



PROMOTING STABILITY IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND SECURING THE FUTURE OF TPS, DED AND DACA BENEFICIARIES

PRESS CONFERENCE • SPEAKER BIOS



Yanira Arias
Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holder
National Campaigns Manger
Alianza Americas

Yanira Arias is a Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holder from El Salvador who joined the Alianza Americas staff team in August, 2014 followed by the need for coordinated actions in response to the detention and stigmatization of thousands of Central American children and their families at the U.S southern border. By December 2014 she became Alianza Americas new National Campaigns Manger. A native of El Salvador, she brings more than a decade of experience in the field of public health, with special expertise in community mobilization and participation, community organizing and capacity building to address health disparities and social justice issues. From 2003 to 2012 Yanira was part of the Latino Commission on AIDS in New York, where she served as Director of Community Organizing for the Latinos in the Deep South. In that role, she led the development and implementation of the Dennis deLeon Sustainable Leadership Institute for emerging leaders in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Since 2005, Yanira started collaborating with several leaders and community-based groups in Puerto Rico such as the Citizens Alliance for LGBT Health of Puerto Rico providing capacity building and joining advocacy efforts in support of LGBT equity in the island. She is a member of the Executive Committee of Salvadoran American National Network (SANN) and has been an active Alianza Americas member for many years. Yanira graduated from the University of El Salvador in 1996, one of the top two Universities in the country, with a focus on journalism.



Ariana Velasco
U.S. Citizen Child of TPS Holder

Arianna Velasco was born in San Francisco, California to two Salvadoran Parents. She is the eldest of three children with a younger sister entering high school and a younger brother beginning first grade. Arianna is currently a sophomore at UC Berkeley where she is pursuing a degree in Political Science with plans to enter Law School. She is very active in school where she has done undergraduate research on World War two refugees. Having a passion for languages since her youth, she also founded her own club at Berkeley known as the Linguaphile Student Association as a freshman. She wanted to create a group where students from different backgrounds could come together and share their language and culture. She also balances a marketing internship with a Berkeley Tech Startup. She hopes that all these experiences will help her on her journey to become an immigration attorney, to help families such as her own and become a voice of change in the political stage.



Lariza Dugan-Cuadra
Executive Director
CARECEN SF - Central American Resource Center of Northern California

Lariza Dugan-Cuadra is a passionate, creative and effective immigrant rights advocate, working to achieve safe, healthy, welcoming and equitable communities. As Executive Director, Lariza continues to build on CARECEN SF's 33-year commitment and mission of responding to the needs and aspirations of the Central American diaspora and greater Latino community. Prior to joining CARECEN SF in 2012, Lariza worked for the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development in San Francisco, managing public service grants and community building initiatives. She worked at San Francisco's local PBS station - KQED, developing education/media literacy and Latino outreach initiatives, and for years consulted on projects with San Francisco State University's Marian Wright Edelman Institute, Children's Book Press, First5 San Francisco, Latino Community Foundation, Active

Voice, Sesame Workshop and other initiatives. She is a founding member and former Community Co-Chair for UCSF's University Community Partnerships Counsel – a leading multi-stakeholder health equity initiative. She was the lead planner and founding Co-convenor for the Roadmap to Peace –SF's leading violence prevention and restorative justice collaboration for transitional aged Latino youth citywide, and she currently serves as Treasurer on the Board of Directors of Alianza Americas –a national network of immigrant lead organizations.



Marleine Bastien
Founder and Executive Director of Family Action Network Movement (FANM)

Marleine Bastien, a licensed clinical social worker and graduate of Miami-Dade Community College and Florida International University, is the founder and Executive Director of Family Action Network Movement (FANM) formerly known as Fanm Ayisyen Nan Miyami, Inc. (Haitian Women of Miami—FANM), an important group that has provided desperately needed assistance not only to Haitian women and their families, but to the community at large. Under Bastien's leadership, FANM has shown a unique ability to provide an array of social services while also organizing around issues such as immigration, housing, health access, education reform, gender equality, and human rights. Bastien is the Chair of the Florida Immigration coalition and Vice-Chair of the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition. Over the course of 30 years, Bastien has worked on many important campaigns, including: The Haitian Immigration Refugee Fairness Act of 1998, Temporary Protected Status, The Dream Act, Comprehensive Immigration Reform, Living Wage and Human Rights Ordinance, and the Children's Trust (treasurer and spokesperson for the Black Community with Congresswoman Carrie Meek). She formed the Justice Coalition for the Haitian Children of Guantanamo and appeared on the Oprah Winfrey show to lend her expertise on a discussion of the devastating impact that prolonged the detention at Guantanamo had on Haitian children in 1995. She is a founding member of the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition, the Haitian Neighborhood Center (Sant La), the Center for Haitian Studies, the Florida Immigrant Coalition, and many more community organizations.



Julio Mejia
TPS Business Owner

Julio Humberto Mejia was born in El Salvador. He migrated to the United States in 1998. In 2001 he became a Temporary Protected Status (TPS) beneficiary. The TPS program allowed him to work and train at Rhapsody Painting, a San Francisco based company. With hard work and determination, Julio started to grow a successful company, J.H. Mejia Construction a remodeling company based in Oakland. He is a loving husband and father.



Samuel Cervantes
DACA Recipient
(Washington, DC)
Research Associate, FWD.us

Samuel Cervantes is an immigration policy researcher and an advocate pursuing a degree in Communication Studies, with a certificate in Human Rights and Social Justice, at the University of Texas at Austin. Born in Nuevo Leon, Mexico and raised in Houston, Texas, he is the oldest child in a family of four and the first of his family to attend college. Shaped by his background growing up as the gay son of an undocumented Mexican-American family, Samuel began his career as a political activist at the state level, where he coordinated a campaign to protect in-state tuition for undocumented students and organized against anti-immigrant legislation in Texas with the University Leadership Initiative. Samuel interned at the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the Texas State Legislature, in addition to completing the Bill Archer Fellowship in Washington, DC, and the Public Policy International Affairs (PPIA) Junior Summer Fellowship at the University of California, Berkeley. Samuel now works as a Research Associate at FWD.us in Washington D.C. and aspires to pursue a JD/MPP to forward the welfare of his community.



Daniella Burgi-Palomino
Senior Associate
Latin America Working Group

Daniella covers issues related to Mexico, migrant rights, and border issues. Prior to joining LAWG she worked for six years on the protection of migrant rights in the U.S.-Mexico-Central America corridor with a variety of civil society organizations and foundations. She was the first coordinator of the Central America and Mexico Alliance (CAMMINA), a Fulbright García Robles Fellow in Mexico from 2010-2011, and a program associate at Oxfam America. Daniella has completed research contributing to organizational advocacy strategies on issues such as transitional justice, migrant rights, gender, and internal displacement. She holds a BA from Tufts University in International Relations and History with a focus in Latin American studies and a Master's in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy where she focused on human security and migration. Daniella is originally from New York and has Swiss-German and Peruvian family.



Albert Saint Jean
Organizer
Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)

Albert Saint Jean is BAJI's New York City Organizer. Having been reared by a community oriented, politically aware Haitian-American family, developed a passion for social justice and black awareness. This worldview is compounded by his exposure to diverse black communities in New Jersey, Florida, and New York. Albert's Pan-African perspective led him to pursue a bachelor's in Political Science with a focus on International Affairs from the University of Central Florida. Albert further prepared himself to serve his community by getting his Masters in Urban Policy from the New School, with a focus on community development. During that time, he worked on community development projects in black and brown communities such as West Harlem and Orange, New Jersey.



Gustavo Torres
Executive Director
CASA

Gustavo Torres is the Executive Director of CASA, the largest Latino and immigrant rights organization in the mid-Atlantic region. He is nationally and internationally recognized for his leadership and vision in the immigrant rights movement in the United States. Mr. Torres came to the United States due to the political and economic unrest in his country of origin, Colombia. He joined CASA's staff as a community organizer and became CASA's Executive Director in 1994. Under his leadership, CASA has grown from a small social service organization with a handful of staff members to a nationally awarded, multiservice, advocacy, organizing and support agency with a staff of nearly 150 and a membership of over 100,000, which operates in multiple states including Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania. Torres has spearheaded several ambitious campaigns locally, statewide, and nationally. Most recently, CASA's Supreme Court victory to not have the citizenship question included in the 2020 Census. He was instrumental in helping to pass Trust legislation in Montgomery County, Prince William County, and Baltimore city. Torres helped to lead CASA in 2012 to pass the Maryland DREAM act, which provided in-state tuition to undocumented students. He has established welcome centers that have served as a model for organizations across the nation and led efforts to allow all Maryland drivers to obtain a driver's license, regardless of status. CASA and its partners helped to increase the minimum wage in Maryland, Prince George's County, Montgomery County, and Baltimore City. He also served as a member of multiple transition teams for city Mayors, state Governors and County Executives and on numerous task forces and leadership groups addressing issues of diversity, immigrant rights, and multiculturalism.



Jaime Contreras
Vice President
32BJ SEIU - Capital Area District

Jaime Contreras, Vice President, heads 32BJ SEIU's Capital Area District, which has 18,000 members in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area and Baltimore, Maryland. The Capital Area members are commercial, government, arenas and residential cleaners, security officers, and education facilities cleaners and maintenance workers. Jaime has emerged as a key figure among the next generation of leaders in the labor and immigrant rights communities of the Capital Area. A lifelong workers' rights activist, Jaime has been described by the Washington Post as "one of Washington's most

active advocates for immigrant rights." A naturalized U.S. citizen, Jaime is the son of an ambulance driver who fled a bloody civil war in El Salvador. Jaime was forced to leave his birth country at age 13, crossing the U.S.-Mexico border with his younger brother to reunite with his family in Washington DC. Jaime's commitment to workers' rights started at a young age. As a student at Bell Multicultural High School in DC and working part-time as a cleaner, Jaime was part of the "Justice for Janitors" team that helped drive the largest low-wage cleaners organizing effort in the history of the District. In 1997, and after a 10-year-long campaign, 4,000 workers won wage increases and the right to a voice at their workplace. After serving three years in the U.S. Navy, Jaime returned to the union in 1997 as an organizer while attending the National Labor College where he earned a bachelor degree in Labor Studies. In 2001, at the age of 27, he became the youngest Latino to hold a full-time elected position at an SEIU local. As a leader at 32BJ, Jaime has not only helped the union achieve significant milestones and victories, but he has been dedicated to working with various communities in the DC region. Jaime has been able to build alliances with a growing immigrant community in DC, Maryland, and Virginia while bridging the gap between labor and New Americans. Jaime is the founder and former Chair of the National Capitol Immigrant Coalition (NCIC) – a coalition of organizations that has advocated, educated, and mobilized the public in the DC metro area in support of citizenship and civic participation. 32BJ's Capital Area District's membership has grown from about 7,000 workers in 2006, when Jaime was elected District Chairman, to more than 15,000 cleaners, security officers and maintenance workers. Jaime is also the first Latino president of the SEIU Maryland and DC State Council. Jaime Contreras currently resides in College Park, MD with his wife Ana Contreras and children Jaime Jr., Isabel, Leyda and Jazmin.



Abel Núñez
Executive Director
CARECEN DC - Central American Resource Center, Washington DC

Abel Núñez joined CARECEN as its Executive Director in March 2013. Prior to CARECEN, he was Associate Director of Centro Romero in Chicago, IL, and was primarily responsible for the day to day operations, fiscal management, program administration, and communications. Mr. Núñez migrated from El Salvador to the United States with his family in 1979 and grew up in the District of Columbia. Mr. Núñez has a Bachelor's of Business Administration from Hofstra University. Before he moved to Chicago, he worked in D.C. for the Latino Civil Rights Center. From 1998 to 2000, he was also on the staff of CARECEN serving first as its Citizenship and Civic Participation Project Coordinator and later as its Deputy Director. Nationally, Mr. Núñez has been one of the founding members of the Residency Now campaign which was launched in January 2012. He also co-founded the DC-MD-VA Coalition in Support of Children Fleeing Violence which responded to the incoming wave of unaccompanied children in the summer of 2013. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of La Clinica del Pueblo, Alianza Americas, Community Advisory Board of Georgetown-Howard Universities Center for Clinical and Translational Science (GHUCCTS) and also was elected to the UnidosUS Southeast Affiliate Council Representative. In 2017 Mr. Núñez was the recipient of Georgetown University's John Thompson, Jr. Legacy of a Dream Award and the Hispanic Bar Association of DC Hugh A. Johnson Jr. Memorial Award. In 2018 he received the Community Service Enrichment Award from the Salvadoran-American Chamber of Commerce.



David Campos
Former City Supervisor, District 9
San Francisco, CA

David Campos is a native of Guatemala who was brought to this country as an undocumented child. David is currently Deputy County Executive for the County of Santa Clara, where his responsibilities include overseeing the County's implementation of the 2016 \$950 million Measure A Housing Bond, the Office of Countywide Contract Management, the Office of Women's Policy, the Office of Immigrant Relations, the Office of LGBTQ Affairs, the Office of Cultural Competency, Sanitation District 2-3, and serving as the County's policy point person on litigation against the Trump Administration. In addition to his government work, David is presently Chair of the San Francisco Democratic Party. Prior to his work with the County, David was an elected member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, where he represented District 9, which includes the neighborhood of the Mission, Bernal Heights, the Portola, and St. Mary's Park. David also served as Chair of the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, and represented the City and County of San Francisco on the Municipal Transportation Commission and the Board of Directors for the Golden Gate Bridge and Transportation District. David was also as a San Francisco Police Commissioner and General Counsel for the San Francisco Unified School District. David received a Juris Doctor Degree for Harvard Law School and a Bachelor of Arts Degree (in Political Science) from Stanford University.



Oscar A. Chacón
Co-Founder and Executive Director
Alianza Americas

Oscar A. Chacón is a co-founder and executive director of Alianza Americas (formerly known as National Alliance of Latin American & Caribbean Communities NALACC), an umbrella of immigrant led and immigrant serving organizations based in the United States of America, dedicated to improving the quality of life of Latino immigrant communities in the US, as well as peoples throughout the Americas. Prior to his designation in 2007 in his current role, Oscar served in leadership positions at the Chicago-based Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights, the Northern California Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, the Boston-based Centro Presente, and several other community-based and international development organization. Oscar has also served in multiple advisory committees to national and international processes including the Civil Society Consultation process associated to the Global Forum on Migration and Development and the World Social Forum on Migration. Oscar is a frequent national and international spokesperson on transnationalism, economic justice, the link between migration and development, migrant's integration processes, human mobility, migration policies, racism and xenophobia; and U.S. Latino community issues.