



# CONGRESO 2024

Speaker and Presenter Biographies





**Adán Ortega, Jr.** was sworn in as the 20th chair of Metropolitan Water District of Southern California’s Board of Directors in January of 2023, quickly organizing the board to meet the challenge of adapting to climate change and spearheading the launch of the Climate Adaptation Master Plan for Water process. He reaffirmed Metropolitan’s commitment to collaboration by reinvigorating interactions with regional agencies, farmers, tribal leaders, and environmental advocates in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and with water users across the Colorado River Basin. He is the first Latino to lead Metropolitan’s board in the district’s 95-year history and the first to appoint a large majority of women to the Board’s Executive

Committee. Know more [here](#).



**Alberto López Pulido, Ph.D.**, is the founding chair of the Department of Ethnic Studies and has been on the faculty at the University of San Diego since 2003. He grew up in the South Bay and lived a life between borders and Fronteras that highly influenced his fronterizo ways of understanding the world. He received degrees in Sociology and Chicano Studies from the University of California, San Diego, and represents one of fifty-seven students who would graduate from the Mexican American Graduate Studies Program at the University of Notre Dame. Dr. Pulido aligns himself with several community organizations, none more important than the Chicano Park Steering Committee who serve as the stewards of Chicano Park in San Diego,

California. He learned a great deal about community organizing through collective struggle and self-determination, which inspired him to direct and co-produce an award-winning documentary on the history and value of lowriding as a cultural expression in the borderlands of San Diego and Tijuana. Dr. Pulido’s scholarly commitment to relevant education rooted in a community epistemology guides his work as Director of the Turning Wheel Mobile Classroom Project – a project that provides a mobile space for supporting the urgent needs and challenges of our local communities. The Turning Wheel Project represents a partnership between the University of San Diego and the Chicano Park Museum and Cultural Center. Dr. Pulido also serves as [Vice-Chair of the CPMCC’s Board of Directors](#).



**Alison Garcia Kellar** grew up in South Florida and studied design at UC Davis and historic preservation at the University of Pennsylvania. For nearly a decade, she has worked to preserve and document a wide range of historic properties in California including McDonnell Hall, the home parish of labor leader Cesar Chavez. She is a member of Latinos in Heritage Conservation's Education Committee, which is embarking on the Abuelas Project, and is excited to bring attention to the meaningful places revered by Latinx communities. She currently works as a senior architectural historian at Environmental Science Associates in San Diego, California.



**Amy Webb** joined the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1993 and currently serves as a senior director based in Colorado. She currently manages the National Trust's *Preserve Route 66* Initiative, a multi-year effort to preserve underrepresented sites and tell a fuller American story along Route 66 leading up to the Route 66 Centennial in 2026. Amy holds a master's degree in architectural history and historic preservation from the University of Virginia and a bachelor's degree in architectural history from Wellesley College in Massachusetts.



**Dr. Antonia I. Castañeda** is a Tejana born Chicana Feminist Historian who is a Professor Emerita at St. Mary's University, received her BA from Western Washington State College, MA from the University of Washington, and Ph.D. in U.S. History from Stanford University. Author of the prize-winning article, "Women of Color and the Rewriting of Western History: The Discourse, Politics, and Decolonization of History," she is former co-editor of the *Chicana Matters Book Series* with UT Press, and of the anthology, *Gender on the Borderlands: The Frontiers Reader*. See also *Three Decades of Engendering History: Selected Works of Antonia I. Castañeda*, edited by Linda Heidenreich (2015)

Castañeda is a founding member of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS), a member of the Scholars Advisory Board of the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project; served on the board of the National Collaborative of Women's History Sites, served on National Park Service's American Latino Scholars Panel, was a founding board member of Latinos in Heritage Conservation, is a founding member of the Westside Preservation Alliance, and is a member of the Buena Gente of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center. She is a recipient of the Mexican American Defense and Education Fund's (MALDEF) Community Achievement Award (2014) and of the NACCS Scholar of the Year Award (2007).





**Armando Zumaya**, a fundraising veteran with four decades of experience, is the Founder and Executive Director of Somos El Poder. His career spans roles in development offices, fundraising culture, and Latinx in the US nonprofit world. He's a noted expert on Latino Major Giving and has raised significant funds from the Latinx community. His career highlights include serving on two \$1+ billion campaigns at Cornell University and the University of California, Berkeley. A well-reviewed speaker, he has lectured at numerous conferences and has been featured in various publications. He's also an advocate for improving the Prospect Researcher/Fundraiser relationship.

Armando lives in Northern California and is a proud alumnus of the University of California, Riverside and Theodore Roosevelt High School in Boyle Heights, East Los Angeles. For more information on Armando or Somos El Poder, [click here](#).



**Asami Robledo-Allen Yamamoto** (she/her/ella) is the Director of Education and Outreach at Latinos in Heritage Conservation. At LHC, she focuses on the Abuelas Project, works with graduate fellows, and creates community and educational resources about Latinx historic preservation. She is also a Bilingual Bicultural Education PhD student at the University of Texas at Austin studying the societal impact of bilingual art museum education.



**Beatriz Domínguez-Alemán** (ella/elle) has an MA in Latin American Studies from the University of Florida and is a Photography Fellow at Latinos in Heritage Conservation. She has also worked on oral histories, community archives, and rural communities across the Americas, particularly Puerto Rico, the United States, and Chile.



**Berenice Badillo** is a Spanish speaking Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, illustrator, muralist, poet, and multimedia artist. Berenice is a Chicano Park muralist, has a doctorate in Art Therapy and co-founder of XoQUE art in motion, an all-women multi-media group. She is a Breast Cancer Survivor. @bbadillos @xoque\_artinmotion www.xoque-art in [motion.com](http://motion.com)



**Betty Marín** is a cultural worker from Wilmington, CA. Her work uses popular education and language justice to create spaces that encourage learning, dialogue, and solidarity between different communities. With the Alliance for California Traditional Arts, she manages a series of programs integrating the traditional arts into health equity campaigns, curates a roundtable series to share resources and create exchange between traditional artists and manages an expanded statewide grants program for artists and organizations. She has coordinated the creation of field scan reports for the National Folklife Network and is thrilled to support in building greater connections and support for folk and traditional artists across the country. She has also contributed curriculum and taught with ACTA's Arts in Corrections program featured in [these publications](#). She graduated with an MFA in Art and Social Practice from Portland State University. As a student, she edited a book titled *Art and Education*, centered on a conversation with artists and educators Pablo Helguera and Luis Camnitzer.



**Brittney Jimenez** (she/her/ella) is a GIS Fellow at Latinos in Heritage Conservation, focusing on the Abuelas Project. At LHC, her work focuses on collecting sites of Latinx Joy, Grief, and Resistance along California Route 66. She is a PhD Candidate in Latin American & Latino Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where her work focuses on the continued impacts of Chicana Organizing by looking at the contemporary organizing of young women who identify as Chicana.

**Cam Juárez** is the son of migrant farm workers from Michoacán, Mexico, and a first-generation college graduate. Cam has advanced degrees in Chican@ Studies, Political Science and Urban Planning from the University of Arizona.

Cam serves as the first permanent Community Engagement and Outreach Coordinator for Saguaro National Park in Tucson, AZ and in the National Park Service.

His focus is on creating awareness and access to public lands by finding inclusive and meaningful ways to engage underrepresented audiences. He collaborates with a variety of organizations, local municipalities, school districts, and other federal agencies to achieve this goal.

Cam has worked most of his career in youth and community development. He served as a Governing Board member of the Tucson Unified School District during the fight for ethnic studies in Arizona, from 2012 to 2016. Cam has served on a variety of boards over his 30-year career and lives to model what is possible in challenging spaces, with limited resources.



**Celeste Lanuza** is an LA based singer-songwriter, actress, filmmaker, producer, choreographer, and scholar who has toured to Malaysia, Indonesia, Ecuador, Mexico, Canada, Jamaica, Romania, China, Spain, and Grand Cayman Islands. Her love for music has been shared with NPR Tiny Desk Contest where she was a featured Latinx singer-songwriter as well as in the SD Union Tribune and 88.3 Jazz station. She has also worked with Grammy nominated producers such as Toby Sandoval and B.Slade. Celeste has opened for Ozomatli at the Summer Pops, was a nominee as Best New Artist at the LA Music Awards, and was a quarter finalist in Tengo Talento Mucho Talento. Some favorite music performances have been

at La Plaza de Cultura y Artes in Downtown LA where famous Oaxaqueno jewelry designer Federico Jimenez invited her to be the featured singer with her dad's band as Jimenez was honored with the Ciudadano Distinguido de Mexico award. She loves returning to perform at the San Diego Latino Film Festival and Chicano Park to perform their original music and be amongst her community. Her music can be found on Spotify and Apple Music under her name Celeste Lanuza.

Celeste has been invited to speak at the Downtown LA City Hall for Latina Equal Pay Day, has taught at UCSD, UCI, Cal State Fullerton, Cal Poly Pomona, Washington & Lee University as Visiting Assistant Professor, is a current PhD Candidate writing her dissertation, and working on a publication for Oxford University Press. Lanuza has been given awards by the City of LA Department of Cultural Affairs to produce films and continues to work collaboratively with her father Freddy Lanuza on scoring. Celeste choreographs and teaches as a master instructor for Debbie Allen with her dance academy at the Shonda Rhimes Performing Arts Center where they have also premiered her film work. Favorite film projects have been with Ballet Hispanico in NYC where she was invited as their filmmaker with funding to create a documentary and a short she premiered at the SD Latino Film Fest where she was sponsored by Alaska Airlines as an emerging Latina filmmaker. Standout choreography credits are Huella on Amazon Prime and Fuego on PBS. Celeste performed the role of Rafaela at La Jolla Playhouse in Fandango with Butterflies (and Coyotes), Amelia with San Diego Repertory in Octavio Solis' Mother Road, Mother in a premiere with playwright Oliver Mayer, Karana in Island of the Blue Dolphins at Laguna Playhouse, and premiere of A Woman named Gloria by

Josefina Lopez at Casa 0101. Roles in musicals have been Anita in West Side Story and Tiger Lily in Peter Pan where she received BWW reviews. Lanuza played the principal role of Duende in the opera Maria de Buenos Aires with SD Opera, Arizona Opera, and Fort Worth Opera as the first US born and female to jump into this role after Horacio Ferrer. Lanuza also performed in several shows recently at the Old Globe Theater with Broadway director Josh Rhodes, West Side Story at Tony Award winning Guthrie Theater, Radio City Music Hall and Marvelous Mrs. Maisel when she lived in NYC and Zoot Suit at the San Diego Repertory Theater. She trained as an actress in the Teatro Campesino Method with Lakin Valdez at Studio Luna in LA and Johnnie Hobbs Jr. at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia while completing her BFA. She also holds an MFA from UCI and you can follow her on instagram at @senoritaarranca and her website is [www.celestelanuza.com](http://www.celestelanuza.com)

**David Dorado Romo** is an author, historian and musician who specializes on the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. He is the author of *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez, 1893-1923* (Cinco Puntos Press, 2005) and *Borderlands and the Mexican American Story* (Penguin Random House, 2024). Much of his global-microhistorical research has focused on South El Paso, where his family's roots go back generations. His maternal grandparents moved to the border city during the Mexican Revolution and lived and worked in South El Paso. He recently came across documents showing that his ninth-generation great grandfather crossed the Río Grande into what is now El Paso in 1647.

After graduating from Stanford University, where he received a degree in history, philosophy and Judaic Studies, he started the Southside Education Center. There he taught chess, music and theater to youth in the Segundo Barrio. In 2006, he was one of the co-founders of Paso del Sur, a grassroots organization that opposes the City of El Paso's gentrification plans for the Segundo Barrio and Duranguito.

In 2014, Romo received a Ph.D. in Borderlands History from the University of Texas at El Paso. His historical essays have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *Texas Monthly*, *Texas Observer*, and Mexico's City's *Nexus*. He is a founding member of Project Regeneración, a non-profit group that is currently working to restore the Duranguito community.



**Desiree Aranda** is an urban planner and heritage specialist based in Phoenix, Arizona where her family has lived for over five generations. She is a founder and the current co-chair of Latinos in Heritage Conservation. With nearly a decade in the historic preservation and planning fields, Desiree specializes in identifying, documenting, evaluating, and designating historic properties, as well as developing community-based cultural heritage programs. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Women's Studies from the University of Georgia and a Master of Science in Planning from the University of Arizona.



**Dolores Clara Fernandez** was born on April 10, 1930 in Dawson, a small mining town in the mountains of northern New Mexico. Her father Juan Fernández, a farm worker and miner by trade, was a union activist who ran for political office and won a seat in the New Mexico legislature in 1938. Dolores spent most of her childhood and early adult life in Stockton, California where she and her two brothers moved with their mother.

According to Dolores, her mother's independence and entrepreneurial spirit was one of the primary reasons she became a feminist. Dolores' mother Alicia was known for her kindness and compassion towards others. She offered rooms at affordable rates in her 70 room hotel, which she acquired

after years of hard work. Alicia welcomed low-wage workers in the hotel, and often, waived the fee for them altogether. She was an active participant in community affairs, involved in numerous civic organizations and the church. Alicia encouraged the cultural diversity that was a natural part of Dolores' upbringing in Stockton. The agricultural community where they lived was made up of Mexican, Filipino, African-American, Japanese and Chinese working families.

Alicia's community activism influenced Dolores' involvement as a student at Stockton High School. She was active in numerous school clubs, was a majorette, and a dedicated member of the Girl Scouts until the age of 18. Upon graduating, Dolores continued her education at the University of Pacific's Delta College in Stockton earning a provisional teaching credential. During this time, she married Ralph Head and had two daughters, Celeste and Lori. While teaching, she could no longer bear to see her students come to school with empty stomachs and bare feet, and thus began her lifelong journey of working to correct economic injustice.



**Edward Torrez, AIA, LEED, NCARB, AP**, is a preservation architect and principal at Arda Studio in Chicago, Illinois. Edward has been specializing in Historic Preservation, Adaptive Reuse, Rehabilitation, and Urban Planning projects in Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Georgia and Texas for over 30 years. He serves as a Board member of Latinos in Heritage Conservation, Advisor for the National Trust of Historic Preservation, past member of the Illinois Historical Sites Advisory Council, member of Landmark Illinois' Reinvestment Committee, and the Grant Park Advisory Council's Sculpture and Monument Committee.

**Fred Lanuza** is a multi-instrumentalist, composer, recording artist and educator. He has been a constant cultural force in the San Diego arts scene. Lanuza composed all the music for the "Resistance Creates Beauty" project.





**Grace Alvarez Sesma**, of Yaqui/Mexican heritage, is a cultural practitioner, educator, and activist. Her consulting and private healing practice draws on her family’s Yaqui cultural knowledge and Zapotec and Mexika healing traditions. As a dedicated cultural educator, Grace coaches and works closely with mental health therapists and other healthcare providers to foster a deeper understanding of Mexican and Indigenous culture-specific health interventions. Her commitment to creating an environment of mutual respect and collaboration among these diverse groups is a testament to her leadership.

In 1993, she received the prestigious leadership fellowship award from the National Hispana Leadership Institute in collaboration with Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Maestra Grace contributed to the book *Voices of the Ancestors: Xicanx and Latinx Spiritual Expressions and Healing Practices* and is a member of the Kanap Kuahan (Tell the Truth) Coalition, advisor to the House of the Moon (Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women), serves on the Consciousness & Healing Initiative (CHI) Practitioners Council, and the Association of Integrative Health & Medicine BIPOC Committee. She was inducted to the MeCHA Mural at Chicano Park - San Diego in 2024.



**Graciela Sanchez** follows in the footsteps of her mother and abuelitas, strong women of color cultural workers and organizers. As Buena gente of the Esperanza, Graciela works with staff and community to develop programs that culturally ground working class and poor women of color, queer people and other marginalized people-- individuals who are survivors of cultural genocide. She challenges notions of the arts and politics as separate work environments. Graciela implements the vision and operations of the Esperanza as a community center, art and performance space, policy-change hub, and network facilitator for social justice, historic preservation, environmental, and community-based arts organizations.



**Herbert Siguenza** is a playwright and actor. An original member of the legendary Chicano performance group Culture Clash. He was California Arts Council Artist in Residence at the Chicano Park Museum and Cultural Center when he created “Resistance Creates Beauty”, a 14 track YouTube album.



**Jeronimo Roldan** is a founding member of El Conocimiento Migrante (the Migrant Knowledge), an organization based in Portland, Oregon, that explores and supports heritage practices and cultural life as an avenue for social transformation. His recent thesis for the University of Oregon, “Foodways and Foodsheds: Supporting Culinary Heritage Practices,” explores strategies for intangible heritage preservation.



**Jose Arellano** is co-owner of Tepito Coffee, one of the fastest growing and influential Chicano and Indigenous-led coffee companies in the United States. Jose grew up in a home filled with generations of gang members. Despite making a promise to never join a gang, he was drawn into life, and cycled in and out of the prison system. However, Jose was able to turn his life around and is now part of the executive leadership at Homeboy Industries, the largest gang rehabilitation and re-entry program in the world, where he is the Vice President of Operations. You can follow his remarkable journey at @josearellanoofficial.



**Joseph Martinez** obtained his Master of Architecture degree from Harvard University in 1975 and his B.A. degree from UC San Diego in 1971. As a practicing architect based in San Diego, he has designed such projects as the Hyatt Regency Hotel (west tower), New Marriott Hall, Phase 2 of the San Diego Convention Center, and The Mark, a 32-story residential highrise at 8th and Market. Some of his educational projects would include the SDSU Calexico Campus, Rancho del Rey Middle, Olympian High, San Ysidro High, The New Lincoln High, and Cesar E. Chavez Elementary -- a National AIA Merit Award recipient. Some of his more recent educational projects include Integrity Charter School and the Cesar E. Chavez

Campus for the San Diego Community College District. In addition to his private practice, he has taught architecture and urbanism at UC Berkeley, UC San Diego and was the founding Dean of the New School of Architecture. Likewise, he has penned several articles, including “Oneness: The Architecture of Self”, and “Placemaking: The Story of Chicano/a Magic, Alchemy & Phenomenology”. His 300+ page manuscript, “Chicanx Architecture: Divine Suppositions in a Multi-cultural Society”, lays out the theoretical basis for its aesthetics relating to built-form and negative space.

Moreover, Joseph has participated in various forums, symposia and lectures including AIA, APA and CEFPI; he was the National Program Chair for the AIA/Committee on Architectural Education—“Sustainable Schools: Sustainable Communities”. Likewise, Joseph is the recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award (2005) from The California Rural Legal Assistance, and in 2016 a Lifetime Achievement Award from Barrio Station/San Diego. In addition, he was a founding board member of the UC San Diego MEChA 1967, The Mariachi Scholarship Foundation, Bahia del Sur, and ONE VOTE! Presently, he is a Sr. Editor at By Design Magazine, and a founding board member of the Latino Legacy Foundation.



**Josephine Talamantez** (Chicana/Yaqui) is an Organizational Management, Public Policy and Governmental Relations consultant with a specialization in Arts, History and Cultural Public Programming, Historic Preservation, Cultural Resource Management and Public History. Founder and Board Chair— Chicano Park Museum and Cultural Center ([CPMCC](#)) San Diego, CA; Former Chief of Programs/ Legislative Liaison, California Arts Council, a State agency; Executive Director, La Raza/Galeria Posada-Sac, CA and Centro Cultural de la Raza-San Diego—nonprofit arts organizations, CA; Past executive board member, National Association of Latino Arts and Culture (NALAC); and Founding member of Latinos in Heritage

Conservation (LHC) a national organization. She has served as an Advisor to the California Office of Historic Preservation for the development of the Ca. Latino American Theme Study and Multiple Property Registration Form (MPRF.) Co-founder—Chicano Park & Chicano Park Steering Committee (CPSC), and member of the Royal Chicano Air force (RCAF). She authored Chicano Park and the Chicano Park Monumental Mural’s successful National Register nomination and co-authored its National Landmark nomination. In addition, she serves on Barrio Logan Planning Group, Barrio Logan Association/Maintenance Assessment District, Air Pollution Control District Portside Communities Steering Committee, appointed to Mayor Todd Gloria’s Latinx Advisory Committee and was inducted to the California Women’s Museum, San Diego’s Women’s Hall of Fame. She has a master’s degree in history focusing on the Chicano civil rights era and on public history programming.



**Julianne Polanco** has served as a commissioner on the California State Historical Resources Commission since 2005 (for the last three years as Chair), and as Director of Cultural Resources for Lend Lease since 2006. She was Senior Preservation Specialist at the Presidio Trust from 1999 to 2006, and Assistant to the Vice President for programs at the World Monuments Fund from 1998 to 1999. Her professional work has also included serving as Advisor to the Chairperson of California Integrated Waste Management Board, Special Assistant to the Secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency, Trustee Emeritus of the California Preservation Foundation, member of the Board of Directors of San Francisco Architectural Heritage, and a member

of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. For more information, [click here](#).



**Karina Amalbert** (she/her/ella) is one of the GIS fellows for the Abuela's project at Latinos in Heritage Conservation. At LHC, Karina worked with Latinx and Indigenous populations along Route 66 in Arizona conducting oral histories and story mapping. She is also an Urban and Regional Planning PhD student at Florida State University studying radical and insurgent planning behaviors in Puerto Rico.



**Karina Rodgers** is a graduate of the University of New Mexico with a master's degree in Community Regional Planning and a license in Historic Preservation. She is currently with the Latino Heritage Internship Program and the National Park Service, focusing on documenting oral histories that highlight Hispanic voices along Route 66. As a first generation Mexican American, Karina is passionate about the role history and cultural identity play in fostering community empowerment and effective planning practices.



diaspora.

**Karla Tatiana Vasquez** is a food writer, recipe developer, and food stylist based in Los Angeles. Her writing has been published by The Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, and Teen Vogue, among others. Her recipe development work can be seen in Food & Wine, Serious Eats, BuzzFeed Tasty, and Tastemade. She is also a food justice advocate and an active member in her community to increase healthy food accessibility in low-income communities, previously working with Hunger Action Los Angeles and Los Angeles Food Policy Council. She founded SalviSoul to preserve her family's recipes, and since then it is expanded to focus on cultural memory and intergenerational healing for the Salvadoran





**Mike de la Rocha** is a visionary strategist, acclaimed artist, and compelling voice for change. Celebrated as one of the most influential changemakers of our era, Mike has been behind several of the largest policy victories and cultural shifts in U.S. history. He's earned accolades as one of GOOD magazine's top 100 people reshaping our world, recipient of the AFL-CIO's prestigious Justice, Peace and Freedom Award, and was lauded as a groundbreaking innovator by Stanford Social Innovation Review. Mike co-founded Revolve Impact, one of the leading creative agencies in the world, and Tepito Coffee, one of the fastest growing Latinx coffee companies in America. You can follow him at @mrmikedelarocha.



**Laura Dominguez, PhD** candidate in the Department of History at USC, where she studies race, heritage, and place-making in the American West. Her research examines the making and unmaking of settler histories, memory sites, and ancestral practices among Black, Indigenous, and immigrant communities in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Los Angeles. Born and raised in Southern California, Laura holds a bachelor's degree from Columbia University and a master's degree in historic preservation from USC. She previously served as Communications and Programs Manager for San Francisco Heritage and Preservation Manager for the Los Angeles Conservancy. An advocate for preservation justice and equity,

she is also a founding board member of Latinos in Heritage Conservation and chairs its Education & Programs Committee. From 2019-2021, she was a member of the Los Angeles Mayor's Office Civic Memory Working Group. Her writing has appeared in the Western Historical Quarterly, Journal of American History, California History, and Lost L.A. She is a new mother to Diego.



**Leticia Gomez Franco** (she/her/ella) is the Executive Director of the Balboa Art Conservation Center in San Diego, CA. Her work is rooted in the intersection of culture, representation and social justice, all values that play a role in her position at BACC where she is leading the 49-year-old organization, through a transformative shift into a radically inclusive art conservation and cultural preservation nonprofit.



**Maria Figueroa**, professor of English Composition, Literature, and Humanities at MiraCosta College currently serves as Vice President of the Board of Centro Cultural de la Raza. Her community work spans over 25 years, predominantly in the area of cultural preservation, traditional arts, teatro y poesia. As co-lead of Danza Coatlicue, a traditional Aztec Dance group, Maria is committed to preserving the dance and spiritual traditions of the Mexican Indigenous diaspora



**Maria E. Garcia** was born in Yuma Arizona and came to San Diego at the age of three she grew up in Encanto and is grateful for the opportunity to grow up in "mixed" community. She graduated from SDSU and has a masters and administrator certificate from Pt. Loma College. She has always been interested in history but when she took Chicano studies from Carlos Velez her interest in Chicano history bloomed.

Maria has been a teachers' aide, teacher, vice -principal and principal. At SDSU, she authored a paper on Neighborhood House which she lent to a local TV station. They lost it! When she was going to turn in the tapes with interviews from that period, she realized she had to write two or three pages about the information on the tapes. After meeting Ann Daniels from the SD Free press, she started writing a weekly article about the neighborhood, which turned into a yearly series and a book. WE MADE SAN DIEGO was her second book followed. Both books have been when awards from the Latino Futures. Maria is belief is that we must write our own history. Currently WE MADE SAN DIEGO is being made into a documentary.



**Maria Jose Plascencia** grew up a fronteriza in the Chula Vista - Tijuana region. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of San Diego where she specializes in Chicanx Histories and Border Studies.



**Maria Velasquez** is an Emmy award-winning Television Journalist & Producer. Pioneer Latina broadcaster in the San Diego region.



**Mary Margaret Fernandez** serves as a Program Coordinator in the Preservation Services & Outreach Department of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, overseeing the Diversity Scholarship Program and the National Trust Advisors. She has over a decade of experience in public history, the arts, and volunteer management, with a professional focus on BIPOC interpretation at historic sites and DEIA policy implementation. Fernandez received her Master's degree in Latin American Art History from Rutgers University and holds dual Bachelor's degrees from Florida State University in English and Art History. She enjoys a codependent relationship with her dog, Alfalfa, and a healthy relationship with her partner, Christian.



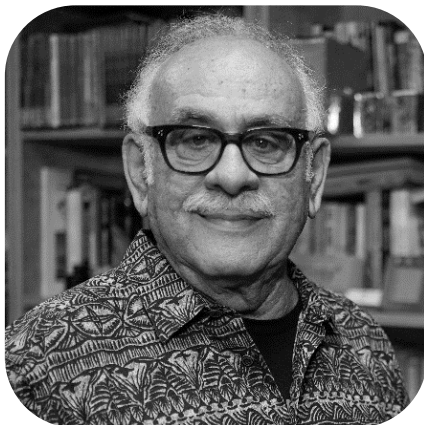
**Melanie Escobar** (she/her/ella) served as the GIS Lead Fellow for the Abuelas Project: Latinx Route 66 at Latinos in Heritage Conservation. A recent graduate from the University of Texas at El Paso, she specialized in using GIS to analyze vulnerability and tree distribution along the U.S.-Mexico border and is passionate about using GIS for the Latinx community.



**Olivia Juarez** (they/them) is the Public Land Program Director at Green Latinos from Salt Lake City, UT.



**Omar Eaton-Martínez** is the senior vice president for historic sites, where he leads the preservation, interpretation, and overall stewardship of 28 [National Trust Historic Sites](#) across the country to tell the full American story. He has had leading roles in racial equity organizations like Museums and Race: Transformation and Justice and Museum Hue and part of the Museum as Site for Social Action project.



**Paul Espinosa** is an award-winning filmmaker who has worked at the intersection of social justice and Latino history for over 40 years. He is a California-based, New Mexican-raised filmmaker who uses the power of media to recover stories about unsung heroes whose lives inspire us. Before founding Espinosa Productions in 1996, Paul served as Senior Producer and Executive Producer with PBS stations KPBS-San Diego and KERA-Dallas. His work has been supported by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the National Endowment for the Humanities, PBS, the Ford Foundation, ITVS, Latino Public Broadcasting, the U.S.-Mexico Fund for Culture and The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Paul's films capture the

transformative energy of the men and women of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands examining topics like: key events in the contentious history between Mexico and the U.S. (*"The Lemon Grove Incident"*, *"The U.S.-Mexican War: 1846-1848"*, *"The Hunt for Pancho Villa"* and *"Los Mineros"* -the latter two for the *American Experience*); the productive intersection of art, music and civil rights (*"Singing Our Way to Freedom"*, *"Ballad of an Unsung Hero"* and *"1492 Revisited"*); and the struggles of both documented and undocumented Mexican immigrant families (*"In the Shadow of the Law"* and *"Uneasy Neighbors,"* and *"...and the earth did not swallow him"* for *American Playhouse*).





**Pedro Hernández** is Green Latinos' Public Land Advocate. He is based in Fresno, California and has worked for several of California's top environmental justice and conservation organizations in leading research, grassroots organizing, and policy advocacy from the local to federal levels on issues including but not limited to climate change, clean drinking water, air quality, sustainable community development, ecosystem restoration, endangered species protection, and equitable access to nature's benefits. Pedro holds a B.A. in United States and Latin American History from the University of California, Berkeley and has served as chair of the History Department at his alma mater, Laton High School. He also

serves as the editor-in-chief for the bilingual newspaper, *The Ivanhoe Sol*, and enjoys gardening, nature photography, film production, and performing as the lead singer for a punk rock band.



**Ray Rast, PhD** is an Associate Professor of History at Gonzaga University, where he teaches courses in U.S. history, public history, and American Latina/o history. He served as the lead historian for the National Park Service's Cesar Chavez Special Resource Study (2013), he served on the Scholars Panel for the Park Service's American Latino Heritage Initiative, and he has written several National Register and National Historic Landmark nominations. He currently serves as a board member for Latinos in Heritage Conservation and for the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation, and he is a member of the Spokane Historic Landmarks Commission.



**Rick and Friends** are a Folk Musical Trio from San Diego. The group emphasizes in traditional Mexican, Chicano and Latino music. These musicians have been enlightening audiences throughout the mid-west and southwestern parts of the US for 4 decades.



**Rigoberto (Rigo) Reyes** has been the Program Director for Via International formerly Los Ninos, a non-profit community development organization that focuses on developing human potential through grassroots initiatives in the US-Mexico border that benefit communities. Rigo is a native of San Diego, as a young boy he was influenced by the many rallies of the United Farm Workers of America, listening to Cesar Chavez had a big impact in his formation. At the age of twelve he witnessed the takeover of San Diego's famous Chicano Park and has been involved since 1970. Rigo's education is based on personal experience organizing at risk youth "gangs", was his introduction to community organizing. Rigo attended Southwestern College

and earned his Associates, he later transferred to National University where he received a BA in Behavioral Science. Rigo's love for Lowriders grew from living in the heart of the barrio, he first saw a lowrider at the age of ten. At the age of seventeen he bought a 1957 Chevrolet which he customized in a year, at the age of eighteen he joined his first lowrider Car Club "The Casinos", this club eventually would become "Amigos" Car Club of San Diego in 1977. Rigo's experience with lowriders led him to co-organize the first Lowrider Council in California in 1979 Rigo co-founded this coalition. Rigo has received various awards for his involvement, in 2002 the County Board of Supervisors recognized Rigo for his community involvement, Lowrider Magazine also awarded Rigo for his Community involvement. In 2015 Rigo was inducted to the "Lowrider Legends" San Diego Hall of Fame. In 2023 Rigo was inducted into the California "Icons of Lowriding" Hall of Fame, Rigo's love for the lifestyle is what drives this urgency of documenting the history of Chicano Car Clubs in San Diego. Rigo is co-producer of the award winning documentary "Everything Comes From The Streets" and co-author of the book "San Diego Lowriders a History of Cars and Cruising".



**Rikki Riojas** is the current Los Descendientes Board President & Mexican American Museum Co-Director. Since 2020, she has also served on the Tucson Pima County Historical Commission as a general commissioner, and on the Plans Review Subcommittee and Task Force on Inclusion. She is also a 2024 NALAC Leadership Institute Fellow and 2024 PastForward Diversity Scholar. Riojas has a B.A. in Mexican American Studies and History from the University of Arizona, specializing in downtown Tucson and the culture of the area prior to urban renewal. Her focus is on elevating the stories, histories, and shared knowledge within Tucson's barrios.



**Hon. Sara C. Bronin** was confirmed by unanimous consent by the United States Senate in December 2022 to serve as the 12th chair of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. A Mexican American, she is the first person of color to serve in this position. Chair Bronin is a seventh-generation Texan, and she grew up working in her grandparents' Mexican restaurant.



**Sarah Z. Gould, PhD** is Interim Executive Director of the Mexican American Civil Rights Institute, a national project to collect and disseminate Mexican American civil rights history. A longtime museum worker and public historian, she has curated over a dozen exhibits on history, art, and culture. She was formerly founding director of the Museo del Westside and lead curatorial researcher at the Institute of Texan Cultures. Gould is co-founder and currently serves as co-chair of Latinos in Heritage Conservation. Additionally, she serves on the boards of El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail Association and the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission, on the council of the American Association of

State and Local History and is an active member of the Westside Preservation Alliance, a coalition dedicated to promoting and preserving the working-class architecture of San Antonio's Westside. She received a BA in American Studies from Smith College and an MA and PhD in American Culture from the University of Michigan. She is a former fellow at the National Museum of American History, the Winterthur Museum, and the American Antiquarian Society, and is an alumna of the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture Leadership Institute.



**Sehila Mota Casper** is a historic preservationist with a decade of experience working in heritage conservation, community building, and preservation equity. Previously, Sehila worked at the City of Austin to assist in preserving marginalized histories and was a senior field officer at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, working nationwide to protect America's one-of-a-kind historic treasures. Sehila is the recipient of the 2014 National Trust for Historic Preservation Mildred Colodny Diversity scholarship and a 2013 Texas Historical Commission Preservation Scholar. Until recently, she served on the Board of Latinos in Heritage Conservation and is an active Board of Director for the National Collaborative for Women's History

Sites, Preservation Texas, Texas Dance Hall Preservation, the Texas Historical Commission's State Board of Review, and the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission. Sehila is a graduate of Texas Woman's University Department of Visual Arts and holds a Master of Fine Arts in Historic

Preservation from Savannah College of Art and Design. She lives in Bastrop, Texas, with her husband David and two dogs, Osito and Paul.



**Sonia A. López**, MA in counseling, participated in the Chicana/o Movement as a chronicler, student activist, and feminist. She authored the article “The Role of the Chicana Within the Student Movement” and co-authored the award-winning book *Chicana Tributes: Activist Women of the Civil Rights Movement - Stories for the New Generation*.



**Susana Rojas** was born in Bogota, Colombia. Susana has worked in the Mission community for the past 31 years. She started her career in the community as a program assistant at Mission Girls and continued her professional growth working at the Boys and Girls Club of San Francisco, Mission Neighborhood Centers, and most recently as the Executive Director of Calle 24 Latino Cultural District. Susana has dedicated her life to empowering and supporting the mission community. Susana brings passion, dedication, and commitment to Calle 24.



**Suzanne Guerra** is a Public Historian & Archives Consultant. She previously served as State Historian with the California State Office of Historic Preservation; as State Museum Curator, California Department of Parks and Recreation; the Cultural Diversity Advisory Committee to the Board of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and Museum Program Officer for the California Council for the Humanities. Her work has focused on the documentation and interpretation of cultural resources in rural, ethnic and minority communities; historic preservation planning and education; oral history and the development of community archives. Ms. Guerra received a BA in Liberal Studies and an interdisciplinary MA in Social Science,

Environment & Community Studies from Humboldt State University (HSU), with a certificate in multimedia resources; Smithsonian Minority Museum Professional Fellowship to study ethnographic collections and photographic archives; and a certificate from the Western Archives Institute. She has lectured on cultural resources and local history and archival research methods at HSU and at San Jose State University and documented historical



resources in neighborhoods throughout California for the last 30 years as a principal with Guerra & McBane LLC and as an independent consultant.



**Stanley Rodriguez, Ph.D.**, member of the Kumeyaay Santa Ysabel Band of the lipay Nation is an educator, language teacher, and tribal singer. He is an advocate for his community’s culture and traditions and serves in several advising and teaching roles in the San Diego and Native Kumeyaay communities. He has held the elected position of legislator for the Santa Ysabel Tribe of the lipay Nation. Stanley is a US Navy veteran, has an MA in Human Behavior, worked as a Drug and Alcohol Abuse Counselor, and now teaches full time, having just completed his PhD in Higher Education from UCSD. Stan Rodriguez learned from his grandmother and other Kumeyaay Elders the methods and culture. Rodriguez sits on

the board of a group whose vision is to strengthen language and cultural revitalization, known as the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival. Rodriguez has been teaching Kumeyaay language classes at Kumeyaay Community College on the Sycuan Reservation since 2000. The college is open to Native and non-Native students. Rodriguez does this work to bring Native American culture to any willing to learn. He has taught workshops at the Northwest Indian Language Institute, and he has been supported by the Alliance for California Traditional Arts in his efforts to learn traditional song cycles, such as Wild Cat, from master artists. Rodriguez regularly performs and provides demonstrations of tribal songs, games, traditional tool making, and structure building. For more information, [click here](#).



**Theresa Harlan** is the founder and director of the Alliance for Felix Cove, a grassroots Indigenous-women-led organization working to protect, restore and rematriate her family’s 19th century ancestral home at Point Reyes National Seashore. Theresa is an advocate for the re-matriation of ancestral homelands on national park lands and the use of Indigenous science (traditional ecological knowledge) to nurture these homelands for future generations. Her family’s story is in a three-part podcast, “Coming Home to the Cove: A Story of Family, Memory and Stolen Land.”



**Victor Reta** is a dedicated public servant with a passion for community development and historic preservation. As the Director overseeing the divisions of Recreation, Special Events, Historic Preservation, Communication, Legislative Affairs, Transportation, and Emergency Management for the City of Socorro, Texas, he plays a pivotal role in the city's growth and revitalization. Victor also serves as the City's sworn Historic Preservation Officer and Public Information Officer, underscoring his commitment to preserving Latino heritage.

Victor's leadership is exemplified by the recent National Historic Landmark designation of the Rio Vista Bracero Site, his successful efforts to secure congressional funding for local projects such as the Paso del Norte walking trail, and the launch of Socorro's new transit service after 38 years. His innovative approach to municipal management includes rebranding the Recreation Department into the Public Affairs Department, reflecting an expanded mission to better serve the community's evolving needs.

Collaborating with the City of Socorro Community Initiative (CSCI), Victor ensures continued free wellness classes at the Rio Vista Community Center and partners with colleagues like Sehila Mota Casper to highlight and preserve the rich cultural heritage of their community. With a commitment to hospitality, integrity, and innovation, Victor Reta sets the standard for exemplary public service in Texas.



**Yolanda Chávez Leyva, Ph.D.**, is a Chicana/ fronteriza historian and writer who was born and raised on the border. She is of Rarámuri descent and honors her grandmother Canuta Ruacho. She is the Director of the Institute of History and a professor in the Department of History. She is also the lead historian for the first-ever Bracero Museum (funded by the Mellon Foundation) slated to open in Socorro, Texas in 2025. She has spent her life listening to and now documenting the lives of people who live on la frontera. Professor Leyva specializes in border history, public history, and Chicana history. She is co-founder of Museo Urbano, a museum of the streets that highlights fronterize history by taking it where

people are-- from museums to the actual streets of El Paso. She came to academia after a decade of social work in the Black and Brown communities of east Austin, with a desire to make academia and especially history relevant and useful to people. She is the recipient of the National Council on Public History "Best Public History Project Award" and the American Historical Association Herbert Feis Award that recognizes "distinguished contributions to public history." She has curated and co-curated many museum exhibits with her students.

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We thank all our speakers for being part of this momentous occasion for our *comunidad*! For more information about Latinos in Heritage Conservation, visit [www.latinoheritage.us](http://www.latinoheritage.us)