

The Launch of the Latino Research Initiative

September 12, 2023

Bios of Speakers and Moderators

9:00 a.m. Welcome

Teresa Córdova is the Director of the Great Cities Institute (GCI) at the University of Illinois Chicago. She is also Professor of Urban Planning and Policy in the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs (CUPPA). Professor Córdova received her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of California, Berkeley in 1986. As an applied theorist, political economist, and community-based planner, Professor Córdova approaches her work as a *scholarship of engagement* in which research, pedagogy, and service are integrated. Throughout her career, Teresa has engaged with communities in and outside the university and is an expert in community/university partnerships and methodologies of engaged research. In addition to strategies for community and economic development, her work focuses on global/local dynamics and the impacts of global economic restructuring on local communities, including impacts of resource extraction.

9:05 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. The Power of Engaged Research: Co-Production of Reports with our Community Partners

Jessie Fuentes is queer Latina grassroots organizer, educator, and public policy advocate with over a decade of experience working in education, criminal justice reform, affordable housing, community development, and sustainability. As a child of Humboldt Park and a seasoned organizer, Jessie's lived experience overcoming poverty, violence, and generational trauma, coupled with her professional accomplishments, have prepared her to serve the residents of the 26th Ward. Through personal resilience, community support, and restorative justice, she turned her most challenging life experiences into tools to uplift others facing similar life circumstances. Jessie's position as 26th Ward Alderperson is a message to young people that transformation and change are possible. It is proof that one's life circumstances do not have to dictate their destiny — this is how we advance safe communities.

Maria del Socorro Pesqueira was appointed President of Healthy Communities Foundation in May 2017. As the eldest daughter of Mexican immigrants, she became a translator, advocate, convener, and bridge for information and understanding at an early age. As a result, justice, equity, and collaborative effort have been her drivers for becoming a passionate servant-leader. Prior to joining Healthy Communities Foundation, Maria served as President of Mujeres Latinas en Acción, the oldest Latina-led organization in the US that offers culturally affirming services to Latinas and their families. Preceding her time at Mujeres, Maria led the Development and Marketing team at The National Museum of Mexican Art, one of the most prominent first-voice institutions for Mexican art and culture in the US.

Nanette Silva serves as Program Director at the Community Memorial Foundation (CMF) where she coordinates the newly launched the Regional Health and Human Services Agenda. CMF is a private health conversion foundation established in 1995. CMF's grantmaking and community work are guided by its mission — to measurably improve the health of those who live and work in the western suburbs of Chicago. Throughout over 20 years of investing in the region, CMF has proudly awarded more than \$66 million dollars to non-profit organizations in the western suburbs of Cook County and southeastern portion of DuPage County. CMF and Healthy Communities Foundation partnered with Great Cities to provide a micro-date site on [Latinos in the Western Suburbs](#).

Oswaldo Alvarez is the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus Foundation's Executive Director and oversees all programs, operations, and organizational development. Oswaldo has nearly 20 years of experience, working across the sectors of nonprofit, government, and philanthropy – all the sectors designed to work with and for community. Before joining the ILLCF, Oswaldo was appointed by Governor Pritzker as the inaugural Census Director for the State of Illinois, helping the State achieve its highest self-response rate ever, ranking #1 among states with over 9 million people. A Chicago native and a fluent Spanish speaker, he earned his master's in social policy from the University of Chicago and a bachelor's in economics and political science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Dr. John J. Betancur is Professor, Urban Planning and Policy Program, UIC. He has a long history of research on the topic of gentrification and neighborhood change in Chicago, particularly as it affects Latino communities. He is the co-author of GCI's recent report, [Who Lives in Pilsen: The Trajectory of Gentrification in Pilsen in the Last Two Decades](#). Among his many publications, Professor Betancur edited, with Doug Gils, *The Collaborative City: Opportunities and Struggles for Blacks and Latinos in U.S. Cities*. John is popular among students and teaches courses on globalization and community development.

Ama E. Anaya is the Cook County Commissioner of the 7th District, serving the Southwest Side of Chicago. She became the youngest woman and the first Latina in over 25 years to serve on the Cook County Board of Commissioners when she took office in 2018. Furthermore, she is one of the few formerly undocumented immigrants to hold office in the country. Born in Guadalajara, Jalisco, México, Commissioner Anaya arrived to the United States as a child. She is the oldest of four and was raised by a single mother on the Southside of Chicago. She holds a bachelor's degree in communications and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC).

10:00 a.m. – 10:25 a.m. *¡Actívate!: A community data-driven guide to help Latinas and their families thrive*

Linda Xochitl Tortolero serves as the President and CEO of Mujeres Latinas en Acción, the nation's longest standing Latina-led and Latina-serving organization. She is responsible for leading Mujeres' strategic plan to address the immediate needs of Latinas and their families; under her leadership, Mujeres is a fierce advocate on key issues such as gender-based violence, women's health and economic security, immigration, and gender-based violence. She is a first-generation Mexican American, a proud Chicagoan, and a steadfast advocate for women's rights as well as immigrant and racial justice. She serves on the Women's Advisory Council and Gender Based Violence Implementation Taskforce for the Mayor's Office, as well as the Board of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice. Through *¡Actívate!* Linda will lead Mujeres' short-term and long-term advocacy priorities at the local, state, and national level.

Erika Aguirre is a Licensed Professional Counselor and Co-Founder, Oasis Project Formerly at Mujeres, Erika has now opened her own private practice that provides mental health services and resources for the Latino community in Northwest Chicago and Chicagoland Suburbs. However, she began her career at Mujeres initially as an intern, then began working as a Community Educator, and finally transitioned to be the first Court Advocate Supervisor for the North Riverside Office. She was integral to the completion of *¡Actívate!* as she conducted screening and facilitated Focus Group interviews while also providing emotional support and counseling for community members. Finally, she assisted with interview

transcription and worked with Advocacy Coordinator to review and synthesize data for the writing and completion of *¡Actívate!*

Sayed Sanchez joined Mujeres in the summer of 2022 as the organization's first full-time Advocacy Coordinator. He organizes Mujeres' advocacy efforts around these four pillars: immigrant justice, economic justice, women's health, and confronting gender-based violence. He works closely with the Community Engagement & Mobilization Program to advance Mujeres' civic participation and engagement. As well, he was the lead writer of *¡Actívate!* tasked with synthesizing the Community Needs Assessment Survey and qualitative Focus Group interviews collected in partnership with Great Cities. He is motivated by his fellow community members' civic engagement, and he believes that one's lived experiences provide a powerful foundation for community organizing.

Roberto Valdez is the Midwest Director for Policy for the Hispanic Federation. Roberto has worked with non-profit organizations, in the private sector, on political campaigns, and on Capitol Hill and has over ten years of work experience in the fields of communications, policy and advocacy, government affairs, and community coalition building. Roberto is a native of Nogales, Arizona, he lived and worked in Washington D.C. from 2012 to 2017 and has resided in Chicago for the past six years. Roberto is part of numerous local and national associations including the National Association of Hispanic Journalist Chicago Chapter and the National Hispanic Lobbyist Association and has won awards for his work with the Latino community including the 2021 Illinois Association of Hispanic State Employees' Leadership Award and in 2022 was named one of HACE's National Latinos 40 Under 40.

10:25 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. *Congratulatory Remarks*

U.S. Representative Jesús G. "Chuy" García proudly represents the Fourth Congressional District of Illinois. He was sworn into office on January 3, 2019, during the 116th Congress. Throughout his career, Congressman García has been a progressive voice fighting to improve the lives of his working-class neighbors, many of whom are immigrants like him. He is a coalition builder committed to empowering youth and expanding access to quality education, affordable housing, and economic opportunity. He currently serves as a member of the influential Financial Services Committee, Natural Resources Committee, and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. He is a member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC), the Congressional Equality Caucus, Congressional Pro-Choice Caucus, and New Americans Caucus. He is also the founder the Future of Transportation Caucus.

Congressman García was born in Los Pinos, a small village in the Mexican state of Durango. He is the youngest of four children raised by his mother while his father worked in the United States, first under the WWII-era bracero program and later at a cold-storage plant in Chicago. In 1965, Congressman García and his family immigrated to the United States with permanent resident status. He still remembers his first American meal: a bologna sandwich from a roadside diner in Texas.

10:30 a.m. – 10:50 a.m. *Serving Illinois' Immigrant Communities through Research*

Rob Paral is a demographic and public policy consultant with specialties in immigrant, Latino and Asian populations; community needs for health and human service programs; and Midwestern demographic change. Rob Paral is a Senior Research Specialist with the Great Cities Institute of the University of Illinois at Chicago, a nonresident fellow in the Global Cities program of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and a lecturer in the Latin American and Latino Studies Program of the University of Illinois at Chicago. He

was the Senior Research Associate of the Washington, DC office of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials and was Research Director of the Latino Institute of Chicago. He has been a fellow or adjunct of the Institute for Latino Studies at Notre Dame University, DePaul University Sociology Department, and the American Immigration Council in Washington, DC.

Eddy Eddie Borrayo, President and CEO, Rincón Family Services, has dedicated his life to helping people and organizations become the best they possibly can. In harmony with his ongoing professional efforts, he is a Program Surveyor with CARF International (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) and travels nationally as part of an accreditation team to survey Opioid Maintenance Programs. In his previous position as Clinical Director and Vice President of Program Development and Consultation at Access Behavioral Services, Inc., he assisted behavioral health organizations with strategic planning, marketing, start-up initiatives, licensure, and accreditation. Throughout his career spanning 18 years in behavioral health and 13 years in management, Eddy has worked with several major non-profits and for-profits in staff and consultant roles. His experience includes administrative and clinical positions in several organizations that serve disfranchised and at-risk populations.

Dr. Layla P. Suleiman Gonzalez, J.D., throughout her career in government, consulting, and higher education, Dr. Suleiman Gonzalez has dedicated her life to serving others –students, nonprofits, and the community at large. Her practice and scholarship focus on capacity building, performance management, and human/civil rights approaches to health and human services. In 2007, she wrote legislation to establish the State of Illinois Latino Family Commission and in 2013 she became its founding Executive Director. In this role, she has been a fierce advocate for Latinos in state government, writing several pieces of legislation and promoting equity in state programs, employment, grants, and contracts. She previously served as the Federal Court Appointed Monitor for the Burgos Consent Decree which demands fair treatment of Latino families in IDCFS.

10:50 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. *Announcement of Forthcoming Update of The Latino Neighborhoods Report*

Ricardo Estrada is CEO of Metropolitan Family Services, one of Illinois' largest and best-respected human services agencies. Since joining Metropolitan in 2011, he has helped the agency more than quadruple in revenue and families served. Ric has three decades of human services leadership experience. Prior to joining Metropolitan Family Services, he served as First Deputy Commissioner of the City of Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS). He previously served as Executive Director of Erie Neighborhood House in Chicago.

José Miguel Acosta-Córdova is a Ph.D. Candidate in Geography and GIS at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His roots in Chicago date back to the 1950's, when his family first arrived in the city from Jalisco, México, and settled in the area just west of the Jane Addams Hull House, in what is now the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). He completed a master's degree in urban planning and policy in the UIC College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs. He also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Urban and Public Affairs from UIC. He is the former President and Co-Founder of the Latino Planning Organization for Development, Education, and Regeneration (LPODER) at UIC. He is the author of the [*Latino Neighborhoods Report: Issues and Prospects for Chicago*](#).

11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. – *Latino Presence in Chicagoland: Employment and Settlement Patterns of Latinos in Chicagoland and Illinois*

José Miguel Acosta-Córdova is the Senior Transportation Policy Analyst at Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) where he focuses on the environmental justice impacts of the movement of freight on neighborhoods. He is the author of [Lower Wages and Continued Occupational and Industrial Segmentation of Latinos in the Chicago Economy](#).

Alex Linares is an Economic Development Planner at the Great Cities Institute where he works primarily within GCI's research clusters of employment and economic development, and community wellbeing. Among his reports, Alex co-authored [Who Lives in Pilsen: The Trajectory of Gentrification in Pilsen in the Last Two Decades](#). He also wrote *Policy Recommendations for Amendments to the State of Illinois Worker Cooperative Statute*, which he presented at Chicago's 1st Cooperative Economy Summit. Linares comes with vast experience in the nonprofit sector working on issues in labor rights, worker cooperatives, interim housing, and workforce development. Previously he worked for the Working World, a non-profit lending organization, where he provided technical assistance to New Era Windows Cooperative, the largest manufacturing worker cooperative in Chicago. He holds a BA in Sociology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and a master's in urban planning and policy from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Norma Hernández, Illinois State Representative, 77th District and former Research Specialist, GCI Norma Hernandez was born in Melrose Park, Illinois. Hernandez earned an associate degree from Triton College in 2013, a bachelor's degree in social work from Aurora University in 2017, and a master's degree in urban planning and policy from the University of Illinois at Chicago in 2019. Her career experience includes working as an urban planner with UIC Great Cities Institute, an intern with the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development, and a child welfare specialist with Youth Outreach Services. Hernandez served on the Triton College Board of Trustees.

Dr. Teresa Córdova has expertise in economic development via her work as a policy maker, community economic development planner, and researcher. She has knowledge and experience in implementing economic development policy and projects and infrastructure projects (roadways and water, sewer, and drainage systems). She is a proponent of business incubators, particularly at the neighborhood scale and has won awards for her multiple roles in developing a small business incubator and commercial kitchen. Through the Great Cities Institute (GCI), she continues her work on addressing issues of *chronic and concentrated* joblessness among young people, especially African American and Latino youth and she supports efforts to rebuild the manufacturing sector in the Chicago region through workforce development, land use preservation, succession strategies, and high-tech innovation. She is a co-author of "Economic Restructuring and The Process of Incorporation of Latino Workers into the Chicago Economy," published in the book, *Latinos in the Changing U.S. Economy* (1993).

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Keynote Speaker:

Juan González is a Senior Research Fellow at Great Cities Institute. Throughout his career, González has become known as one of the most well-regarded Latino journalists in the United States. He was a staff columnist for New York's *The Daily News* for nearly thirty years, has been a co-host since 1996 of the morning news show *Democracy Now*, and was the Richard D. Heffner Professor of Communications and Public Policy at Rutgers University from 2017 to 2023. His investigative reports on the labor movement, environmental justice, race relations, and urban policy have garnered numerous accolades, including two George Polk Awards for commentary, and he became in 2015 the first Latino to be inducted into the New York Journalism Hall of Fame by the Society of Professional Journalists' Deadline Club.

He is the author of five books, including the classic *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America* (2001), which became the basis of an award-winning 2012 feature documentary film narrated by González and which is now in its third edition. His *News for All the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media* (2011), which he co-authored with Joseph Torres, was a *New York Times* best-seller and a finalist for the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award. His *Reclaiming Gotham, Bill de Blasio and the Movement to End America's Tale of Two Cities* (2017), examines the rise of progressive elected officials in cities across the United States and their efforts to revise urban policies.

Over the years, more than two dozen films and documentaries have featured González as a figure or expert commentator, including the landmark PBS series *Latino Americans* (2013); the PBS documentary *9/11's Unsettled Dust* (2021); the CNN series *1968: The Year that Changed America*, (2018); HBO Max's docuseries *Menudo: Forever Young* (2022); the Ric Burns history of Latino New York, *Nueva York* (2010); the PBS biography *Roberto Clemente* (2008); and Spike-TV's *Viva Baseball* (2005).

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Luncheon panel of UIC Faculty Affiliates, GCI Latino Research Initiative

Lilia Fernández specializes in the history of Latinos/as/x in the mid-to-late 20th century United States. Her research interests lie at the intersection of urban history, labor and working-class politics, and economic inequality. Her first book, *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago*, focused on the migration and settlement of these two populations in the city's central neighborhoods and the communities they formed. Her current research continues to examine Latino history in the Chicago area, focusing specifically on cross-ethnic interactions among Latinos, their labor politics, class dynamics, activism, and strategic articulations of a pan-ethnic identity.

Xóchitl Bada is an Associate Professor in the Latin American and Latino Studies Program of the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her articles have appeared in the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, *Forced Migration Review*, *Population, Space, and Place*, *Latino Studies*, and *Labor Studies Journal*. She is the author of *Mexican Hometown Associations in Chicagoacán: From Local to Transnational Civic Engagement* (Rutgers University Press, 2014) and coauthor with Shannon Gleeson of *Scaling Migrant Worker Rights* (University of California Press, 2023). Her areas of specialization include migrant access to political and social rights, migrant organizing strategies, violence and displacement, and transnational labor advocacy mobilization in Mexico and the United States. She is co-editor of the books *New Migration Patterns in the Americas. Challenges for the 21st Century* (Palgrave, 2018), *Accountability across Borders: Migrant Rights in North America* (The University of Texas Press, 2019), the *Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Latin America*, and *The Routledge History of Modern Latin American Migration*.

Ralph Cintrón is Professor of English and Latin American and Latino Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He just finished two years of being the interim director of LALS. He is a former Rockefeller Foundation Fellow, Fulbright Scholar, honorable mention winner for the Victor Turner Prize in Ethnographic Writing from the American Anthropological Association and was recently elected as a Fellow to the Rhetoric Society of America. He is the author of *Angels' Town: Chero Ways, Gang Life, and Rhetorics of the Everyday* as well as *Democracy as Fetish*. He is also the co-editor of *Culture, Catastrophe + Rhetoric* and Co-Pi of *60 Years of Migration: Puerto Ricans in Chicagoland*. He is currently writing with a philosopher *Volatilities and the End(s) of Sovereignty*, a text that contextualizes planetary heating inside modernity's political economy.

Dr. Lorena Garcia is Associate Professor of Sociology and Latin American and Latino Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is the author of *Respect Yourself, Protect Yourself: Latina Girls and*

Sexual Identity (New York University Press, 2012), which received the 2013 Distinguished Contribution to Scholarship Book Award from the ASA Section on Race, Gender, and Class. Her work has also been published in *Gender & Society*, *Social Problems*, *Latino Studies*, and *Identities: Global Studies in Power & Culture*. She has also co-edited a special issue of the *National Women's Studies Association Journal* (NWSA) [now *Feminist Formations*] on Latina sexualities and is a co-editor of the NYU Press book series, *Critical Perspectives on Youth*. Her research interests include gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, intersectionality, Latina/x/o studies, and youth studies. She is currently working on her second book project exploring newly middle-class Latinxs parents' perspectives and approaches to parenting.

Dr. Daysi Ximena Diaz-Strong is an Assistant Professor at the Jane Addams School of Social Work at UIC. Dr. Diaz-Strong's immigrant background has shaped her professional and research interests in education and immigration. For various years, she worked in the community college system developing and implementing programs to improve the success of underrepresented students, and her research focuses on the experiences of Latinx undocumented immigrants and the impact of immigration policy on their educational and developmental trajectories.

Jonathan Inda is Professor and Director of Latin American and Latino Studies. He earned a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley and an A.B. in Public Policy from Stanford University. He has written about anthropology and globalization, Foucauldian social theory, the geneticization of race, and the government of immigration. His books include *Race, Identity, and Citizenship* (1999), *The Anthropology of Globalization* (2002, 2008), *Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and the Politics of Life* (2005), *Targeting Immigrants: Government, Technology, and Ethics* (2006), and *Governing Immigration Through Crime* (2013).