



**Remarks by Mayor Ed Lee  
Tribute to Mayors Series**

**June 22, 2014**

Mayor Ed Lee: Wow. Antonio, thank you. Mickey, thank you very much. Mayor Martinez, congratulations. It's really my personal honor to share the stage with you tonight. Let me also just add my thanks to B of A and to Walmart. B of A is doing wonderful things. They're working with us on financial literacy and I just love him for that because that's also aimed at Latino and Asian immigrants. It's so valuable to get them up to speed on the literacy.

I am so humbled with this award and recognition. I personally don't feel I deserve it, but I will say that Antonio that had brought me previous events when this award was announced. I kind of wowed that the leaders that you had recognized in the past. The other mayors and their distinguished records and what they have accomplished. I am so lucky to be the mayor of San Francisco even though I know I really didn't like the politics to have to get in to being the

mayor. I still don't like it to be quite honest. That part of it.

But I do know that the things that I believe in, what had caused me to work as a professional person in the city of San Francisco, rings so true today. I was a civil rights attorney for about 10 years before I sued the city of San Francisco and then worked for it. With this award, for me personally recognizes the people that I used to represent, who we met with in the barrios if you will of Chinatown and Japan Town and in the mission to talk about why the city family and city government didn't include people like us for decades. Whether it was in the police department, in the fire department, or making decisions about housing and housing quality, did not include us.

And I brought that to 12 years of litigation on behalf of low income communities. And then I figured maybe working within city government perhaps we can solve things a little differently. And then this opportunity after 21 years of working through human rights commission, purchaser, public works director, and then the city administration. Who could have known that the previous mayor would have left the mayor's office and my ability to have served Mayor Willie Brown for all of his years and him giving me the funnest job that I've ever had was just purchaser, got to buy a billion dollars of things every

year. And then I must have really pissed him off because then he gave me the hardest job I've ever had and that was head of public works.

This is where the connection is with Antonio from the very beginning. We have that mutual friendship through Willie is that he always said you got to make sure community is always first on your mind. That has been a natural for me because of the family that I grew up with and the attitudes that we had about being excluded and that in every capacity that I might occupy in civil service and public servant, I would keep that door open for others. That's been a natural for me now that I'm mayor to understand that extraordinary power that mayors have.

And this is working with Kevin and Antonio in the past and how much we can accomplish on the national scale by simply talking about what we're trying to innovate in our own city to solve problems. It's a powerful, powerful message. It's also ones that if we're just true to our backgrounds, where we come from and how we want to help our families and help communities, create opportunities that they didn't have or bring down the barriers of exclusion. That could be on a national level when we're talking about the internet or talking about transportation or talking about all the things that have kept barriers in place for us to not succeed, education, business, all the things.

This is coming to fruition for me and I want to say this recognition and award means a whole lot because what I felt comes natural for someone who has advocated for people in various communities, I'm making decisions that I feel very natural for mayors to make, but there's significant progress being made for our community.

So for example, championing, everything from choice neighborhoods to promise neighborhoods that are affecting our Latino community. Naturally, enforcing what is a sanctuary city. Having corporations and businesses work with me so that we can provide our municipal transit for free for kids particularly aimed at African-American-Latino kids because they got to get to work and they can't afford that \$25 a month. It helps their families get ahead and makes things a little bit more tolerable.

Invest in neighborhoods, for the first time this year in the history of San Francisco. We are creating the first Latino cultural district in the history of San Francisco. You'll see this. You'll see this cultural district rise to the same recognition of a Chinatown and a Japan Town. It will help us define really what diversity is in San Francisco.

For me, diversity is always been our strength. It's never been something that we think about second after something is accomplished. Because for our city to succeed, I've got to

unleash the talent of every community in our city to join, and that talent cannot be unleashed unless you get rid of barriers of discrimination, barriers of education, small business and you invite and you reach in to those communities and pull them up.

One of the things that I learned from Antonio and from Willie and I get to say it here, the only condition that I have for anybody that we help is when you walk through that door of opportunity that I just walked through as the mayor, you keep that door open for everybody else and you pull people up and we do that. That is the responsibility that we have. This is what Antonio has done for me, Willie has done for me, what Mickey has done with this. It's a blessing because all the work we do is going to get strengthened that much more, so I regard this award so valuable to me. I am humbled by it just to be in the presence of others who have received this award for great work they have done, but then also gives me even more strength.

I will say this, for the son of a cook and a garment worker, to be the mayor of San Francisco and to be able to say to other immigrant communities, I'm going to bring you in, I'm going to have *you* help *me* keep the doors of opportunity for others. Leadership in San Francisco is really about how you take your Asian culture for me and how you work it for other cultures so that they can bring in and have that same hope. And they could be the mayor. They could be anything that they want.

But we've got to represent that opportunity to be real for them.  
Thank you very much to the Latino Leaders Network for this great  
award.