her home. And it's amazing the way things worked out.

Today as we speak, that super committee is meeting six senators and six Congress people joined together to try to sort out literally a question that is right at the heart of the future of our country - how we're going to deal with debt and deficit. One of the 12 is Xavier Becerra. What an amazing thing. I think we ought to recognize that, one of those 12 people.

And in the audience tonight at the president's address on the same basic subject - deficit, debt, jobs - is the mayor of Los Angeles who is the president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and invited there by the President of the United States. So it's an amazing thing Gloria that all those years ago we were trying to keep a collision from happening and both of them have done very, very well which is a story of our community and our progress.

I want to recognize all the public officials who are present. They have all been announced and it's a tremendous aggregation. Thank you for being here. And also, the heads of major national organizations, Tom, thank you for your words. You're doing a great, great job. I will say a word about that in a minute. Janet Murguía is here from the National Council, Arturo Vargas from NALEO, David Lizárraga with TELACU, and Arturo Rodriguez with the farm workers. Let's just hear it for these folks who work in the vineyards every day for our people.

And I want to thank in a very sincere way for her years of help and partnership, my wife, Mary Alice, who in the last four years has served on the city council in San Antonio. The same seat that I held from 1975 to '81, she has held for the last four years and done a great job of really providing constituency service and improving the community. She now has become head of a nonprofit we created about ten years ago in our home neighborhood.

The mayor said we live in the home that my grandparents owned. We do. The barrio of San Antonio is kind of the East LA equivalent of San Antonio. We decided that the children in the neighborhood just almost don't have a chance. I mean there's just no way they're going to make it. So we bought an adjacent house and set it up as an afterschool learning center. It's

become the base for a nonprofit that operates in a one square mile area of the West Side of San Antonio. We have children come every afternoon for math and science and reading. And we're going on from there to middle school children and preparing high school kids by getting SAT prep for them that they don't get. It can improve their SAT scores to go to college and then involving their parents in literacy and citizenship. It's called American Sunrise and the president of it is Mary Alice Cisneros. So I want to recognize her and thank her for her work.

And somewhere here is my daughter, Teresa, and her husband, Sean Burton. Guys, please stand up so folks can meet my daughter Teresa and Sean Burton who live here in LA. Teresa is a lawyer, a mediator who's worked in the City Attorney's Office here and a mother of two of our four grandchildren. And Sean is the president of CityView, the company that I am the chairman of. And he is doing a great job. So I wanted you to meet them.

I want to be brief in my remarks. But I do want to comply with Mickey's admonition to say a few words about kind of personal things and how they fit into the larger picture of the progress of our people, of our community.

As the mayor said, I grew up in San Antonio. My grandfather was exiled from the revolution in Mexico who arrived in 1926 on pain of execution in Mexico, and set up a business - a very successful print shop. My mother was one of seven. My father was a soldier who went to World War II from New Mexico and spent four years in New Guinea and ended up in San Antonio with malaria, rooming with a guy who had a sister. That sister became my mother and the rest is history. My grandfather who was an old Mexican style father patriarch, said, "You can marry her but you cannot take her out of San Antonio." So that's why we're from San Antonio and not from some other place in the country because my dad had to be there.

We grew up in a neighborhood in which all of the people, all the *Mejicanos*, it was a *Mejicano* neighborhood. As I say, something like East LA Boyle Heights would be today in which most of the men were the heads of households who were World War II veterans.

So we lived in this idyllic kind of lower middle class setting. I have sometimes said it was like a Norman Rockwell painting except all the faces were brown. I went outside the house and whistled and 16 guys roughly between my age and my brother's age, five years younger, would come out and we had football games and baseball games at any hour of the day. It was just great growing up. We were protected in some ways from the discrimination and the segregation that continued to plague Texas in that era.

Mayor Brown is from Mineola, Texas. A place where discrimination and segregation was as savage as anything you would encounter in the Deep South in the 1940s and '50s when he was growing up. Mayor Bradley came from Calvert, Texas, the same kind of place. San Antonio was in some ways insulated from that because of the *Mejicano* community. We had people who were proud of their heritage and they were not going to be put down and they were hardworking. And so we grew up in a setting that was a combination of ethnic pride and at the same time, Janet, not unlike your neighborhood in Kansas City which I have visited, at the same time a sense of social justice.

So out of the people who came out of neighborhoods like that came the founding of MALDEF in San Antonio, Gregory Luna and other major leaders; came Southwest Voter Registration Education Project which Willie Velasquez founded. The first Spanish radio station in the United States, KCOR, the Cortez family. KWX, the building block of Univision founded there in San Antonio. And many other things like the Association of Hispanic Colleges and Universities and Avance. Here in the room is a woman who's married to Arturo Rodriguez, Sonia, who was the president of one of those sort of seminal and fundamental organizations called COPS, the predecessor of 1LA here built by Ernie Cortés out of the same neighborhoods of San Antonio.

So that's the setting that we grew up in. I grew up with a mother who had a real social conscience. I mean, I remember going to the doctor with her as a boy, maybe seven, on a bus with no air conditioning. In those days, the politicians in Texas all wore white suits. The mayor, and that's the first time I ever saw the mayor. She said, "Look out the window.

That's the mayor over in the plaza." But that same plaza had water fountains that said white and colored. And the Woolworth store on the color [sounds like] had entrances that said white and colored and African Americans couldn't go to the counter there. This is 1955, 1956, that timeframe.

So it has been impossible for me over my life to not relate to people who are marginalized, who haven't had an opportunity. There's a deep sense of kind of what's fair and what's unfair. It's just been part of my genetics. I share that with you because I think it's true of a lot of you in this room and a lot of our people. I believe that our community is unusually attuned for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, it's our religion. Sometimes, it's the remembrance of family, extended family. But I know you in this room. I know José Villarreal seated right over here, for example, or Art Gastelum here. And no matter what other successes you achieve, you remember, and you have this sense of roots. So that's kind of one of the things I wanted to not only highlight for you but also encourage. You see, our community needs that sense of connection from its leaders and from those who've been fortunate. That sense of remembrance in order to progress.

In 1968, I graduated from college and it was one of the most tumultuous years in American history. In March, President Johnson decided not to run for reelection because of the riots over the Vietnam War and the opposition to the war. In April, Dr. King was assassinated. I remember the night. In June, Senator Kennedy was killed in this city at the Ambassador Hotel. By that summer, cities were burning including Chicago at the Democratic Convention which was a riot, a police riot.

It was in that era that I concluded that what I wanted to do with my life was in the public realm and public service. Try to make the country a little better. I knew I wanted to serve but I didn't know what it was. And then this whole idea of the cities kind of was opened to me. I had the opportunity as a college student to travel to the East Coast to a conference as a student, a selected delegate. I was introduced to Mayor Lindsay, the mayor of New York, who was walking the streets, shirtsleeves, turning the water spigots on so that the children

would cool in the summer heat. So that New York wouldn't explode like Cleveland and Detroit and so many others. Washington, D.C. all burned.

It was in that era listening to voices like Julian Bond and Andy Young. And in our community, relating to people like Raul Yzaguirre who was just starting up at that time, and Cesar Chavez, of course. That I concluded what I wanted to do was in this realm of community building and city building. So that's what I studied. The mayor's right, I went home and was elected to the city council and served on an at-large city council citywide for two terms, four years, when MALDEF brought a suit - again, I'm trying to make some of these connections for you - against the Justice Department to contest an election form in which there were two Latinos out of nine in a city that was 60 percent Latino. The seven people who were not Latino lived within a mile of each other in the wealthiest part of town.

So MALDEF sued to create single member districts. We had an election on it and barely won it, the equivalent of one vote per precinct citywide, right? But we won it. And in the next election, we had an 11-member city council in which six were minorities. The city thought a revolution had occurred. The city thought it was going to melt down six minorities, five Latinos and an African-American. And all were young. All were under 35 years of age. I was a college professor. We had a social worker. We had a junior college professor. We were a very different crowd. And the city took a very, very different path.

And I must say, I think that it has been the most progressive times San Antonio has ever had. I used that word "progressive" not just in the way we think of kind of center-left politics but in terms of job creation and downtown redevelopment and inclusion of the people. The organization that Sonia was president of, COPS, was very, very much a part of that process.

I developed a kind of a mindset that has served me well through the rest of my life including the time I spent with President Clinton in the cabinet which is a formulation of how cities work. To put it as simply as possible, I used to say to the

people of San Antonio, a good boxer has to have two punches. You can't just be a right; you got to have a left as well. In my formulation, a city has to have two punches. One is it's got to grow. You got to have jobs. You got to raise incomes. You got to figure all of the practical things to create economic momentum. And then, the second punch is you got to harness that economic momentum in realistic ways and make it work for people who are at the edges. So everything from job training and using the community college and reaching through the COPS organizations to the schools to industrial parks and big league stuff like energy policy and water policy and infrastructure because that's what it takes to create the jobs. That's what it takes to grow. That's been the model that served San Antonio well.

But it's also what I preached to President Clinton. And I'm very proud to have been part of the administration that had the longest economic expansion in American history with the lowest unemployment rates and the lowest poverty rates and the highest formation of jobs and the highest formation of businesses. We made it work for people. I remember the morning in the Rose Garden; we had an announcement on another subject. And as I left HUD to go to the White House, they handed me a piece of paper that showed for the first time in American history since the records were kept, the distribution of income was narrowing.

One of the hardest things in American economics to move is the actual distribution of who has money because it's always the top, top percent has the vast bulk of the resources and the people at the very bottom have one or two percent of the total wealth. On the Clinton watch, we actually were beginning to move that hardest of hardest of things that suggested people could actually be making progress.

That's been a philosophy. It's also been a practical application. And I must say for me, it's kind of a philosophy of life. Which is what makes the present era since 2000 so disheartening because in that period we've seen the squandering of the surplus that was amassed. We've seen world forces on a collision course that are just ugly. We've seen new forms of implacable opposition including the present Tea Party rhetoric.

It just doesn't understand. It doesn't get it. It's just dismantled things that work in our country. Unfortunately, a lot of it is racist and anti-minority including the anti-immigrant sentiment that we saw last summer in Arizona. And we see, in particular, communities in Pennsylvania, in Nebraska, all across our country. Thank God for MALDEF and the other advocates among us who make that battle.

But what it says to me is that we have to continue to fight. In that same kind of stream that's been the central theme of my life which is pride in our community, our people, belief in what we can do in this country, and creating opportunity in the larger American picture is the task that lies ahead.

So let me close here by just saying that as I think about not the past as Mickey asked me to do but the future, I'm committed to sort of three things. The first is I continue to believe that the places we live, our communities, our cities, are the platforms by which we're going to create a better life for people. That's why I am in the housing business. We have a company called CityView that's building homes, taking institutional capital and trying to build homes for working families all across the country. We got to go beyond that. We got to build green. We have to build affordable. We have to build for ethnic communities. We have to build utilizing capital in new ways. So that's something that I'm committed to out of this same sense of making our community stronger.

Secondly, I believe that my best expenditure of time in the time that remains to me - I'm 64 years old now, I expect to work until at least 90, so that's about 26 years or something - is in helping our people, our community which are the largest minority group in the country integrate into the American mainstream. If there's going to be an American middle class, it's going to be the conversion of people who are poor into a middle class.

I mean the numbers say it very clearly. If we're going to have academic excellence in America, it's going to be children who are presently dropping out who somehow are converted into academic superstars that the country is going to need. If we're going to compete with the Chinese and the Indians, it's going to

be people and neighborhoods like those in Los Angeles and San Antonio and other places across the country, minorities of all heritages who are the population that does that.

So that's why we're committed to American Sunrise as a model. We want to learn things. We want to take them to a broader scale. We want to support Janet and the National Council of La Raza and every other mechanism that exists. This is an effort that cannot fail. As they said in the movie, *Apollo 13*, "Failure is not an option." If you love this country, no matter your race or heritage, we have to do this. No matter what your background is, this is not about compassion, this is not about humanitarian instincts; this is about the future of our country. And thank God we have a people who are hungry, who are committed to work, who understand sacrifice today to do better for their families tomorrow. America is lucky to have this Latino population on hand to build a future. And the best days can still be ahead.

The final point that I'll make that I'll commit to in terms of what I do going forward is family. In the immediate sense, of course, it's my personal family - my daughters and son, their husbands, grandchildren. But I'm blessed. I've been blessed to have a very broad extended family. That includes many of you. And that's the way I see it.

Antonio Villaraigosa is like a younger brother to me. And we have that kind of relationship. He's a better looking younger brother. The other day, I was walking by a newsstand at the airport and I saw a magazine. I said, whoa, that's a good picture of Antonio. It was Mark Sanchez, the quarterback of the New York Jets. Don't tell Antonio I said that. His head will get bigger.

But I've had the good fortune of interfacing with a lot of young talent. Councilman Cárdenas, who is over here, running now for Congress, I mean what a great thing that is. I watched him come up. I've watched people like Xavier Becerra. I watched Julián Castro, the present mayor of San Antonio, come up. So at this point in my life, we have a rich extended family. That includes males, females, people in business, people in politics. My

heart overflows with good will and hopes for watching our community take its place on the American scene.

Mickey, thank you very much for singling me out for this honor today, it's just a privilege to be able to share this time with all of you. Gracias. Thank you very much.

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