

Latino Leaders Network  
City of Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey  
June 11, 2026

Jacob Frey: Well, I just listened to the extraordinary Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa say that you don't get this award for giving good speeches. So maybe I'll continue that tradition right now.

But thank you to Mayor Richardson, Mayor Holt, Mayor Romero, Mayor Villaraigosa, Mickey Rubin, Javier, the extraordinary team here as part of the Latino Leaders Network, people that have made our country definitively a better place, that have stood up for our neighbors during the most difficult of circumstances. People who had led through thick and thin. To be here right now, in Long Beach, is something truly special. As Mayor Karen Bass just mentioned, while LA may have been the first honoring tomorrow, let's all make sure that Minneapolis is the very last.

This award is really meaningful to me personally because during some of the darkest of moments, I've taken inspiration from people in this room: from mayors who have been getting pummeled from every single side. From our Latino community whose brilliance and entrepreneurship, whose great ideas and patriotism, whose kind of common humanity in seeking a better life has inspired me in the most beautiful of ways.

The very last trip that I took before COVID-19 and before we had kids was to Mexico City. We took a trip there. It was inspirational to me. Not long after that, the whole world went into lockdown. There was an economic downturn. George Floyd was murdered in my city that I have the honor of representing. The subsequent unrest and everything that we went through. It was a very difficult time obviously for people throughout the world, but people in Minneapolis felt it particularly acutely.

My wife, who was both pregnant at the time and studying for the bar exam, recognized that the kid we were about to have had to be resilient, had to be tough, had to understand that this world only exists in the benevolence that we want to see if we understand our all-common humanity. So when we had the kid, there was only one name for her - Frida. Frida is now five years old. There's no doubt in my mind that she is a future leader. She has the kind of spunk, and authenticity, and drive that makes me tear up any time that I talk about her.

But I today want to talk about all of you. I want to talk about the people of our city, our incredible Latino community who has made our city a better place. I completely abandoned the speech that was written for me here.

So I want to talk about the few months that we experienced - in January, February, and March - of this year. ICE and the federal government thought that they were going to roll into a

city and we would abandon each other. They thought that they would be able to terrorize us with 3,000 to 4,000 ICE agents in border patrol that were literally marching down the street discriminating only on the basis of do you look like you're Latino, do you look like you're Somali, and in the completely indiscriminate pickups thereafter.

They thought that we were all going to back down because the people that were being picked up were something other than the majority. What they didn't realize is the people in Minneapolis did not look at these people as immigrants. They looked at them as neighbors. This was about something that was far more important and profound than resistance alone. It was about love, about loving the people that you live by, about understanding the people that you meet when you're walking down the street.

The people that we're talking about were our real estate agents. They were business owners. They were chefs. They were police officers. They were people that are more Minneapolis than I am who have been in our city for longer than I've been there, and for decades they have started families and gone to school. They started businesses and contributed beautifully to our economy.

When you think about the contributions that they made, no, these are not dangerous people. They're not committing crimes.

They're making Minneapolis the kind of place where you want to be. Minneapolis is not unique in that identity. That's the case here in Long Beach. That's the case in Los Angeles. That's the case in Chicago. That's the case all across the country because we are a nation of immigrants. We are a nation that comes together and, hopefully, we are a nation that is not separated when some federal administration tries to demonize a single group based on the way they look or where they're from.

So something that I think a lot about these days is trust in institutions. That is declining across the country and, if we're being honest, there are quite a few political leaders that benefit from that decline in trust. There are people who gain power by trying to convince Americans to fear one another, to fear immigrants, to fear cities, to fear people they never have really taken the time to get to know.

But the beauty of being mayor, you all know this, is you got to meet these people. You get to know them. Sometimes they're thrilled with doing the job you're doing and sometimes they don't like it very much, but that's just the world. The beauty of being a mayor is seeing what actually happens when people get to live together.

In Minneapolis, I've seen Latino entrepreneurs open businesses that become neighborhood anchors. I've seen immigrant families buy homes, raise children, start churches,

create jobs, and build community. I've seen people invest in neighborhoods long before anyone else was willing to do so. That's not a threat to the American story. That is the American story.

Sometimes I worry that our national politics has become so detached from everyday life that we've forgotten what most people actually want. It's pretty simple. People want dignity. They want opportunity. They want safety. They want community. They want a fair shot to build a decent life for both themselves as well as their children.

When people have those things, trust grows. When trust grows, democracy becomes more than an idea. It becomes something that people can actually feel, tangibly feel in their day-to-day lives. That responsibility lands heavily on cities right now, especially for those of us leading these beautifully diverse communities. Because when residents hear national leaders have the guts to speak out and support one another, even have the courage to tell their own side what they don't want to hear, that provides clarity for everybody else. They want to know, will somebody stand up for us? Will somebody speak up and say that they in fact do belong?

When local leaders choose decency over fear, people feel it. When cities invest in neighborhoods instead of scapegoating them, people feel it. And when immigrant communities are

treated as neighbors that we love, then trust grows even further.

I've seen it most clearly during some of the hardest moments that we experienced. In the middle of winter in Minneapolis with, yeah, negative 15 degree temperatures, I saw residents standing hand-in-hand outside supporting strangers that they never met before because they weren't really strangers at all. I saw people dropping off food for those that were terrified to go outside to the grocery store because they thought that their families might get torn apart. I saw people stand and watch over a daycare.

What was so clear to me is that the father who I met that's about to drop his kids off at daycare, about to go work a 12-hour shift who happens to be from Ecuador, he is just as much part of our city as anybody else regardless of documentation status. This is a guy that I love. This is a guy that we should be protecting because he makes our city a better place.

I saw people taking off time from work even to monitor federal activities in their neighborhoods and taking videos of what was happening in public. By the way, it's called in public for a reason. Community leaders are spending countless hours making sure that families had accurate information and knew where to turn for help. I saw police officers delivering food

to people who were afraid to leave their homes. So our Latino community that refused to let fear define it.

If you come to Minneapolis and you meet our Latino community, you will see grit, you will see perseverance, you will see compassion, and you will see love. If you go to a celebration on East Lake Street, in our Latino community, you won't just find exceptional food. You'll find music. You'll find dancing. You'll find this common and gentle touch.

To start a war, to have ICE invade a city, to have border patrol come and terrorize people, it costs hundreds of millions, perhaps billions of dollars. It costs lives like Renee Good and Alex Pretti. It costs all sorts of money, and difficulty, and shame. But to heal communities, sometimes it begins with a gentle touch and a loving smile. If you see our community on East Lake Street, you will see those loving smiles in abundance because they stand up for one another.

So if you can't sense it, I'm really proud of our city. That kind of thing stays with you. I know that mayors understand why. Because even in moments when a country feels deeply divided, we still get to see the good in people. We get to see communities refuse to give up on one another. As long as that remains true, I'm going to stay optimistic about where this country is going to go next.

So to the Latino Leaders Network, thank you for the recognition. I'm really happy, you know, yeah. As mayors, you get bogged down in this kind of thing. Then you lift your head up and suddenly there's this incredible stuff that's going on. I'm honored to accept it. I also know that this award does not belong to just me. It belongs to the people of a great city in the world and everyone else who stood alongside Minneapolis when it mattered much. So thank you so much. *Muchas gracias*. Thank you so much. Thank you.

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