



Welcome

to the 11th Annual Forum on the Latino Community

*The Drivers of Growth
and Our Path Toward
Solidarity Economics*

September 10, 2025

Welcome



We are pleased that you have joined us for our 11th Annual Forum on the Latino Community! We invite you to listen and to learn about a key driver in our state and national economy: the Latino communities.

US Latino economic output, measured as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), hit \$4.1 trillion in 2023, equating to the fifth largest GDP in the world. US Latino GDP is also the fastest growing, outpacing the growth rates of China, India, and the US as a whole. Latino economic consumption accounts for 30.6% of the GDP growth of the country, which is 5% larger than the entire economy of Texas (\$2.58 trillion) and 25% larger than New York's (\$2.17 trillion).

In California, Latino GDP surpassed \$1 trillion in 2024. Without Latinos, our GDP, which represented the 5th largest global economy in 2023, would have fallen to 8th. Statewide, Latinos/as:

- Own more than 815,000 businesses, generating \$100B+ annually
- Pay \$83B annually in taxes
- Have the highest labor force participation rate: 65.1%.

Yet despite 250 years of economic contributions, Latinos hold just 2.8% of the nation's wealth and remain locked out of opportunities that build generational wealth. This wealth gap— if not addressed through equitable access to funding, real estate, high-paying jobs and leadership roles — will impact America's long-term economic growth.

The Latino Leadership Council is a service organization at its core, and now investing in long-term strategies such as a feasibility study for a Community Development Corporation (CDC) to forge partnerships that will bring education, workforce and business opportunities to our region's populations. We hope today brings a deeper understanding of Latino economic power along with the inspiration to act with us. We look forward to building a more prosperous future for our region by fostering equity, innovation, and collaboration and invite you to reach out to us. ¡Adelante!

Elisa Herrera,
Founding Executive Director

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Event Program

BREAKFAST AND NETWORKING

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Loren Nakai / Sierra Native Alliance

WELCOMING REMARKS & RECOGNITION

Sandra Reyes, LLC Board President
Elisa Herrera, LLC Executive Director
Celina Salas, LLC Deputy Director

LLC'S COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT 2024

Crystal López-Franco & Syrina Vásquez

LATINO/A CONTRIBUTIONS AND PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

Elisa Herrera, Executive Director

KEYNOTES

"Building Equitable Communities in an Era of Change and Uncertainty"

Manuel Pastor, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor of Sociology and American Studies
& Ethnicity and Turpanjian Chair in Civil Society and Social Change at the
University of Southern California

10:10 – 10:40 BREAK / RAFFLE / NETWORKING in ROSE GARDEN

"Building Power, Building Wealth"

Paulina González-Brito, CEO, Rise Economy / CalAccount Blue Ribbon
Commission, Community Change Board Member

Q&A, MANUEL & PAULINA

EVALUATIONS

KEYNOTE GIFTS

Val Sandoval & Sandra Reyes

QUETZAL AWARDS PRESENTATIONS

Jose Díaz and Elvira Covarrubias-Martínez

CLOSING REMARKS & NEXT STEPS

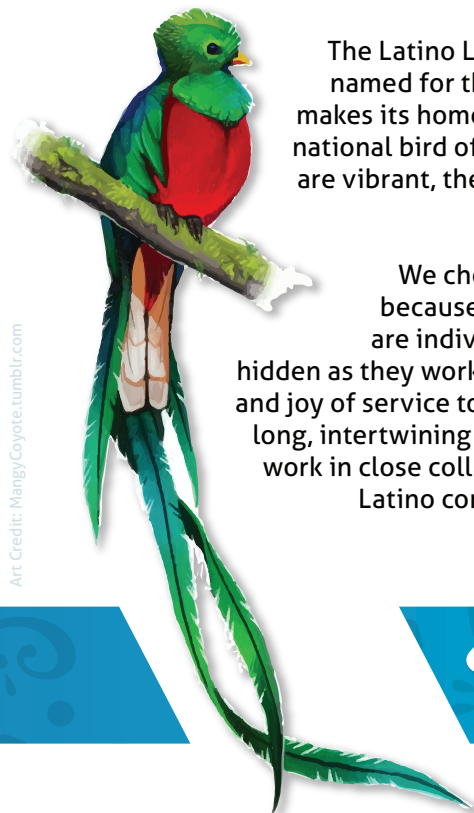
Elisa Herrera, Executive Director

RAFFLE & SILENT AUCTION WINNERS POSTED IN ENTRYWAY

The Quetzal Awards

The Latino Leadership Council's Quetzal Awards are named for the elusive and beautiful Quetzal, which makes its home in Mexico and Central America and is the national bird of Guatemala. Although the Quetzal's colors are vibrant, the Quetzal is often camouflaged among the vegetation of its habitat.

We chose the Quetzal as our award namesake because like the bird, our Quetzal award winners are individuals and organizations that are often hidden as they work in the Latino communities, yet their love and joy of service to others shines brightly. Like the Quetzal's long, intertwining tail feathers, our Quetzal Award winners work in close collaboration with others to ensure that the Latino community is appropriately served.



Art Credit: MangyCoyote.tumblr.com

Past Honorees

Health Care Award Recipients

2024 – Laura Logan
2023 – María Ramírez,
2022 – Gladys Puente
2019 – Prep Médico
2018 – Gilberto Riojas
2017 – Gina Martínez-Díaz
2016 – Ana Liz Servín-Bancroft
2015 – Melody Quenzer, D.O.
2014 – Chapa De Indian Health

Education Award Recipients

2024 – Elvira Covarrubias Martínez
2023 – Dr. Melissa Moreno, Ph.D. &
Christine Mabery
2022 – Michelle Hill
2019 – Marcelina Zamora

2018 – Sandra Guzmán
2017 – Elizabeth Balmin
2016 – Antonieta Márquez
2015 – María Córdova
2014 – Rock Creek Elementary School

Youth Development Award Recipients

2024 – Alma Elizabeth López
2023 – Mayra Plascencia
2022 – Pablo Bermudez
2019 – Placer Sheriff's Activities League (PSAL)
2018 – Sac PD Officer Lilia Vásquez
2017 – Indira Infante
2016 – Dan Beltrán
2015 – Placer County Children's System of Care
2014 – Youth Empowerment and Goals Association (YEAGA)

Quetzal Award Honorees

Health Care Award Honoree

Imelda Valdez, Victim Support Manager / Sierra Community House

Imelda Valdez brings unwavering dedication to improving the wellness of the Latino community, particularly through her trauma-informed, culturally responsive work with survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, strangulation victims, attempted murder survivors, child abuse, animal abuse, and human trafficking in the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee region.

For nearly a decade, Imelda has led with strength, compassion, and vision as one of the region's most trusted advocates for survivors. She currently oversees the only safe house serving survivors in the North Lake Tahoe-Truckee area, providing direct services both on-site and in community-based settings. Her survivor-centered approach integrates healing, justice, and dignity, ensuring that every individual, especially those from underserved Latino communities, receives holistic, respectful support. What truly sets Imelda apart is her rare combination of professional excellence and personal resilience. She sits on the Police Chief's Advisory Committee, has collaborated with local and federal law enforcement, and maintains partnerships with law enforcement, healthcare providers, and community organizations to build more inclusive systems.

As a bilingual and bicultural advocate, she breaks down barriers that often prevent Latino/a individuals, especially immigrants and undocumented survivors, from seeking help. She works to remove fear, shame, and stigma, common barriers in the Latino/a community, by meeting people where they are and honoring their unique stories. She embodies the spirit of the Quetzal Award through her compassionate leadership, relentless advocacy, and deep commitment to equity and healing. Her impact is not only transformative, but it is generational.

Education Award Honoree

Community Liaisons (Priscilla Gachet, Rosabel Ortiz, Paola Gachet, Paola Pedroza, Selene Muñoz) at Western Placer USD

The school liaisons play a vital role in bridging communication between schools, families, and community partners, and are often the communities' first contact when problems or difficulties arise. They have built strong, trusting relationships with students and families, and never fail to show up when families have legal situations or face challenges such as academic struggles, housing instability, unmet basic needs, and health concerns affecting either the student or parent. The liaisons demonstrate a deep passion for their work and an unwavering commitment to understanding and addressing the unique needs of the Latino community. They don't stop when the family has been connected to services, but maintain communication to ensure the services are appropriate and other needs addressed.

They make a real difference in the Latino community by being present and accessible when families need them the most. They go above and beyond their normal duties by taking late calls, going to home visits and often making themselves available weekends and even on school breaks, which shows their understanding of the challenges many working families face. The parents and students feel seen, heard, and supported because they give extra care to each child and parent. This connection has built trust and made a huge impact on the lives of the Latino families, and are therefore deserving of the Quetzal Award.

Youth Development Award Honoree

Dennis Duran, Youth Mentor / YEAGA (Youth Empowerment & Goals Association)

Dennis Duran has been actively involved in mentoring youth through YEAGA's youth diversion program since 2009, when he was incarcerated. Upon his release in 2019, he continued to engage with the program, dedicating himself to mentoring youth to make positive life choices. As a youth co-facilitator through the Latino Leadership Council's (LLC) Parent Project, he openly shares his personal story to guide young people toward making better choices and helps parents learn tools to raise their children with intention and care. He also volunteers his time to lead youth sessions at Sierra College for justice-involved students at their Unity Circle. He has empowered students to stay on track with their studies, embrace healthy coping strategies, and expand their support networks, earning him the deep respect and admiration of the Rising Scholars community as a friend and champion.

His personal journey from incarceration to community leadership serves as a powerful example of resilience and transformation. His consistent dedication, respect for others and teamwork have positively impacted both individuals and the community as a whole. His ability to connect with both youth and adults makes him an exceptional advocate and role model and he consistently demonstrates respect, integrity, and teamwork, not only with YEAGA members but also with the broader community. He has become a standout member of the team through his consistent presence, mentorship, and service to the community. Dennis's resilience, leadership, and commitment to uplifting others make him a powerful example of transformation and community service—qualities that embody the spirit of the Quetzal Award.

Keynotes



Manuel Pastor, Ph.D. is a Distinguished Professor of Sociology and American Studies & Ethnicity and Turpanjian Chair in Civil Society and Social Change at the University of Southern California. He holds an economics Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and he currently directs the Equity Research Institute (ERI).

Dr. Pastor's research has generally focused on issues of the economic, environmental and social conditions facing low-income urban communities – and the social movements seeking to change those realities. In 2021 he published two new books, *South Central Dreams: Finding Home and Building Community in South L.A.*

(co-authored with Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo) and *Solidarity Economics: Why Mutuality and Movements Matter* (co-authored with Chris Benner). His previous 2018 book, *State of Resistance: What California's Dizzying Descent and Remarkable Resurgence Means for America's Future* (New Press 2018) was lauded in a New York Times review as "concise, clear and convincing."

He was the founding director of the Center for Justice, Tolerance, and Community at UC Santa Cruz. Dr. Pastor speaks frequently on issues of demographic change, economic inequality, and community empowerment and has served as a member of the Governor's Task Force on Jobs and Business Recovery and as a Public Member of the Strategic Growth Council in California. He also previously served as a member of the Commission on Regions appointed by California's Speaker of the State Assembly, and as a member of the Regional Targets Advisory Committee for the California Air Resources Board.

In 2002, Pastor was awarded a Civic Entrepreneur of the Year award from the California Center for Regional Leadership. In 2012, he received the Liberty Hill Foundation's Wally Marks Changemaker of the Year award for social justice research partnerships. In 2017, he received the Champion for Equity Award from the Advancement Project for his work with community-based organizations fighting for social change.



Paulina González-Brito (She/They) is the Chief Executive Officer of Rise Economy, a member-led alliance with more than 380 members across California fighting for racial justice, economic opportunity, and equity for low-income and BIPOC populations. Paulina identifies as Xicane, Purepecha, Mestize. Their great-grandparents were Mexican Arizona copper miners who took part in the historic Metcalf-Greenlee strikes in the early 1900s and whose father was an immigrant union hotel worker. Paulina has dedicated more than 20 years of their life to leading economic justice organizing campaigns to expand worker rights, immigrant rights, and the rights of low-income and underrepresented communities of color.

Under their leadership, Rise Economy has expanded its work to directly challenge systemic and structural racism within the U.S. financial system and to focus on building collective political and organizing power amongst and with frontline communities to close the racial wealth gap.

Paulina has testified before the U.S. House, Senate and California Legislature on the need for greater oversight and accountability in the banking sector to prevent financial actors from extracting wealth from Black and Brown communities. They are frequently called upon to speak as an expert in the fields of Wall Street accountability, discrimination in lending, equitable reinvestment by financial institutions, racial and economic justice, and democratizing finance through alternative and community-owned financial models, and has been profiled/quoted in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The L.A. Times, NPR, Univision, La Opinión and other national media outlets.

She currently serves on the CalAccount Blue Ribbon Commission and on the board of Community Change, a national advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. They previously served on the Board of Directors for the National Association for Latino Community Asset Builders as well as on the Community Advisory Council of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, the San Francisco Municipal Bank Feasibility Task Force, and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Consumer Advisory Board.

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Latino Leadership Council

2945 Bell Road #274
Auburn, CA 95603

(530) 320-5353

info@latinoleadershipcouncil.org

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