



**Latino Leaders Network
Cafecito Series con
Latina Founder of America's First Queer Gym
Nathalie Huerta
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Nathalie Huerta: Thank you Mickey. Thank you, Latino Leaders Network for this award for this opportunity to be here with you all today. I'm honored to share my story. As Mickey mentioned, I come from a huge family. I grew up in Orange County, and I grew up witnessing entrepreneurship in the first row.

My parents, including most of my siblings are all entrepreneurs, so I was hit with entrepreneur influences left and right growing up my entire life. I would say definitely though the most impactful was obviously witnessing my parents migrate here, build their business, have it run for 35 years, and just the multiple daily lessons that I was witnessing but didn't really know the significance and the impact of it until now that I myself am an entrepreneur. You know, little moments like I remember when computers first came out and my mom sitting

in the office like counting on her fingers how to do payroll. I remember me driving home and crying and being like, it's hard. I'm going to quit and my mom gave me a little canta tada, told me to stop my whining and stop my crying and drive my butt back to my house and get to work because I had a baby business and what was I doing taking a vacation. So these little moments all equate to who I am today and what I do today and essentially, that's provide a safe space for the queer community which is also something that I learned from my parents because I am the only queer kid in my family.

I grew up super Catholic, and I remember coming out to my parents and that being a very challenging time for them and for myself. At that moment, they had a choice to love me, house me, continue to nurture who I was becoming, or let fear and hate kind of take over. My parents, I'm privileged to say that my parents decided to continue to love me and instead of letting hate in their heart, expand their mind and get to know me and get to know me as I was getting to know me. They allowed me to do that by providing a safe space for me and our home, so now I'm in a position where I can return that favor to other queer kids that don't necessarily have a safe space to be themselves.

A lot of you might be wondering what the queer gym is and how it came to be. I was somebody who grew up in sports. I

loved going to the gym. I loved playing basketball so the gym for me was like my happy place when I looked like a cis-hetero female. The minute that I started to become more comfortable with who I am and my presentation, I started to present more masculine and that's when I quickly noticed the gym just got very weird very fast and the only thing that had changed was that I quote unquote looked a little bit more gay. So for me I figured, I can't be the only person having this experience. Where do queer people work out? After not finding anything, I was essentially inspired to create America's first queer gym back in 2010. If you're wondering, you know what exactly that is and why we exist.

We exist because like I've shared in my story, I'm not the only one who doesn't feel comfortable and safe in most gyms. We exist because we're the only gym that is open-minded enough that's skilled enough, knowledgeable enough, to train particular parts of our queer community, specifically the trans community. We provide training for people in the trans community who are getting ready for gender affirming surgeries or just you know the whole journey in itself. We've had the gym now for 13 years, we have survived and thrived in the pandemic, and we continue to serve the queer community on our mission of making happy healthy homos.

I look forward to talking a little bit more about this on the panel. Once again, thank you so much to Mickey and to the Latino Leaders Network for you, for being here today, for having your time, for having your attention.

I'm ready for some Cafecito, I'm ready to talk, and I again am grateful, humbled to be here. Thank you all, gracias. Have a great day.