



**Remarks by Lina Hidalgo
Cafecito Series**

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Virtual**

Lina Hidalgo: Thank you so much, Mickey, for this recognition and for Senator Alvarado for the incredibly kind tribute. It's always an honor to serve alongside you, Senator, our region, our area. But look, I am just so honored to be given this award and be part of such an incredible network of Latino leaders who are leading with creativity, are leading with heart, but are also leading through their stories. I'm about to participate in a panel with incredible people, including Secretary Castro, who himself brings a fantastic story, whose mother was an activist and a political leader.

And of course, when it was his time to serve, he led bringing early childhood education pre-K to San Antonio, a program that is still celebrated throughout the country and then as secretary of HUD, with compassion, with creativity, always up till now with such a vision for what's needed. Those experiences, that history, those stories, I think, are the strength not just of us as Latinos, but of us as a nation. The

fact that we bring such a diverse background, such different experiences, that's what makes us who we are and allows us to really put our heads together and come out with more creative, more ambitious progress initiatives.

For me, of course, seeing the contrast between growing up in Colombia during a very difficult time, the drug war there and the incredible opportunities that this country has afforded me and my family, that's part of what's in my heart and my passion to serve. And I really believe you show me a local official that says that they can't do something. I will say, show me somebody who is not thinking creatively enough. There is so much potential in this nation and there's so much potential for us as leaders.

In the time I've been in office, I've been incredibly proud to lead on issues where you would think a county in the heart of Texas could lead, for example, on environment in an area that is ground zero for climate change and also a leader in the petrochemical industry. We're thinking hard about how we positioned ourselves for a competitive energy transition, how we protect our environment and make sure that good actors are not put at a disadvantage just because bad actors can get away with whatever it is that happens.

Being creative, being ambitious. We focused as well on criminal justice reform, investing in our children instead of

building more juvenile detention facilities, investing in early childhood education, making sure that we're building a system that keeps people safer and that is smart, that doesn't simply keep doing the things that haven't worked for so many generations.

And of course, voting in a state that is the most repressive when it comes to the right to vote. We've been able to come up with creative and innovative initiatives to make it easier for people to vote. And that has brought us results. We saw record turnout in the 2020 elections, turnout from both parties. And that's what we should strive for, is participation, because that ultimately builds a better government. That participation closely watching what elected leaders are doing, leads to accountability, leads to better programs.

I want to continue working on this with partners like Senator Alvarado, Secretary Castro, like Mickey Ibarra. We need to continue fighting with this spirit that is not so much looking at limitations, but is more focused on what we can achieve, what we can achieve together, not through philosophical warfare, but through practical initiatives, practical solutions that we need, especially as we come out of it. And so, Mickey, and to the Latino Leaders Network, thank you for this honor.

Thank you for bringing us together to share stories, to share ideas, and hopefully to invite and inspire other people to

follow that same ethos and to help us push our community and our country forward. [End of transcript 0:15:46]