



# SPEAKERS & SCHOLARS

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CONGRESO 2026 LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

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## ALICIA PONCE

Alicia Ponce is the Founder and Design Principal of APMonarch, an award-winning Chicago architecture firm recognized for sustainable design, adaptive reuse, and community-centered architecture. A nationally recognized architect, entrepreneur, and advocate, Alicia believes design is a powerful tool for creating healthier, more equitable, and resilient communities.

Through APMonarch, she leads a multidisciplinary team in designing transformative spaces across the commercial, civic, healthcare, retail, and education sectors. Her clients include The Field Museum, the University of Chicago, mission-driven organizations, and small businesses shaping the future of their communities.

Alicia's leadership has earned numerous honors, including the 2025 Tory Burch Fellowship, the 2025 AIA Chicago Distinguished Service Award, the 2023 Breaking Glass Award, and recognition as a 2022 Landmarks Illinois Influencer. She serves on the boards of United Way Metro Chicago and Professional Women in Construction and is an appointed Chicago Landmarks Commissioner.

Guided by her philosophy, "Lift as You Climb," Alicia founded Arquitina, a national nonprofit advancing Latina representation in architecture, and published the Latinas in Architecture anthology series. She is also a proud mother of two teenagers who inspire her to build a better future while reminding her that leadership credentials carry very little weight when it's time to do the laundry.

## AMBER DELGADO

Amber Delgado (she/her/ella) is the Technical Assistance and Programs Manager at Landmarks Illinois. Prior to joining the Landmarks Illinois team in November 2024, Amber held the position of Grants Compliance Manager with The Community Preservation Act with The City of Boston. Amber holds a Master's degree in Heritage Studies and Public History from The University of Minnesota and BFA with a dual major in Art



History and Film and Media Production from East Carolina University. Her passions for preserving the built environment, expanding historical resources, community engagement, and multimedia creative practices are a culmination of my upbringing and never forgetting my roots. Raised in African American and Peruvian household in North Carolina, storytelling and the imperative of protecting/documenting historical narratives and places were foundational values of the communities she grew up in. Amber's goal in all of her creative and professional pursuits is to support BIPOC communities in preserving and celebrating their histories.



### ANGELA JIMENEZ

Born and raised in El Paso, Texas, Angela earned a B.A. in History from the University of Texas at Austin and an M.A. in Historic and Sustainable Architecture from New York University in London. Her past experience with historic home museums and nearly a decade of experience in the preservation field has made Angela a dedicated advocate for historic architecture. Her responsibilities include work with historic property surveys, Determinations of Eligibility/National Register

Nominations, Historic District Design Guidelines, Historic Cemetery Preservation, and in-depth historical research. Angela also served as the Vice Chair for El Paso's Historic Landmarks Commission.

### ANGELICA SUAREZ

Angélica Suárez is a nonprofit strategist, educator, and coach with more than 20 years of experience in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. Her career began as a social entrepreneur, when she founded an international nonprofit serving internally displaced families in her homeland of Colombia.

Over the past two decades, Angélica has held leadership and management roles across higher education and state and local nonprofits, helping organizations align their mission,



vision, and values while building systems to sustain their impact. In recent years, she has focused more deeply on coaching, teaching, and capacity building, driven by her love for education and the growth of nonprofit leaders.

She is the founder of Yellow Collective, a boutique consulting firm that helps mission-driven organizations strengthen relationship-based fundraising, build thoughtful donor cultivation systems, and tell clear, compelling stories that inspire generosity. Through this work, Angélica also serves as a Capacity Building Coach with Resilia, supporting nonprofits nationwide and contributing to foundation-funded capacity-building initiatives.

In addition to consulting and coaching, Angélica teaches fundraising at Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. She holds a Master's degree in Public Administration and Conflict Resolution from Syracuse University, completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Florida, and is a Certified OKR Coach, Psychological Safety Practitioner, and IDEO-certified leader in Business Innovation.

On a personal note, Angélica loves traveling with her family, sharing spontaneous dancing moments with her husband, and connecting with her children through simple one-on-one dates. She intentionally centers connection in everyday moments, a value that also shapes how she approaches community and fundraising.



## CARLOS GARCÍA

Carlos' mission is to fight for social justice and cultural equity through philanthropy. A speaker, presenter, and moderator, his work is centered in community-centric fundraising and trust-based philanthropy to create the world nonprofits are seeking to make. Carlos has experience in the arts and culture field, managing multiple leadership and executive changes, and often being the only person of the global majority in the team.

## CHERYL JIMENEZ-FREI

Dr. Cheryl Jiménez-Frei is an Associate Professor of History, co-director of the Public History Program, and affiliated faculty in the Latin American and Latinx Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. She teaches various courses in public history, history of Latin America, museums, and global history, and her research specializations are in memory and the built environment, visual and material culture, and Argentina and the Southern Cone. More recently, her work has expanded to include research on Latinx history and identity in Wisconsin. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Latin American Studies*, *The Public Historian*, and *Collections: A Journal for Museum and Archive Professionals*. She is currently working on a book manuscript titled *Carved, Cast, and Contested: Monuments, Memory, and Identity in Argentina*.



Dr. Jiménez Frei serves on the Editorial Board of *The Public Historian* and is an Academic Advisory Committee member of the Contested Histories Initiative at the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation, The Hague, The Netherlands. She also sits on the Wisconsin Historic Preservation Review Board. Her work as a core member of the Wisconsin Latinx History Collective includes a multi-year project to create a comprehensive digital edition site documenting, preserving, and providing public access to artifacts and stories on the rich history and contributions of Latinx communities in Wisconsin.



## CHRISTELLA MALDONADO

Christella Maldonado is a PhD Candidate in Public History at University of California, Riverside and holds an master's in Public History. Her extensive public history work includes being a contributing writer for the "Great Day in East LA: Celebrando the Eastside Sound," which is exhibiting at La Plaza de Cultura y Artes museum in downtown Los Angeles. Her background includes serving as a historical research assistant for the Santa Monica Mountains National Park, where

she collaborated with the Network to Freedom program to document Black freedom sites across Los Angeles and San Bernardino.

Additionally, she was a preservation fellow with Latinos in Heritage Conservation (LHC) and was a contributor to the Latinx Preservation Toolkit, which centered community perspectives on preserving community spaces. Her research focuses on the history of Chicanx communities in urban settings, placemaking practices, and sites of memorialization. Born and raised in Sacramento, her dissertation titled, *Preserving Nuestras Historias: Documenting Chicanx and Latinx Placemaking in Sacramento*, traces the multi-generational history of Chicanx and Latinx placemaking in the city by analyzing their acts of defiance and refusal—literally inscribed in the city's built environment and cultural landscape. She interrogates the tactics used during the urban renewal era (1950s-1980s), and how the community responded to its effects by grounding grassroots conservation practices across the city of Sacramento.

## CHRISTINA LOYA

Christina Loya is a Public Historian and Community Engagement Coordinator at Mattie Rhodes Center in Kansas City, Missouri. She earned both her B.A. and M.A. in History, with an emphasis in Public History, from the University of Missouri–Kansas City.

Christina is a proud third-generation Chicana with deep roots in the heartland. Growing up, she rarely encountered Mexican American history in the classroom, learning instead through conversations with family members—especially the women in her family. That absence inspired her lifelong commitment to uncovering, preserving, and sharing the overlooked histories of Chicanx communities in the Midwest.

Christina's thesis research was featured on KCUR's *A People's History of Kansas City* in the episode "Mariachi Estrella Will Always Be Stars." Her work examines how first- and second-generation Mexican American women in eastern Kansas participated in community building and adapted religious institutions to create distinctive identities from the 1940s through the early 1980s.



Most recently, Christina's work—including the curation of Connecting Cultures Across Kansas City, an exhibition featuring more than 200 works from the folk-art collection she manages in partnership with the Museum of Kansas City—has established her as a leading voice in the Kansas City Chicanx community. In recognition of her contributions to cultural preservation and public history, she was honored to receive the Chicana Visionary Award. Through her scholarship and career as a Public Historian, Christina is dedicated to documenting underrepresented histories and creating opportunities for the public to engage with and preserve their own stories.



### DANIEL SUAREZ | Keynote

Daniel Suárez is a Mexican professional stock car racing driver who competes full time in the NASCAR Cup Series, driving the No. 7 Freeway Insurance Chevrolet for Spire Motorsports. A native of Monterrey, Mexico, Suárez has become one of the most accomplished international drivers in NASCAR history and a leading representative for Latino fans across motorsports. He made history in 2016 by becoming the first Latin American driver and first

NASCAR Drive for Diversity graduate to win a NASCAR national series championship, capturing the NASCAR Xfinity Series title.

In 2022, Suárez became the first Mexican-born driver to win a NASCAR Cup Series race with his victory at Sonoma Raceway, then added a second Cup Series win in 2024 at Atlanta Motor Speedway in one of the closest finishes in the sport's history. His career also includes victories in the NASCAR Mexico Series, NASCAR Brazil, and all three NASCAR national series in the United States. In 2024, Suárez became a dual citizen of Mexico and the United States after completing the U.S. naturalization process. Away from the racetrack, he lives in Charlotte, enjoys working on cars, and remains closely connected to his Mexican heritage and lifelong passion for soccer. Suárez's career reflects perseverance, international influence, and a continued commitment to competing at NASCAR's highest level.

## DARLING TOVAR

Darling is a Spiritual Mentor and Licensed Professional Counselor in TX, MA, CO and IA who has training in EMDR, parts' work and is certified to be a practitioner of psychedelic assisted therapy. Darling has roots in the Purépecha people from Michocán, México and her work is rooted in bridging the gap between the western clinical therapy model, and ancestral practices & wisdom for more holistic approaches to mental wellness.



## DENNIS ARGUELLES



Dennis Arguelles is Southern California Director for the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), which was founded in 1919 to protect our nation's natural and cultural treasures and support a thriving National Park system. He works with a variety of partners, advocates and communities to protect and expand existing parks, preserve new landscapes and ensure our parks tell the stories of all Americans. This includes engaging policy makers, organizing park supporters, and bringing media attention to threats faced by our public lands. He has a particular interest in engaging communities underrepresented in our parks, and working with them to improve access, interpretation and the visitors' experience. He is based in Los Angeles and has the B.A. in Political Science and M.A. in Urban Planning from UCLA.

## DIANA ANZALDÚA

Diana Anzaldúa, a 2nd year Decolonial Ph.D Scholar, Xicanx psychosomatics therapist dedicated to embodied trauma alchemy. She is the founder of the award winning health and wellness centers; Austin Trauma Therapy Center & Contigo Wellness. Diana is a social change activist and influential leader in community mental



health equity and reform in historically marginalized communities. Her vision of decolonial healing and anti-oppressive trauma-informed leadership create safe spaces for other survivors to grow, embrace their resilience, and heal; in-community with others. Diana and her clinical expertise have been featured in a number of magazines like: Allure, The BBC, and The Atlantic Journal. Diana serves on several local and national non-profit boards and has received numerous awards for her work in community healing justice, public service and leadership. Diana is a graduate of the School of Social Work at the University of Texas in Austin and is professionally licensed in North Carolina, Nevada, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Texas.



### EDDIE TORREZ

Edward I. Torrez, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP, is an architect and president of Arda Design in Chicago. He has been specializing in Historic Preservation, Adaptive Reuse, Rehabilitation, Interiors and Urban Planning projects throughout the U.S. for more than 35 years. Ed has worked on numerous significant projects including, Blackwell School National Historic Site, Pullman National Park & State Historic Site, Roberts Temple

National Historic Site and the Historic Chicago Water Tower. He currently serves on the Board of Trustees for the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Chair of the Trust Advisors. Edward is a founding member and served on the Board for 20 years for Latinos in Heritage Conservation.

### ELENA GONZALES

Elena Gonzales, PhD, is Curator of Civic Engagement & Social Justice at the Chicago History Museum and the lead curator of Aquí en Chicago (2025-2026). She co-edited the related exhibition book and co-created the podcast “The Missing Exhibition: Building Aquí,” (finalist for the Peter Lisagor Award for Best Podcast). Elena’s book, Exhibitions for Social Justice debuted in Routledge’s Museum Meanings Series (2019). Elena received her doctorate in American Studies and Masters



in Public Humanities from Brown University in 2015 and 2010 respectively. She has curated exhibitions since 2006, beginning at the National Museum of Mexican Art, and has taught curatorial studies since 2010.



### ERIC ROMERO

Eric Romero joined the National Chavez Center in 2023 to guide the organization's efforts to preserve and digitize the organization's archives, as the Director of Archives and Exhibits. He has served in the role of Executive Director since April of 2026. Eric is a Certified Archivist, with a Master of Arts in Education from the University of California, Riverside, and a Master of Science in Informatics from San Jose State University.

### FERNANDA FIGUEROA

Fernanda Figueroa is a reporter most recently having worked at The Associated Press covering Latino affairs, where she reported on the issues, people and policies shaping Hispanic and Latino communities across the United States. Previously, she was a general assignment reporter at the *Austin American-Statesman*, covering labor, transportation and education while earning a Master of Public Affairs from The University of Texas at Austin's LBJ School of Public Affairs.



The daughter of Mexican immigrants and a first-generation college graduate, Fernanda is passionate about telling stories that reflect the diversity and complexity of Latino communities. Fluent in English and Spanish, she is committed to producing accessible, community-centered journalism that highlights the cultural, political and economic experiences of Hispanic Americans. In addition to her journalism career, Fernanda served as an intelligence specialist in the U.S. Navy Reserve for 7 years.



## FRANCISCO UVIÑA-CONTRERAS

Francisco Uviña-Contreras received his Master of Architecture and Masters Certificate in Preservation and Regionalism in 2009 from the University of New Mexico, where he graduated with distinction. Francisco worked for Cornerstones Community Partnerships, a not-for-profit organization, from 1994 to 2008, serving as the Architectural/Technical Manager and assisting with field assessments, documentation of historic buildings, adaptive reuse design, and new design work utilizing traditional building methods. He was involved in many Indigenous community projects, including the most important Missions in New Mexico. Among the most important were the San Esteban del Rey Mission in Acoma Pueblo, the Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Mission in Zuni Pueblo, and is currently assisting with some of the historic adobe housing at Santo Domingo Pueblo. Francisco is the co-author and illustrator of Cornerstones' Adobe Architecture, A Conservation Handbook. Francisco is currently an Assistant Professor and was the former Director of the Historic Preservation and Regionalism Graduate Certificate Program at the University of New Mexico's School of Architecture and Planning. He is also the coordinator for the Patrimonio Histórico+Cultural Iberoamericano (PHI) in the United States and a member of the Scientific Committee for the Traditional Architecture Journal in Madrid, Spain. He is also a member of the PROTERRA group in Iberoamerica.

## ILLYA MOUSAVIJAD

Illya Mousavijad is an interdisciplinary and multisensorial artist whose work navigates exile, displacement, migration, cultural memory, and belonging. His practice examines how identity and lived experience are shaped through movement, social conditions, and embodied rituals. In recent projects, he engages culinary art and food practices as sites of storytelling, labor, critical inquiry, and communal memory.



Mousavijad works across culinary arts, computer animation, virtual reality, installation, painting, sculpture, video, and participatory experiences. He has collaborated with

international artists across disciplines and has exhibited his work globally. He is an Assistant Professor of Art and Technology in the Department of Art at The Ohio State University in Columbus, OH.



### IRMA MARIBEL ANDRADE GUZMAN

Irma Maribel Andrade Guzman, LMSW, is a co-founder of the Detroit VOCES Collective (DVC). A first-gen Xicana, born and raised in Southwest Detroit, she is passionate about “lifting others as you climb”. Irma is the daughter of immigrants from San Luis Potosi, Mexico. She holds dual degrees from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor in Sociology and History of Art, an LMSW in Community Change, Management & Leadership, and a Museum Studies Program Certificate.

Irma currently works for the Michigan History Center in Lansing, MI as a History Specialist for the Preserving Nuestra Historia Project. Her work bridges social justice, oral history, Latinx visual culture, community archives, collective change/memory, community engagement/outreach, and knowledge transmission around cultural and artistic practices.

As the co-found of Detroit VOCES Collective (DVC) she supports the organization’s collective-led Oral History projects whose purpose is "To celebrate and document the rich and enduring lives of Latinos in Detroit." DVC has identified how to honor the history and contributions of our communities, inform inclusive development of Detroit neighborhoods, inspire new possibilities across generations, and weave a holistic history of the city.

### ISMAEL CUEVAS

Ismael Cuevas curated his first exhibit "Rieles y Raíces: Traqueros in Chicago and the Midwest" at the National Museum of Mexican Art. Due to its success, he is encouraged to continue this curatorial process focusing on contemporary Latinx history. Born in Zacatecas, raised in Chicago, inspired by the southside neighborhoods he has resided in, he has published local stories on Black



and Latino communities in Chicago. He is currently employed at the Chicago Park District as the Director of Legislative Affairs. Ismael received his B.A from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and his M.A. degree in Mexican American and Latina/o Studies from the University of Texas at Austin.



### JADE CINTRÓN BÁEZ

Jade is a dynamic educator, storyteller, and cultural connector who has spent the last 17 years celebrating the richness of bilingual and bicultural life. She holds a BA in Theatre & Journalism Media Studies from Rutgers University and a Master's in Arts Administration from Drexel, where she honed her focus on using theatre and language education to enhance cultural awareness.

As the Owner and Lead Teaching Artist of ¡Looking Bilingüe! Jade travels the country (and beyond) leading bilingual storytimes, professional development workshops, and heritage language empowerment programs that honor the realities of multilingual Latiné families. Her storytelling series blends theatre, song, and movement to create joyful, healing spaces where language and identity come alive.

Through ¡LB!, Jade amplifies intergenerational voices, equips heritage Spanish speakers with tools to embrace their identities, and champions the arts as a pathway for self-discovery, cultural pride, and community building. Her work has been recognized for sparking genuine connection between educators, families, and communities while preserving the stories that shape Latiné identity.

Follow Jade's work at [www.lookingbilingue.com](http://www.lookingbilingue.com) or on Instagram @looking.bilingue

### JAIME TORRES CARMONA

Jaime Torres Carmona is Founder and Principal of CANOPY, an award-winning architecture and urban planning firm based in Chicago. With lived and professional experience in Mexico City and Chicago, he brings a multicultural perspective to each project and is recognized for a design approach grounded in



culture, social impact, and environmental responsibility. Jaime views design as a vehicle for positive change, with work spanning community and health centers, housing, placemaking, preservation, and adaptive reuse.

Under his leadership, CANOPY has produced some of Chicago's most recognized culturally driven architecture, including the Encuentro Square Master Plan in Humboldt Park, LUCHA's La Herencia church conversion into 100% affordable housing in Logan Square, and Latinos Progresando's adaptive reuse community center in Little Village. Jaime's work has been presented at the Chicago Architecture Biennial, the American Planning Association, and the American Institute of Architects. A distinguished graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, he has taught at UIUC and other local universities, where his studios have focused on cities, urbanism, people, and culture. His practice reflects a commitment to architecture that strengthens communities, honors place, and expands the role of the built environment in shaping shared human experience.



### JENNIFER EDGINTON

Dr. Jennifer Edginton (she/her) is the Museum Director of the Illinois State Museum and State Historic Sites. She has over 20 years' experience working in museums, including places like the Field Museum, Museum of Science and Industry, and Kenosha Public Museums. Jenn has a doctorate in First Nations Education from University of Wisconsin- Green Bay, where her dissertation focused on how museums could be allies to

Indigenous communities. Her career has focused on making museums and historic sites more welcoming, inclusive, and accessible for all.

### JONATHAN MARTINEZ

Jonathan Martinez is the Founder and Executive Director of the Immokalee Center for Arts & Culture (ICFAAC), a community-based nonprofit dedicated to expanding access to arts education, cultural preservation, and creative opportunities in Southwest Florida. Born and



raised in Immokalee, he is committed to ensuring that the stories, traditions, and lived experiences of historically underrepresented communities are recognized, preserved, and celebrated. His work focuses on building community-led cultural infrastructure that uplifts local voices, strengthens cultural identity, and fosters meaningful connections through the arts.

As a multidisciplinary artist and educator, Jonathan's practice explores identity, memory, and community through painting, drawing, illustration, and storytelling. A graduate of Florida State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Studio Art, he integrates visual art with cultural research to illuminate narratives shaped by migration, labor, and belonging.

Through ICFAAC, Jonathan develops exhibitions, workshops, public art initiatives, and programs that center on community knowledge and expand creative access in rural and agricultural regions. His recent project, Self-Documented, is a community storytelling and exhibition initiative exploring memory, migration, and lived experience within immigrant communities.

As an emerging cultural leader, Jonathan advocates for community-driven approaches to heritage conservation that honor lived experience and elevate local knowledge. His work bridges the fields of arts, storytelling, and preservation, demonstrating how creative practice can strengthen communities and contribute to a more inclusive understanding of history and culture.



## JOSEPH TORRES

Joseph Torres is a historic preservation architect and Senior Associate at Simple Design Studio-Architects, P.C. His work spans façade investigation, building assessment, rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, and preservation planning for existing and historic buildings, combining conservation expertise with documentation, research, and digital tools.

He holds a B.S. in Architecture from the University at Buffalo and an M.S. in Historic Preservation from the University of Pennsylvania. His experience includes façade inspections and repair programs for New York City buildings; condition surveys and construction administration for historic masonry, terra cotta, and wood structures; National Register-listed properties; historic tax credit projects; and preservation

planning through surveys, archival research, GIS mapping, and district recommendations.

Joseph also uses preservation to document community networks, migration histories, urban renewal, and the experiences of working-class communities and communities of color. In projects in Newburgh, Jersey City, Buffalo, and Kinderhook, he uses oral histories, archives, GIS, photography, and visual storytelling to connect buildings with the people and traditions that give them meaning. His certifications include Certified Remote Pilot, ITC Level One Thermographer, and SPRAT Level 1 Rope Access, and his affiliations include the Association for Preservation Technology, Latinos in Heritage Conservation, and IIBEC.

### JULISSA ARCE | Keynote

Julissa Arce is a bestselling author, sought-after speaker, producer, and public thinker whose writing interrogates the myths of the American Dream and the cost of assimilation. Her acclaimed books, including *My (Underground) American Dream*, *Someone Like Me*, and *You Sound Like a White Girl*, blend memoir, social critique, and cultural analysis to reframe conversations around immigration, identity, and what it means to truly belong. Her work has made her a leading voice in the national dialogue on race, belonging, and the power of reclaiming one's roots.



She's a trusted voice on CNN, MSNBC, NPR, and other outlets. Her essays have appeared in *The New York Times*, *TIME Magazine*, *CNBC*, *Vogue*, and other outlets. Julissa's storytelling and advocacy have earned her recognition as one of *People en Español's* 25 Most Powerful Women of 2017 and 2022, and she was honored as the 2019 Woman of the Year by the City of Los Angeles. Prior to becoming a writer, she built a successful career on Wall Street working for Goldman Sachs and Merrill Lynch and had seemingly achieved the American Dream—yet she was not part of what defined American.

Julissa immigrated to America from Mexico at the age of 11 and was undocumented for more than a decade, some of them spent rising to prominence on Wall Street. In order to help other young people in similar circumstances, Julissa co-founded the Ascend

Educational Fund (AEF). AEF is a college scholarship and mentorship program for immigrant students regardless of their ethnicity, national origin or immigration status. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, daughter, and cat.



### LAURA DOMINGUEZ, Ph.D.

Dr. Laura Dominguez is an NEH postdoctoral scholar and research associate with the USCHuntington Early Modern Studies Institute. She holds graduate degrees in history and historic preservation from the University of Southern California and a bachelor's degree in architectural history from Columbia University. In addition to her scholarship on race, memory, and placekeeping in the American West, Dr. Dominguez has nearly 18 years of experience in heritage conservation and is an expert in equity practices and community engagement in the field. She previously served as a Mellon Humanities Postdoctoral Fellow with the National Park Service and was recently appointed to the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission. Dr. Dominguez is also a co-founder of Latinos in Heritage Conservation and will complete her board service at the end of the year.

### LOUIE A. CORREA, CAE

For nearly 25 years, Louie A. Correa, CAE, has served the nonprofit sector, including nearly two decades in development. He currently serves as Executive Director of Development for the Purdue University College of Engineering. Previously, he was Senior Director of Development for the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Pharmacy, where his leadership helped produce seven of the eight strongest fundraising years in the school's history.



Louie's career spans organizations of many sizes, including the VCU School of the Arts, The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, Tau Kappa Epsilon International Fraternity, and Project 375, where he served as Founding CEO. As a consultant with Campbell & Company, he advised clients across the arts, health systems, professional societies, community foundations, and other mission-driven sectors.

He has served on the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy Alumni Board, the VCU Rams in Recovery Board of Directors, and the Friends of Indianapolis Animal Care and Control Board of Directors, among other volunteer leadership roles. He has also served as adjunct faculty for the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government & Public Affairs at VCU. Louie has been recognized locally and nationally for his community service and was featured on The Today Show in 2021.

Louie holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Illinois and a Master of Arts from the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University, where he contributed as an author for Giving USA in 2010, 2011, and 2012. He also earned a Certificate in Nonprofit Management and a Certificate of Fundraising Management from Indiana University.

He is a Certified Association Executive, as recognized by the American Society of Association Executives.



## LUCHA MARTÍNEZ DE LUNA

Lucha Martínez de Luna is an archaeologist specializing in Mesoamerican and Contemporary Archaeology. She has participated in numerous archaeological projects across the Southwest, American West, and central and southern Mexico. Currently, she serves as the Associate Curator of Latino History and Culture at History Colorado and is pursuing a Ph.D. at the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Lucha is also the director of the La Providencia Archaeological Project and a visiting professor at the University of Science and Arts in Chiapas, Mexico.

Growing up in Colorado, Lucha was deeply influenced by Chicano/a/x art and muralism. Troubled by the destruction of historic Chicano murals throughout the state, she began documenting the stories of muralists and their murals. As the Executive Director of the Emanuel Project and the Chicanx Murals of Colorado Project, she leads a grassroots organization that advocates for the preservation of historical and legacy murals. The project collaborates with local communities, artists, and cultural institutions to create educational and preservation initiatives that celebrate community visual heritage.

## MANNY RODRIGUEZ

Throughout his fifteen-year career in economic development, Manny has been an advocate for Chicago's underserved communities. He graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and served for seven years as the Vice President of Economic Development for the Alliance for Illinois Manufacturing. Afterwards, was employed as the Director of Replication for the Jane Addams Resource Corporation (JARC). Currently, he is a sitting member of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) and its Equity Taskforce. In 2017, Manny co-founded Revolution Workshop, a bold incubator that would serve as a pipeline to the construction industry. Using innovative practices, RW aims to uplift Chicago's underserved communities by providing free training for jobs in the skilled construction trades. More than a workforce development program, we are a family, delivering financial independence and careers through skills, hope, and resilience.



## MARÍA ELBA TORRES



María Elba Torres Muñoz is a Puerto Rican historian, curator, professor, and cultural manager whose work centers on visual arts, Afro-Puerto Rican studies, race, representation, and historical memory.

She earned a Ph.D. in History from the Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe and an M.A. in Ibero-American Literature from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Her research has examined Puerto Rican literary avant-gardes and the

social and cultural circulation of visual arts in Puerto Rico from 1900 to 1950.

She is a professor in the Department of Humanities at the Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras, where she also serves as Principal Investigator of Tiznando el País: Visualidades y Representaciones, a Mellon Foundation-supported project developed with the Alianza de Museos de Puerto Rico. Her scholarship and curatorial work have advanced Afro-Caribbean studies through exhibitions, publications, workshops, and public programs. She has served on the boards of the Museo de Arte

Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico and the Fundación Puertorriqueña de las Humanidades, and has curated exhibitions at several Puerto Rican institutions, including university museums in Río Piedras and Mayagüez. Her publications include essays on Black Puerto Rican arts, Afro-Latin American research, Puerto Rican art collections, and art as resistance. She has presented her research in Puerto Rico, Spain, Brazil, Portugal, Mexico, and the United States.

### MARÍA HINOJOSA | Keynote

Maria Hinojosa is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, author, educator, and media leader whose work has reshaped American journalism by centering stories too often left out of the national conversation. For nearly four decades, she has reported with courage, independence, and compassion, amplifying marginalized voices and bringing greater depth to coverage of culture, politics, immigration, and social justice. In 1985, she became the first Latina hired at NPR, opening doors in newsrooms that had long excluded voices like hers. She later founded Futuro Media Group, where she continues to build platforms for inclusive, rigorous, and community-centered storytelling. Hinojosa is the anchor and executive producer of Latino USA, the Peabody Award-winning radio program distributed by PRX, and co-host of In The Thick, a political podcast from Futuro Media. Her reporting has appeared across major outlets including PBS, CBS, WNBC, CNN, NPR, and MSNBC. In 2022, she received the Pulitzer Prize in audio reporting for Suave, a groundbreaking podcast from Futuro Studios and PRX. Her many honors include Emmy Awards, Robert F. Kennedy Awards, the Edward R. Murrow Lifetime Achievement Award, the Ruben Salazar Lifetime Achievement Award, and the John Chancellor Award. A mentor and professor, she teaches at Barnard College and has received seven honorary degrees. She is also the author of several books, including Once I Was You, a memoir about identity, journalism, and belonging in America today.





## MAYRA CECILIA PALAFOX

Mayra Cecilia Palafox is a museum administrator and cultural worker with more than a decade of experience in museums across New York, Berkeley, and Chicago. Her work focuses on building meaningful relationships with bilingual and Latine communities through community engagement, education, and inclusive museum practices. Based in Chicago, she develops programs, exhibitions and partnerships that connect local communities with artists, curators, and cultural institutions in Mexico, fostering cross-border collaboration and expanding access to cultural heritage. She currently serves as the ED&I Commissioner for the Museum Division of the National Art Education Association and is committed to advancing equitable approaches to heritage conservation and museum practice.

## MAURICIO HUERTAS

Mauricio Huertas is an experienced fundraiser known for building meaningful connections with donors, community members, and nonprofit partners through genuine conversation and active listening. From congregational mission ministries to government agencies, he has successfully solicited funds from a wide range of sources for nonprofits across Chicago.



Mauricio's path to nonprofit work began at Phillips Exeter Academy, where volunteer opportunities in Exeter and nearby communities helped shape his sense of civic responsibility. He continued that commitment at Cornell College through Alternative Spring Break trips, mentoring local students, and co-chairing the college's Relay for Life event. In that role, he helped raise nearly \$20,000 and worked directly with local vendors to secure food and gifts-in-kind for the annual fundraiser.

Born and raised in New York City, Mauricio moved to Chicago after eight years in New Hampshire and Iowa and holds a degree in history. Outside of work, he enjoys bird watching, board games, and storytelling through innovative tabletop RPGs. The proud

son of two Colombian immigrants, he is also known among friends for baking whenever the opportunity presents itself.



### MICHELLE TOVAR

Dr. Michelle Tovar is the Director of Education at the Center for African American Military History at the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum in Houston, Texas. She leads the development, implementation, and evaluation of museum education programs for diverse audiences. She is a Smithsonian Latino Museum Studies alum, a Fulbright-Hays scholar, and a member of the Harris County Hispanic Cultural Heritage Commission. In 2020, she received the American Alliance of Museums EdCom Award for Excellence in Practice. Dr. Tovar is also a contributing author to the forthcoming volume *The Barrio and the Badge: A History of Latinos and Law Enforcement in Houston* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2026), where her chapter examines Chicano experiences and the Black Lives Matter movement.

### OMAR EATON-MARTÍNEZ

Omar is the Senior Vice President for Historic Sites at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, where he leads the preservation, interpretation, and overall stewardship of 28 historic sites across the country to tell the full American story. Prior to this position, he led Prince George's County Historical Resources which included historical house museums, an aviation museum, the Black History Program and archaeological parks. Additionally, Omar has worked for the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History (NMAH), the National Park Service, the Office of the National Museum of the American Latino Commission, NASA, he also was a K-12 teacher in NYC and DC and has consulted on public history projects centering blackness in Puerto Rico.



Omar is the Immediate Past Chair for the Association of African American Museums. He currently serves as a board member/trustee for the International National Trusts Organisation, Drayton Hall Trust, and the White House Historical Association. He is newly elected to the board for the International Council of Museums – US and also was added Para la Naturaleza Reparative Culture and History Advisory Committee (Puerto Rico).



## PEDRO HERNÁNDEZ

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.

## RUBÉN GARCÍA | Keynote

As former Executive and Co-Head of Cultural Business Strategy at Creative Artists Agency (CAA), Ruben worked with artists including Becky G, America Ferrera, Anthony Ramos, Ricky Martin, and Eugenio Derbez while advancing conversations about representation, cultural power, and Latinx visibility in spaces that often excluded those communities. He is also the founder of MOSAICO and creator of La Cena, a leading gathering



space for Latinx leaders in entertainment, media, sports, and culture that grew from a dinner series into a national network of artists, executives, athletes, and changemakers.



### SARA PHALEN

Sara Phalen is a Chicana community organizer and museum professional advocating for equity in local history and small museums. She is currently the director/curator for the West Chicago City Museum and the Warrenville Historical Museum & Art Gallery. Sara is Board President for People Made Visible, an arts-based community incubator that she co-founded with Danish artist Anni Holm. She also serves on the board of

Landmarks Illinois, the Illinois State Museum and the Illinois Association of Museums. In her historic preservation accessibility work, Sara is currently piloting a project in rural Illinois exploring how private public partnerships can utilize a National Register historic home for community building.

### THAIS BELTRAN

Thaís Beltran (they/she) is the founder of Nuestro Chicago Archives, a digital archive that is dedicated to highlighting and preserving the Latine stories of Chicago. Founded in September 2024, Thaís noticed there had not been an official archive that just focused on the Latine stories of Chicago, with their passion for familial archives, Chicago history and photography, starting an archive was a necessity.



## NEXT GENERATION SCHOLARS



**Sylvia Gutiérrez  
Scoggin**  
(she/her)  
Yorkville, IL



**Kimberly  
Yapias**  
(she/her)  
Salt Lake City, UT



**Delfina  
Anchondo**  
(she/her)  
Cross Plains, WI



**Bianca  
Rivera**  
(she/her)  
Philadelphia, PA



**Kathryn  
Hughes**  
(she/her)  
Spokane, WA



**Susanna  
Vega**  
(she/her)  
Tucson, AZ



**Madeline  
Lagunas**  
(she/her)  
Champagne, IL



**Michael  
López**  
(she/they)  
Denver, CO



**Elizabeth  
Vázquez**  
(she/her)  
Chicago, IL

## LOCAL COMMUNITY SCHOLARS



**Juliana Cardona Narváez**  
(she/her)  
Chicago, IL



**Edith Salazar Méndez**  
(she/her)  
Berwyn, IL



**Ada Marys**  
(she/her)  
Chicago, IL