



Latino Leaders Network
Mayor Quinton Lucas Receives the
Antonio Villaraigosa Leadership Award
January 28, 2026

Quinton Lucas: My constituents, my family, and my friends, almost none of them would believe this - I'm speechless. As Mayor Moreno noted - and it has been an honor getting to know you, I look forward to working with you. Sometimes it is unbelievable to be able to stand in a room and, Antonio, to think about where we started, to think about when your life journey was your mama's dream. To think about the fact that there were so many people who told that parent perhaps in some sort of kind-hearted way, you know, he may not be able to do that, but that's going to be all right. But to always know that you could dream.

I'm going to start by honoring some people. Not just thanking them, but honoring them. I want to honor my friend, Mickey Ibarra, who does outstanding work for this organization. Mickey, thank you for being a friend to us all. One other thing that you may want to know, if ever you want to get into an event

or a party, just drop Mickey Ibarra's name. Absolutely every person knows him.

I want to honor some exceptional women from Kansas City and our region who are with me tonight. CiCi Rojas, an exceptional person. Janet Murguía who I've loved having the chance to know. And so many as my career continued - I won't say rose, as it continued - as our service changes over time who said you can do that. And as was noted, recognize that we don't have to look the same, we don't have to come from the same background, but we have to fundamentally respect our shared humanity.

I want to thank my sister, Phyllis Dickerson, here from the African American Mayors Association, who lifts us up every single day as we fight the hate, as we fight the bigotry, as we fight people who say that we are leaders with cities in chaos. When we are leaders with cities where crime is dropping, we are leaders of cities that are bringing folks together. We are leaders of cities that are at the vanguard of what is best in America.

I want to honor my fellow mayors. It is interesting - and, Helena, you are doing better than everyone else - because I will admit when I first showed up and you see people like Antonio and you see other folks, you see David Holt who - even if you didn't know him is like 6'7" so at least you were in some way nervous. They said, I stand there with you. We can learn with you. If

you have never been to the White House before, don't worry. You won't embarrass yourself. Folks like all of you have not only helped me, but you helped my family. You have helped my community each and every day.

But I particularly want to thank and honor the freedom fighters, the folks who have built these communities, who have built these positions. One of the reasons this award is so special is, if you study or just listen to Antonio for a few minutes, you hear those stories about the folks who generations before us - and I don't mean to age you - but generations before us said that black and brown needed to work together to build a better future not just in Southern California but one for those of us in Middle America and the Northeast and in every part of our country.

The types of people who made it possible that, when my family was coming up from Alabama now generations before me, one branch went to Kansas City and one branch went out to Southern California. As my mother was living in Southern California and seeing different challenges and different opportunities along the way, there were Latinos, there were black folks, there were white folks who were allies, there were others who said that our communities could be greater. So thank you to all of you for not giving up.

I will admit that in the mayoral job there are days, there

are nights where there is so much stress that perhaps you are tempted to give up. But I remember a few things that keep me going. First of all, there but for the grace of God go I. I recognize that for whatever reason - and I happen to think that it is a God who has cared about me, my family, my people, and my country - that I have been able to get here today through challenges every step along the way. But I think another key part of that is to build opportunities for others to do the same.

Another thing that I always think about is how much our communities are worth the work. They are all worth the work. Years ago my mother was just trying to get us by. I have two older sisters. She was going to a junior college in the Kansas City area. She was trying to make it by and all of that.

But I remember the things that existed back then. Frankly, it breaks my heart that in a state like mine, in a state like my neighbor, we don't have programs like that in the same way. We had access to free early childhood education which should be a right for every child in America. We had access to quality health care to make sure that, when I was a six-year-old with pneumonia, it didn't end my life. Instead, it was something that I could get through. My family could be taken care of and we could have opportunities long term. I know of a country that made sure that educational opportunities were open to all of us

regardless of background, regardless of status. And more than anything, making sure that your dreams could come to realities in America.

So what I challenge all of you to do no matter what your position is and, let me be real, particularly with my corporate brothers and sisters -- first of all, thank you for the contributions. Keep coming back. Mickey loves it. But I recognize that this is a time where some days you might be tempted to keep your head down. Every day we have a choice. We could just say, all right. You know what? They're not going to come for me. I'm just going to hide. I'm going to try to make it through.

But I can't keep moving. I can't keep moving when there is somebody who is just like me, who needs every opportunity that I did, who is being left out, who is being castigated, who is being marginalized, who is being pushed down, pushed down sometimes by government itself, but in more situations by stinging bigotry.

Don't get me wrong. What we are seeing in places is bigotry. The reason that there is the focus in Minnesota now is because of the Somali population in the Twin Cities. It is something that is anti-black. It is anti-brown. And that's how it can be perpetrated right now. We need to make sure that we stand up for those folks even if you never make it to Minnesota,

even if you don't know a lick about somebody of a different type.

The other thing we need to make sure we do is that we need to make sure we stay strong and support each other. Something I love about being a mayor is this: That we call each other. That we talk to each other. That if you know somebody is down, you know if somebody's football team got their butt kicked in the last Super Bowl, you tell them it's going to be all right. You'll get back. Sorry. I got like two Chiefs fans. But what you do is you make sure that you are lifting up that someone else because the work that you do will pay dividends years and years later.

A few years ago I asked my mother, who did you vote for in the 1980s? She said, I didn't vote, it didn't make a difference. I was poor before the election; I was going to be poor after. I managed to get her to start voting, to get her to start caring, and to get her to start seeing and so many more in our community.

That we can get leaders in states like California and states like my own, who will listen to us. We can get leaders that will center those who are working class, who will center people of color in their messaging, in their board appointments. Those are the sorts of things we need to see even more of.

But what I want us to also remember is this. At the end of

the day, no matter if it's election season or anything under the sun, this is our country. This is our country. I don't care where you were born. I don't care what mistakes you have made. I don't care where you're going. This is our country and our country is worth fighting for.

So on those days where I wish to give up, on those days where I wish to have my head down, I say, you know what? Damn it. Somebody like Antonio kept fighting. Mickey keeps fighting. Janet keeps fighting. All of you keep fighting in your cities and your communities because our communities are worth the work. Our people are worth the work. Fortunately, for all of us, our country is worth the work.

So as we make it through this moment together, I want us to remember that. I want us to remember to lift up each other. I want us to remember that faith, tradition, or whatever keeps you going, I want us to remember that we are what America is at its best. People flock to many of our cities and our communities. People all have a shared story of looking for better opportunities for them and their families. More than anything, that our humanity, our passions, our hearts, our souls and our country are worth the work.

Thank you all so very much for this award. It means so much to me. God bless you all. Thank you and have a wonderful evening.

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