
ESPERANZA

LATINA LEADERSHIP NETWORK OF THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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President Maria Ramirez's Message (in photo with Rigoberta Menchu Nobel Peace Prize winner and Mayan Human Rights Activist)

Queridas Hermanas/Dearest Sisters,

I leave my position as President with the same attitude as when I started. Adelante, Onward Mujeres! What a year, for our organization, for our state, and for our nation. Hope and change, is being countered by the largest global economic calamity ever, not the least is an estimated \$1 billion in cuts to the community college system alone. This means dismantling whole programs, hiring freezes, eliminating many classified and faculty positions, tuition increases, reduced financial assistance. There are far less sponsors and donors supporting LLN. Fears of foreclosures are gripping both students and staff due to ballooning mortgages.

Now more than ever, we need to remember our great resiliency as a people, our determination and courage individually and collectively, in order to come through these times not only intact, but stronger. As Latinas, we know hard times, and because of that history, we know we will not only survive but we will thrive. We will have our sacred dreams fulfilled, and maintain balance in our lives. In the face of these challenging times, I encourage you all to read the writings of Rigoberta Menchu for inspiration and inner fortitude.

Our theme for this year's conference, In LakEch, We Are One, taps into a deep ancestral artery that throbs inside of each of our hearts to remind us of a connected and integral way of life. As a sisterhood of Latina women, we know we are not alone, we are one with each other, and all creation. Our foremothers kept the council fires burning through their circles. We still feel this empowerment whenever we gather in groups, and so at our statewide conference we need to continue to feed the council fire, and then take that flame with us when we return to our homes, our schools, our communities. Our sisterhood is powerful! LLN's founding mothers formed that circle 22 years ago and that power continues to draw in Latinas every year--each of you is a part of that circle, feel it, draw on it, nurture it, strengthen it.

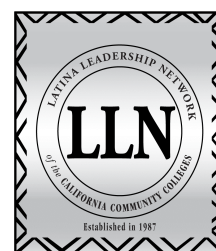
Hold tight to our resiliency, our ability to rebound and resist, as we brace for more hard times. We must keep on, and stay strong. If you are an employee of the community college system, do your job as best you can, even if the work load has tripled, but not at the expense of jeopardizing your health. If you are a student, don't drop out, even if you have to take only one or two classes, stay focused, stay healthy, be true to yourself, know you are not alone. All of us need to actively seek out and maintain a support system. Remember to look up into the beauty of the night sky, or let the warmth of the sun embrace you or take a peaceful walk as a reminder of our connectedness. Call on Mother Nature's great and powerful support system. We haven't come this far to lose our hope now, Adelante Mujeres! Always Onward!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Message from the President**
- 2 Reflections of LLN students**
- 3 Message from President elect, Vivas**
- 4 Colleges and Regions**

Important Dates:

Visit our website for more information in exploring LLN's history, mission and past issues at Latina-leadership-network.org.



2008 Conference-Reflections of Latina College Students

Written by
Esmeralda Leon



Photo of Ohlone College attendees

“The more you struggle in life the more you appreciate your accomplishments,” said Erica Castillas, a student from Ohlone College, explaining her experience in attending last year’s 21st annual Latina Leadership Network Conference held in March in San Jose. Every year the Latina Leadership Network conference committee organizes workshops and presenters to inform Latinas of all ages how to start reforming the balance in their life, the community and the world. Included in this cultural celebration of food, music, teatro and dance are groups of Latinas from around the state coming together to better understand the benefits of higher education.

“Before I went to the Latina Leadership Conference I was thinking about dropping out of school,” she said sadly, recalling how she and her family are struggling to pay for college. “I was thinking about working full time to help my family. Paying for my units and school supplies is becoming too expensive for me,” she said. Castillas hopes to become a registered nurse.

Judge Katherine Lucero was one on the many inspirational speakers at the 21st annual conference, “She inspired me to keep my mind on positive thoughts about completing college in order to achieve my academic goals. After hearing Judge Lucero’s story: “I feel more confident about myself,” said Castillas. “I realized that I’m not alone in my struggles”. Now I see my struggles as investments, I know they will pay off.” If there was a secret to the strength of a Latina leader it would consist of three ingredients: heart, discipline and credentials, explained Lucero, “You have to have perseverance, hope, and faith. If you know you’re doing the right thing you can keep going,” said Lucero as she closed her speech with words of hope. “She inspired me to continue in my education,” Erica said. “Being able to see a powerful Latina in front of me made it real.”

To maintain a hopeful sense of the future was the clear objective that all the speakers confirmed. Latinas of all ages came together to witness and participate in sharing their struggles and how they were able to overcome very difficult situations. It was a time to raise Latinas consciousness of the obstacles that confront young Latinas and to emphasize the importance of education.

“It exceeded my expectations,” said Ana Rodriguez another student from Ohlone College, “There was one workshop in particular that really helped me cope with my stress with college and with my family,” Ana shared that “the workshop helped me to deal with my stress in a positive manner.” “I feel proud to be a Latina after hearing powerful stories; I feel like I can make it too,” Ana said enthusiastically. “The whole experience was life changing for me, I really think differently now.”

As a young Latina, I also had the opportunity to experience this motivating convention. I will always admire Dolores Huerta’s strength and courage, for her testimony showed the value of persistence. She spoke about believing in ourselves, but being focused on the needs of others.

I learned from each workshop and presenter how to be more conscious about how society can work against me. But now that I have witnessed truly inspirational stories, I am more determined to pursue my educational goals in order that I become successful. “Do what you fear but have no fear.”

“...If you know you’re doing the right thing you can keep going.”



Message from LLN President-Elect,

Marlene de Leon

I take great pride and am truly honored and humbled to step into my role as the 2009-2010 LLN President. Serving as an Executive Board member since 2004, I have had the privilege of belonging to a sisterhood and have gained friendships that have both personally and professionally inspired and touched my life. I now know the true meaning of "Comadre".

I have worked at Palomar College for 24 years, both as a part-time faculty in the Dance department and as full-time classified staff in the Educational Television department. I bring my experience from serving as President of the Directors of Educational Technology/California Higher Education (DETCHE), member of several statewide committees, Advisory Board member for the National Indian Justice Center, Self Study Accreditation Co-Chair, and local professional development committees. I value the diversity of talents among sister Latinas and accept the responsibility to utilize the wealth of experience to continue the legacy that past LLN presidents have left in overcoming struggles in moving our organization forward. One of my goals this coming year is to develop strategies that support the active involvement of Latinas in our organization when facing budget cuts and economical hardships in our personal and professional life.

"Not only can Latinas *do*, but we do it with pride for our cultura, we do it with spiritual energy and we do it with the Latina brand of enthusiasm."

Vivas!

- Viva to Felicia Osnaya upon her retirement after 35 years of service at Modesto Junior College and 12 years of service to the LLN of the CCC (to both the campus chapter and the Statewide Organization). Felicia became active with LLN in 1995 when MJC formed its local LLN Chapter. She brought the statewide Network into the digital age when she created and maintained an effective database - the original database guru! Felicia has announced her retirement, and we could not be more excited and happy for her. She leaves behind very large shoes to fill - her absence will surely create a large void at MJC.
- Viva to Maria Ramirez as LLN president honoree of the 2009 International Association for Women of Color Day, at the annual Women of Color Day Event in Sacramento.
- Viva to Martha Robles (Modesto JC) and Eva Jimenez (Shasta College) who were selected to attend the 1st CSSO or CIO Leadership Institute. These are Chief Student Service Officers and Chief Instructional Officers respectively. To attend the institute persons are nominated by their administration who selects individuals whom have demonstrated potential for advancement to positions of CSSOs or CIOs.
- Viva to Dr. Azari, former Vice Chancellor for SCCC, who was appointed the new Fresno City College President. The State Center Community College District Board announced her appointment in December, 2008. The campus newspaper quoted the District Chancellor, Dr. Tom Crow as saying, "Dr. Azari has a strong track record of success, well earned success, and I think she is a perfect fit for the position."
- Viva to Darlene Montes, on her promotion to Executive Assistant to the President, Los Angeles Mission College.
- Viva to Glenda Moscoso for becoming tenured at Cuesta College and for all her valuable contributions as treasurer to LLN.

COLLEGES AND REGIONS

REGION 1 - (NORTH) Cabrillo, Cañada, College of San Mateo, DeAnza, Evergreen Valley, Foothill, Gavilan, Hartnell, Mission, Monterey Peninsula, Ohlone, San José City, Skyline, West Valley

REGION 2 - (NORTH) Butte, Feather River, Lassen, Shasta, Siskiyou, Yuba, Woodland

REGIONS 3 - (NORTH) Chabot, City College of San Francisco, College of Alameda, Contra Costa, Diablo Valley, Laney, Las Positas, Los Medanos, Marin, Mendocino, Merritt, Napa Valley, Redwoods, Santa Rosa, Solano, Vista

REGION 4 - (NORTH) American River, Cosumnes River, Lake Central, Tahoe, Sacramento City, Sierra

REGION 5 - (CENTRAL) Bakersfield, Cerro Coso, Columbia, Fresno, Merced, Modesto, Reedley, Porterville, San Joaquin Delta, College of the Sequoias, Taft, West Hills

REGION 6 - (CENTRAL) Allan Hancock, Antelope Valley, College of the Canyons, Cuesta, Moorpark, Oxnard, Santa Barbara City, Ventura

REGION 7 - (SOUTH) Los Angeles Community College District: Administrative Offices, East Los Angeles, Los Angeles City, Los Angeles Harbor, Los Angeles Mission, Los Angeles Pierce, Los Angeles Southwest, Los Angeles Trade-Technical, Los Angeles Valley, West Los Angeles

REGION 8 - (SOUTH) Coastline, Cypress, Fullerton, Golden West, Irvine Valley, Orange Coast, Saddleback, Santa Ana, Santiago Canyon

REGION 9 - (SOUTH) Cerritos, Citrus, Compton, El Camino, Glendale, Long Beach City, Mt. San Antonio, Pasadena City, Rio Hondo, Santa Monica

REGION 10 - (SOUTH) Barstow, Chaffey, College of the Desert, Crafton Hills, Mt. San Jacinto, Palo Verde, Riverside, San Bernardino Valley, Victor Valley

REGION 11 - (SOUTH) Cuyamaca, Grossmont, Imperial Valley, Mira Costa, Palomar, San Diego City, San Diego Mesa, San Diego Miramar, Southwestern



Colleen Triesch
3925 Linden Ave.
Long Beach, CA 90807

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