



**Remarks by Mayor Kevin Johnson
Tribute to Mayors Series**

June 23, 2013

Mayor Kevin Johnson: Thank you very much. It's an honor for me to have this award. I want to thank Mickey and Allah. I'm not even going to say anything funny. I want to thank Mickey and Tom Cochran and everybody who's a part of the leadership to create environments where mayors can come together. Because at the end of the day, mayors are the folks who get it done, and there's a lot of mayors in the room, so if you wouldn't mind just give the mayors one round of applause.

Most people don't know this, but Mickey grew up in Sacramento, and his father still is a resident in Sacramento. So Mickey is somebody who's been a huge champion of mine since I've been running and growing up. And every time he comes to Sacramento, he stops by and he departs some Latino knowledge on me, which is kind of cool. Let me give you one of them. Every time he comes in, he teaches me a new word. The last one was choco latte. So, Mickey, thank you, sir. So thank you very much.

And to my companion mayor, I mean, wasn't his story just really compelling? Man, that was awesome. Thank you so much. I'm so proud of him. He threw away his notes; he spoke from his heart. And when you think about Hartford in Connecticut to have that kind of leadership, when you can look somebody in the eye and say, I was where you were at one point in time. That's the kind of compassion that mayors have and he certainly represents it. So mayor, congratulations to your award as well, let's give him another round of applause.

Before I talk about my partner in crime here, let me just tell you that this award as an African American is truly humbling for me, because I am so committed that African Americans and Latinos and others work together. And when you think about California, the Latino population is one of the fastest growing populations in the state, in the country. And by the end of the year, there's going to be more Latinos in terms of population in California than whites.

So what's happening for the Latino community is the writing is on the wall. States like Arizona and Texas, they are starting to change policies. Now you're seeing people on the other side of the aisle getting behind immigration, because it's the right thing to do. What I'm realizing is part of them believe it's the right thing to do. The others believe the writing is on the wall, and key votes are going to come out of

that community. And I realized early if you can't beat them, join them. So thank you so much for having me as part of this as well.

I want to say this about, you know, I'm not getting this award as a person. I've got to honestly speak from my heart and talk about Mayor -- I still don't know how to pronounce your last name. So no, no, no, wait, hold on. I got the mic. Can you just let me handle it?

So Mayor Antonio, I just want you to know his name used to be V-i-l-l-a-r. I could pronounce it then, then you put all those other letters on it and made it complicated. But this man, the moment I decided to run for mayor five years ago, he reached out to me, he brought me in under the fold. He gave me advice. He was a mentor. And I got a chance to work with him.

The big ten mayors are the mayors of the ten largest cities in California. I got a chance to see him go toe to toe with Governor Schwarzenegger. And that's not an easy matchup. And he did not flinch or back down. And he was just always fighting for cities and the little guy. And that was something that got embedded on my heart as a young mayor. Then I saw him fight the next governor, we have Governor Brown, who was a little bit older. So Antonio can go at him a little bit differently. And then we got a chance to sit down with presidents and vice presidents. And every step along the way, he puts cities first.

He's looking for common sense, practical solutions that put people to work and make a difference in people's lives.

So mayor, I just want to thank you for your leadership along the way and your mentorship. Can we give him another just round of applause for that? Honestly [sounds like].

Two more quick things. One, education is my passion, but I learned a lot of it from Mayor Antonio, Mayor V. And right now there are mayors because of you. Mayor Tavares in Providence, Mayor Castro in San Antonio, Mayor Hancock in Denver, myself in Sacramento - four mayors, Democrats, Latinos and African Americans, because of your leadership.

We're going around the country. And we are talking about how important it is for us to be out in front of this fight, because it's our children that live in underserved communities. It's our children that are underrepresented. And because of you, we have the courage to take a stand. If you didn't do it, we wouldn't have the courage. So I want to thank you for your courage and your leadership as well, because that is not an easy topic. Antonio come from the community oftentimes that we're going against, and all we want is children to have an opportunity to experience the American dream. And it is not an easy fight. So I don't care what you do throughout your career, you're going to be most remembered for his fight for children and educators. So thank you, Mayor, for that as well.

So I'll close on a personal note. Nobody's influenced me more than Mayor Villaraigosa. I see Doug Palmer here, who also has had a huge influence on me. But I am standing here as the first vice president, I guess tomorrow, because of his leadership and what he's done for me. So I want to close on one fun story if you're okay with that, all right, Mayor V?

So, as I said earlier, when I got elected, he reached out, gave me advice, talked to me, mentorship, all the way along the way. And let me give you one example of where it really came to fall. And this is a good example. So about two weeks ago, or three weeks ago, I got an invite to speak at an event for Mitt Romney in Park City. Okay, you got that, right? So I'm an African American, a Democrat. So I'm thinking, like, I'm not sure if I'm going to be welcome in Park City. So I looked at the agenda, and I saw that Mayor Villaraigosa is speaking. I'm like, so we're good. I'm okay. I got my partner in crime in there. My brother from another mother, we are like, we'll be there together.

So I get there. And Antonio gives this great speech. And he talks about Mitch, Mitt Romney personally and inviting him and he didn't personally invite me, but that was okay. So, because he's high profile, and he's a sexy celebrity mayor, which I mean, you all know that. So I get there, Mayor Villaraigosa gives an incredible speech. And he's talking about

bipartisanship. How important is bipartisanship. And this is a room full of Republicans on the very right side of -- I mean, at the far right side of the spectrum. And he's talking about bipartisanship. And he's all passionate and excited. And I know he was chairman of the DNC, and I'm thinking, whoa, they probably don't like him. But he was so passionate, they started nodding and they started, you know, getting in rhythm with what he was saying. I'm thinking, man, this is powerful. This is awesome.

And at the end, he says, I need a commitment from everybody in the room that we break bread, and we network, and we socialize. And it's always going to be about bipartisanship. And they're standing. They give him a standing ovation. He says, thank you very much. He walks out the podium, and people are high fiving him. I'm like, this is such a cool mayor. Bipartisanship. He leaves. He left me as the only Democrat in the room. So Mayor, it was good while it lasted because as soon as you left, they went right back to their normal way of thinking. Thank you very much.

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