



The Antonio Villaraigosa Leadership Award
40th Tribute to Mayors
Keynote Remarks of Mayor Paulette Guajardo
Loews Kansas City Hotel
June 21, 2024

Paulette Guajardo: Wow. Well, thank you. Thank you, Mayor, for those kind, kind words. Without saying, it is a great honor to receive this award named after you, Mayor Villaraigosa, a great honor.

I first want to thank my husband, Victor, who's here, my son Jude who is here with me and with us - there you go, thank you, Mayor - this evening. You know, in August my son Jude will enter the Rawls Business School at Texas Tech. I'm very proud of you, son. Congratulations on that.

I also want to thank Mickey Ibarra for this leadership award. You've created a platform that is very powerful through the Latino Leaders Network, so thank you. Thank you for not just creating that and supporting that for us, but you do it with a passion that is so genuine. So thank you for that.

And Senator Leticia Van de Putte. Where is she? Over here. There she is. Thank you to Leticia, my good friend, for being such a wonderful mentor to so many Latinas across the nation. A powerful mentor and a role model. Thank you for what you do.

As mayors, we are all on the frontlines of community leadership. That's, without being said, we know that. But I believe it's imperative that everyone has a seat at the table. That all voices are represented. That's not always that easily done in our communities. They're all different.

One of the reasons I felt compelled to serve was the quick little tidbit you just heard from Mayor Villaraigosa regarding my family. My dad dropped out of high school to be a farm worker alongside my grandmother and pick cotton in the blistering heat of south Texas many years ago. That was because that was the only option he had at that time. He later joined the United States Army and he served our great country. Then he met my mom, a beautiful woman from Saltillo Coahuila, Mexico. An educated woman, as was mentioned. Then created a great union between the two and the rest is history.

Today his daughter, the mayor of Corpus Christi, the eighth largest city in Texas, leads the Economic Development Corporation that helped the region bring the Tesla lithium battery plant to none other than -- guess where? Robstown,

Texas. My dad passed away a few months ago, but I'm very proud to say that because again Robstown is a very small town, a very small little suburb of Corpus Christi, and it is where I grew up every summer. I'm proud to say that because who would have thought, right? Who would have thought that everything has its day.

So today, that said, we are creating more opportunities for young people in our community than ever before. Never will it or should it be that you don't have an option. But my dad's story was very encouraging to me. I didn't know it. I didn't know how it was going to affect me in my career and my life. But today I stand before you and I tell you that because it is, because of how his life was back then.

So serving the people of Corpus Christi has truly been my greatest honor, but I do believe that we all have this responsibility not just to serve. Serving is easy. It's serving everyone. It's making certain that we go to all the different pockets of our community. Some are smaller than others, it's easier done. But some are not. That's where we have the responsibility to make certain that if you truly want to be -- and we all do. Of course, you want to be the people's mayor. That's what you're elected to do.

But who are the people? You get to define that. I have defined that, and I have made it my focus to say it is everyone.

I don't care what you look like. I don't care what color of skin you have. It is everyone.

A quick little story. We have a big parade. A hundred thousand people that attend this parade. It's called the Buc Days Parade. I invite you all to join us. It's a fun parade. It's the best thing. It's at night, of course, and it's -- anyway. Great parade. I get a call. My office receives a call from a lady that says "I want her to know what she did for my child. She stopped along the parade, shook my daughter's hand, and spoke with her for --" It had to have been just seconds. "And the impact it had on my daughter," she said, "was immense" because she said, mom, "she looks like Barbie."

I thought, no, I don't. But maybe there's a Barbie with dark hair and little darker skin. I don't know. But I thought that was cute. She told her mom that she wanted to be like me when she grows up. In this country every little girl that looks like me should be able to believe that she can be the mayor of her city and more.

So with that, I am extremely honored to be here before you. Thank you. This is such a great honor. Thank you. Thank you, Mickey, for everything you're doing. It's amazing. You know, when you really stand still, all of us, no matter where you are in your political careers, you think about the legacy you are leaving because you can always make it better. It doesn't

matter what you've done, it's what you are going to do. And you can continue to create a legacy that is going to touch even more people.

If you are already in the position, God has given you the gifts to do it. Point blank, He's already given because we're all called to serve somehow. It's not all in political office. How many times do people tell you, I don't know how you do it, I would never do it. I could never be a nurse. I didn't have the gifts to be a nurse, or a teacher, or all the other things out there, all the other occupations. We're all given gifts because the path has already been laid out for us. We decide to what degree.

So thank you. God bless you. I hope that you all continue to do the wonderful work for the people.