

Puentes de Impacto/Bridges of Impact: A Celebration of Latino Leaders

Connectors and Changemakers Across New Jersey

Puentes de Impacto / Bridges of Impact is more than a list—it is a spotlight, a tribute, and a collective celebration.

This inaugural 2025 celebration honors Latino professionals who are building bridges of leadership, culture, equity, and transformation across the Garden State.

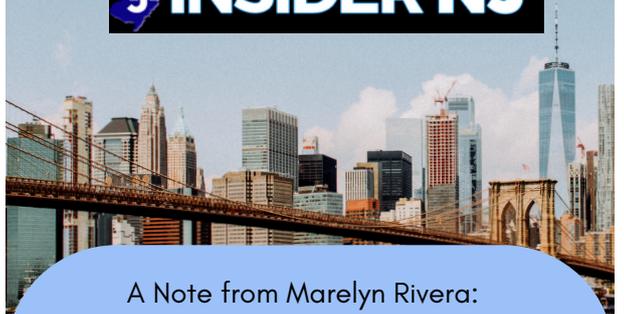
Latinos now account for more than 22% of New Jersey's population, a growing and dynamic communities that continues to shape the state's future.

These individuals represent the vast and vibrant spirit of New Jersey's Latino communities—those who lead, those who connect, those who work hard, and those who uplift with pride in their culture and heritage.

Feliz Mes de la Herencia Hispana!



 **INSIDER NJ**



A Note from Marelyn Rivera:

Puentes de Impacto / Bridges of Impact is a project close to my heart. As someone who's spent years working across government, advocacy, and community spaces, I've seen firsthand the dedication, creativity, and resilience that Latinos bring to every room we enter.

This inaugural list is more than recognition—it's a reflection of the village it takes to build progress. From grassroots organizers to elected officials, from public workers and educators to entrepreneurs, every name on this list represents a story of impact, identity, and purpose.

I'm proud to co-present this effort alongside InsiderNJ and to uplift our collective power—rooted in cultura, driven by service, and united through bridge-building across our state.

¡Con orgullo y con propósito!
— Marelyn Rivera

Why "Puentes"?

The word puentes (bridges) symbolizes connection, resilience, and progress. Whether linking communities, creating access, or elevating the next generation, these honorees are architects of possibility. They are the cultural translators, the movement makers, the legacy builders.

The 2025 Honorees:

This year's list spotlights professionals from across sectors—government, education, health, media, business, nonprofits, grassroots organizing, and more. Each honoree embodies an unwavering dedication to service, leadership, and the collective progress of our communities. Their impact reaches every corner of the state, benefiting all of New Jersey—proof that when Latinos rise, New Jersey rises with us.

This is the first-ever Puentes de Impacto / Bridges of Impact list, presented in alphabetical order—not by rank—because each honoree plays a vital and unique role in shaping our collective future.

In addition to the primary honoree list, this inaugural edition includes a special Honorary Mention: Latino Elected Officials, recognizing their ongoing commitment to public service and representation across New Jersey.

Presented In Partnership By:

This initiative is presented in proud partnership between InsiderNJ and Marelyn Rivera—two voices committed to celebrating Latino excellence, storytelling, and leadership across New Jersey.

Together, we honor those who are shaping the state's future through dedication, connection, and impact—because, as we know, it takes a village.



Special thanks to Quadratín Hispano for translating and publishing this feature in Spanish, ensuring that our stories are shared and celebrated en ambos idiomas.



A message from Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz:

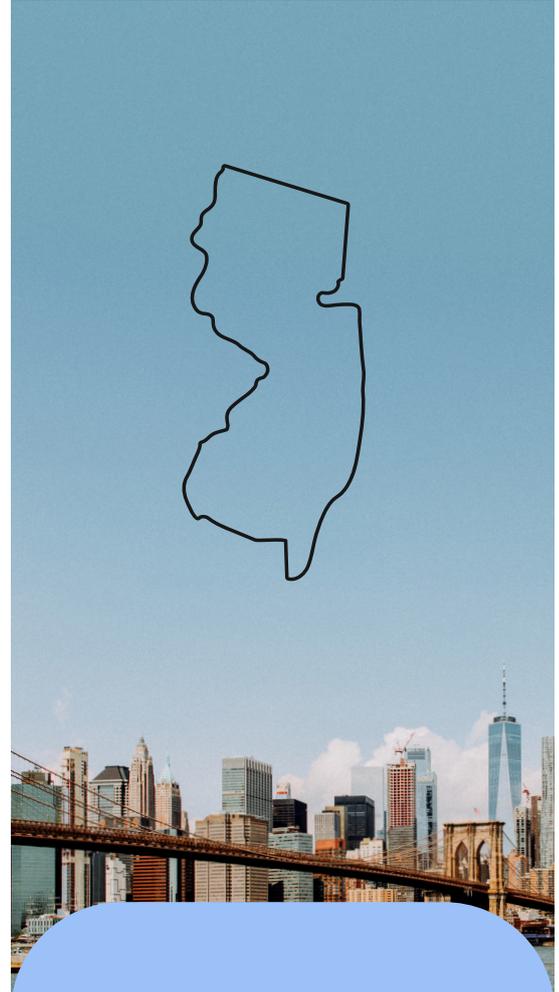
‘Puentes de Impacto’ is a powerful acknowledgment of the strides and impact Latino leaders are making in driving change across the Garden State and beyond. So many of you have contributed to the healing of humanity through policy and politics – representing and transforming the communities you serve with purpose and heart. While many of us may be the first in our endeavors, we will not be the last – our passion and resilience will continue to build bridges for those coming after us. To the names not listed, but who carved trenches so we could walk smoother paths – the public servants and warriors in their own right – we see you, we honor you, and we thank you. Congratulations to all the honorees, and thank you for using your platforms to uplift others, champion equity, and create lasting change across every space you touch.”

– Major Leader Ruiz

A message from Congresswoman Nellie Pou:

“Hispanic Heritage Month meant a great deal to me this year. Being the first Latina to represent our New Jersey in Congress is a designation I take very seriously and one which guides my work every day. While serving and delivering for the great people of our communities, I hope to be a model for young Latino and Latina leaders. Just as trailblazers guided me, I want to help inspire the next generation interested in serving our country.”

–Congresswoman Nellie Pou



The 2025
National Hispanic
Heritage Month Theme:

“Collective Heritage:
Honoring the Past,
Inspiring the Future.”

2025 Honorees | Puentes de Impacto / Bridges of Impact: A Celebration of Latino Leaders



Adam Alonso
Chief Strategy Officer,
Hudson Regional
Health



Adrian Orozco
Political Director,
32BJ SEIU



Alex Sandoval
Managing Director,
GTS Engineering



Alyana Alfaro Post
Executive
Communications
Lead, PSEG



**Andrea Martinez-
Mejia**
Executive Director,
Greater Newark
Health Care Coalition



Andres Acebo
President,
New Jersey City
University



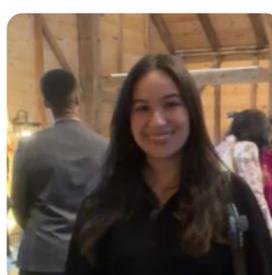
Andressa Soares
Finance Director,
Terrace Park Group



Anna "Cuqui" Rivera
Outreach Director,
Community, Latino
Action Network
Foundation & Political
Activist



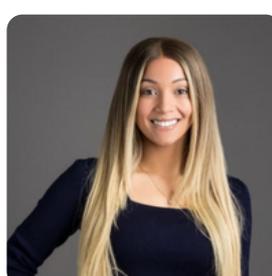
**Arlene Quinonez
Perez**
Equity Partner,
DeCotis, FitzPatrick,
Cole & Gilben; Chair,
Hunterdon County
Democratic
Committee



**Awilda Pomales-
Diaz**
Executive Director,
New Jersey Puerto
Rico Commission



Bill Tipacti
Sr. Director of
Community
Empowerment,
Univision New York at
Univision
Communications Inc.



Brianna Earle
Associate Director
Government Affairs,
Novartis

2025 Honorees | Puentes de Impacto / Bridges of Impact: A Celebration of Latino Leaders



Camelia Valdez
Prosecutor,
Passaic County



Carlos Irvin Merino
Government
Representative, New
Jersey Department of
Labor & Workforce
Development



Carlos Lejneiks
President,
Big Brothers Big
Sisters of Essex,
Hudson & Union
Counties



Carlos Medina
President, New Jersey
Statewide Hispanic
Chamber of
Commerce,
Entrepreneur &
Executive Producer of
Images/Imagenes



**Carlos Rodriguez,
ED. D.**
Senior Vice President,
Kean University



Carmen Gandulla
Director of Finance,
Jersey City &
Community Activist



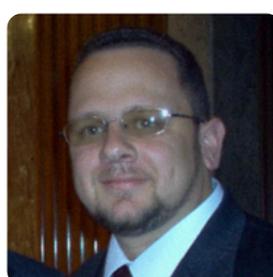
Carol Caudrado
Associate Vice
President, University
and Government
Relations, William
Paterson University



Carolina Montes
Senior Aide,
Governor Phil Murphy



Christian Callegari
Attorney, McCarter &
English, LLP



Christian Estevez
Director, Mercer
County Workforce
Development Board &
Former President,
Latino Action Network



Christopher Flores
Director, NJ Economic
Development
Authority & Social
Chair, NJ State
Democratic Latino
Caucus



Cristal Lambert
Assistant General, ETS
& Incoming President,
NJ Hispanic Bar
Association

2025 Honorees | Puentes de Impacto / Bridges of Impact: A Celebration of Latino Leaders



Cristian and Irvin Moreno-Rodriguez
Co-Founders,
El Pueblo Unido



Cristina Coll Pinzon
President & CEO,
Stateside Affairs



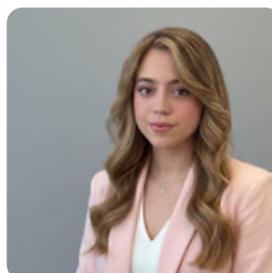
Cristina Cosme
Assistant Director ,
The Joseph A. Unanue
Latino Institute at
Seton Hall University



Dan Carles
Owner & President,
Terrace Park Group



Dan Cassino
Professor of
Government and
Politics, Fairleigh
Dickinson University,
& Executive Director
of the FDU Poll



Daniela Lopez Granada
Project Manager,
Field Strategies



David Cruz
Correspondent,
NJTV News



Diego Maya
Founder,
The Latino Spirit



Dr. Jesselly De La Cruz, DSW, LCSW
Executive Director,
Latino Action Network
Foundation



Dr. Lauren Zyriek Enriquez
Assistant Secretary of
State, NJ Department
of State



Dr. Melissa Beralt
Latina Educator,
Motivational Speaker,



Dr. Patricia Campos-Medina
Academic Scholar
Practitioner, Labor &
Immigrant Rights
Strategist, &
President; Latina Civic
Action

2025 Honorees | Puentes de Impacto / Bridges of Impact: A Celebration of Latino Leaders



Edgar Santillan
Director of
Operations,
Terrace Park Group



Emy Quispe
Deputy Chief of Staff,
Office of Governor
Phil Murphy



Erika Nava
Senior Policy Advisor,
New Jersey State
Senate



Fernando Mazariego
Vice President, Tonio
Burgos & Associates
New Jersey



Fernando Uribe
Host & Executive
Producer, Real Talk



Francisco Cortes
President, NJ State
Veterans Chamber of
Commerce



Francisco Maldonado
Senior Counsel for
Policy and External
Affairs, NJ Laborers'
and Employers'
Cooperation and
Education Trust



Frank Argote-Freyre
Board Chair, Latino
Action Network
Foundation



**Genesis Algaba
Ensor**
Chief of Staff,
Assemblywoman Dr.
Rosaura "Rosy"
Bagolie



Gualberto Medina
Executive Vice
President, CBRE &
former Secretary of
Comment, State of
New Jersey



Guillermo Artiles
Partner, McCarter &
English, LLP & Former
Associate Counsel,
Governor Phil Murphy



Idida Rodriguez
Managing Partner,
1868 Public Affairs

2025 Honorees | Puentes de Impacto / Bridges of Impact: A Celebration of Latino Leaders



Iris M. Delgado
Executive Director,
Middlesex County
Democratic
Organization & NJ
Democratic
Campaign Committee



Jacquelyn A. Suárez
Commissioner, New
Jersey Department of
Community Affairs



Javier Robles
Chair, New Jersey
Disability Action
Committee



Johanna Calle
Director, Office of
New Americans, New
Jersey Department of
Human Services



John Heinis
Founder & Publisher,
Hudson County View



Jorge Cruz
Executive Director,
New Jersey Local
Initiatives Support
Corporation (LISC)



Jose Lozano
Executive Vice
President, Chief
Growth Officer,
Hackensack Meridian
Health



Juan Carlos Nordelo
Chief of Staff,
Assemblywoman
Yvonne Lopez



Juan Melli
Managing Director,
Mercury Affairs & Vice
President, Team
Wilderness



Julie Diaz
Assistant
Commissioner, New
Jersey Dept. of Labor
and Workforce
Development



**Karina Jimenez-
Belen**
Horizon Blue Cross
Blue Shield of New
Jersey, Marketing &
Sponsorship Manager



Krishna Martes
Director of Labor
Relations and
Stakeholder
Engagement,
Governor Phil Murphy

2025 Honorees | Puentes de Impacto / Bridges of Impact: A Celebration of Latino Leaders



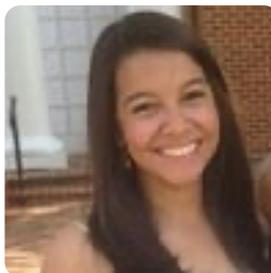
Laura Bustamante-Gagné
Deputy State Director & Political Director, Senator Andy Kim



Laura Matos
Partner, MAD Global Startegy



Lazaro Cardenas, Esq.
Chief Compliance Officer, Latino Action Network Foundation



Leany Pichardo
Director of Policy, Office of Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin



Leslye Moya
Deputy Political Director, NJ Victory 2025 & Deputy Executive Director, New Jersey Democratic State Committee



Lilian Plata, Esq.
General Counsel & Senior Advisor, Monage Capital



Lizette Delgado Polanco
Executive Director, New Jersey City University Foundation



Lori Tarke
Executive Director, Joseph A. Unanue Latino Institute



Luis de la Hoz
Chair, New Jersey Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce



Marcela Maziarz
Vice President for Community and Government Affairs, Thomas Edison State University



Margo Chaly
Executive Director, New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority



Maria J. Andrade, MPA
NJ GEARUP Site Director, New Jersey Institute of Technology & Newark Hispanic Commissioner

2025 Honorees | Puentes de Impacto / Bridges of Impact: A Celebration of Latino Leaders



Maria Del Cid-Kosso
Director of External Affairs & Policy, NJ Maternal & Infant Health Innovation Authority & Former Commissioner, NJ Cannabis Regulatory Commission



Maria Rodriguez-Gregg
Director of Government Relations & Community Affairs, Montclair State University & Former Assemblywoman



Melinda Colon Cox
General Counsel & Chief Compliance Officer, New Jersey Community Capital



Miguel Diaz
Respected veteran Paterson political operative



Milagros Peralta
Chief of Staff, New Jersey City University



Natalia Espejo/Yesenia Cruz-Troy
Founders & Co-Presidents, Latinos of Montclair



Nataly Tamayo Espinosa
Deputy Director of Legislative & Intergovernmental Affairs, NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development



Nedia Morsy
State Director, Make the Road New Jersey



Nicole Rodriguez
President, New Jersey Policy Perspective



Peggy Anastos
Co-Chair, New Jersey Puerto Rico Commission



Rob Matos-Moran
Director of Legislative Affairs, Governor Phil Murphy



Robert Figueroa
Field Operative, Terrace Park Group

2025 Honorees | Puentes de Impacto / Bridges of Impact: A Celebration of Latino Leaders



Roberto Frugone
Neighborhood Development & Government Relations Professional, The Frugone Group



Ron Bautista
VP, Product Manager, Small Business Credit Card Community Reinvestment, JPMorganChase & Political Activist



Rosa Farias
Deputy Executive Director, New Jersey Senate Majority Office



Roy Garcia
Assistant Vice President of Alumni Engagement & Philanthropy, William Paterson University



Rudy Garcia
President, MBI GluckShaw & Former Assemblyman



Rudy Rodas
Managing Director-Policy, Research, & Government Affairs, New Jersey Economic Development Authority



Saily Avelenda
Executive Director, New Jersey State Democratic Committee



Samuel Kanig
Bonner Scholars Coordinator, The College of New Jersey & Community Activist



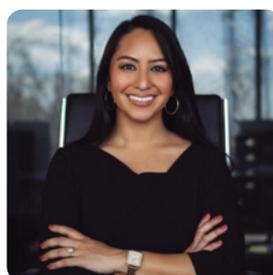
Sara Pena
Director of External Affairs, PSEG & Founder & President of Boys to Leaders Foundation



Simon Pereira
Vice President & Managing Director, Mercury Affairs



Sonia Delgado
Principal, Princeton Public Affairs



Stephanie Brown
Head of Government Relations & Community Impact, Wonder & Chair of New Jersey State Ethics Commission

2025 Honorees | Puentes de Impacto / Bridges of Impact: A Celebration of Latino Leaders



Tonio Burgos
Founder & CEO,
Tonio Burgos and
Associates



Ulises Diaz
Vice President of
Government &
Community Affairs,
Horizon



Vereliz Santana
Latino Base Director,
Director, NJ Victory
2025 & Vice
President, Newark
Board of Education



Wendy Martinez
Public Affairs &
Political Strategist

Honorary Mentions:



Evelyn Padin
U.S. District of Judge,
New Jersey



Esther Salas
U.S. District Judge,
New Jersey



Megan Linares
Assistant U.S.
Attorney, U.S.
Department of
Justice

Honorary Mentions: Elected Officials



**U.S. Congresswoman
Nellie Pou**
NJ-9



**U.S. Congressman
Rob Menendez Jr.**
NJ-8



Senator Teresa Ruiz,
Senate Majority
Leader & Chair of the
Latino Caucus
LD-29



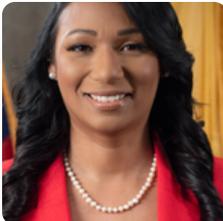
**Senator Nilsa Cruz-
Perez,** Vice Chair of
the Latino Caucus
LD-5



**Assemblywoman
Alixon Collazos-Gill,**
Secretary of the
Latino Caucus
LD-27



**Assemblywoman
Annette Quijano,**
Speaker Pro Tempore
LD-20



**Assemblywoman
Carmen Morales**
LD-34



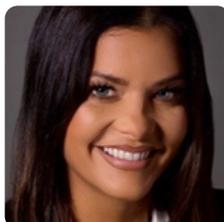
**Assemblyman
Christian Barranco,**
Assistant Minority
Conference Leader
LD-25



**Assemblywoman
Eliana Pintor-Marin,**
Assembly Budget
Chair
LD-29



**Assemblyman
Gabriel Rodriguez**
LD-33



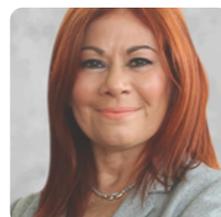
**Assemblywoman
Jessica Ramirez**
LD-32



**Assemblyman Julio
Marengo**
LD-33



**Assemblywoman
Rosy Bagolie**
LD-27



**Assemblywoman
Yvonne Lopez,**
Deputy Speaker &
Treasurer of Latino
Caucus
LD-19

Honorary Mentions: Elected Officials

- **Carlos Rendo, Mayor, Woodcliff Lake**
- **Hector Lora, Mayor, City of Passaic**
- **Helmin Caba, Mayor, Perth Amboy**
- **Patricia Hendricks Farmer, Mayor, Lawrenceville**
- **Jessica Rafeh, Deputy Mayor, Pennsauken Township**
- **Junior E. Maldonado, County Clerk, Hudson County**
- **Tilo Rivas, County Surrogate, Hudson County**
- **Claribel Cortes, County Surrogate, Middlesex County**
- **Zoila Cassanova, County Surrogate, Passaic County**
- **Angel Estrada, County Commissioner, Union County**
- **Antonio Romero, County Commissioner, Cumberland County**
- **Caridad Rodriguez, County Commissioner, Hudson County**
- **Carlos Pomares, County Commissioner, Essex County**
- **Carmen Rodriguez, County Commissioner, Camden County**
- **Cathleen Lewis, County Commissioner, Mercer County**
- **Claribel Azcona-Barber, County Commissioner, Middlesex County**
- **Fanny Cedeño, County Commissioner, Chairperson Pro-Tempore, Hudson County**
- **Germaine M. Ortiz, County Commissioner, Bergen County**
- **Orlando Cruz, County Commissioner, Passaic County**
- **Sergio Granados, County Commissioner, Union County**
- **Sammy Gonzalez, City of Newark North Ward Democratic Chairman & Chief of Staff to Councilman Aníbal Ramos**

Honorary Mentions: Elected Officials

- **Angel Fuentes, Council President**, Camden
- **Anibal Ramos, Councilman**, Newark
- **Arturo Santana, Councilman**, Dover
- **Bobby Cruz, Councilman**, Pompton Lakes
- **Carlos A. Rivas, Councilman**, Linden
- **Carlos Cedeño, Council President**, Elizabeth
- **Carlos Gonzalez, Councilman At-Large**, Newark
- **Carlos Torres, Councilman**, Elizabeth
- **Cruz Gomez Jr. , Council Vice President**, Vineland
- **Danny Rivera, Councilman**, Jersey City
- **David Gonzalez, Councilman**, Bridgeton
- **David Silva, Councilman-at-Large**, Morristown
- **Eduardo Ortiz, Councilman**, Woodbine Borough
- **Elizabeth Rodriguez, Councilwoman**, Prospect Park
- **Eloy Delgado, Councilman**, Linden
- **Falio Leyba-Martínez, Councilman**, Camden City
- **Felicia Ortiz, Councilwoman**, Prospect Park
- **Frank Cuesta, Councilman-at-Large**, Elizabeth
- **Geovani Estacio, Councilman**, Dover
- **Hailey Cruz Batista, Councilwoman**, Perth Amboy
- **Hector Cruz, Councilman**, Woodbine Borough
- **Ingrid Nieves-Clark, Councilwoman**, Egg Harbor
- **Jannette Ramos, Councilwoman**, Camden City
- **Jeremy E. Mojica, Councilman-at-Large**, Rahway
- **Jorge Alvarez, Councilman**, Borough of Buena
- **Jorge Diaz, Councilman**, Carteret
- **Jose Garcia, Councilman**, City of Passaic
- **Juan Perez, Councilman At-Large**, Bayonne
- **Leticia Fraga, Councilwoman**, Princeton
- **Luis Quintana, Councilman-at-Large**, Newark
- **Luis Torres, Councilman**, Woodland Park
- **Luis Velez, Councilman**, Paterson

Honorary Mentions: Elected Officials

- **Manny Grova, Jr. , Councilman-at-Large**, Elizabeth
- **Manuel Castañeda, Councilman**, New Brunswick
- **Marcos Tapia, Councilman**, Dover
- **Maritza Colón-Montañez, Councilwoman**, City of Passaic
- **Maritza Davila, Council Vice President**, Paterson
- **Mary Helen Perexz, Councilwoman**, Woodbine Borough
- **Milady Tejada, Council President**, Perth Amboy
- **Monica Charris Tabares, Councilwoman at-Large**, Bloomfield
- **Naomy De Peña, Councilwoman at-Large**, Belleville
- **Nelson Gonzalez, Councilman**, Elizabeth
- **Nereyda Curiel, Councilwoman**, Borough of Haledon
- **Nohemi G. Soria-Pérez, Councilwoman-at large**, Camden City
- **Paola Vasquez, Councilwoman**, Wharton
- **Rebecca Escobar, Councilwomann**, New Brunswick
- **Rose Morales, Councilwoman**, Perth Amboy
- **Rosemary “Rosie” Pino, Councilwoman**, Clifton
- **Rosemary DeQuinzo, Councilwoman**, Bridgeton
- **Ruben Ramos, Councilman President**, Hoboken
- **Sanders Reynoso, Councilman**, Totowa
- **Sandra Milena Wittner, Councilwoman**, Dover
- **Sergio Rodriguez, Councilman**, Dover
- **Silvia Catalan-Culnan, Councilwoman**, Mount Laurel Township
- **Stacey Perelta, Councilwoman**, Perth Amboy
- **Thania Melo, Councilwoman**, City of Passaic
- **Veronica Velez, Councilwoman**, Dover
- **Victor Carmona, Councilman**, Pleasantville
- **Vince Martnez, Committeeman**, Pennsauken Township
- **Yazminelly Gonzalez, Council President**, Trenton