



# Latino Leadership Academy Class of 2017

Produced by Dr. María Teresa & Néstor Montilla, Sr.



Congratulates

The Latino Leadership Academy

**CLASS OF**

**2017**





# LATINO LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

LALEA



# Latino Leadership Academy Class of 2017



Alex Calix Rodríguez, Carla Jiménez, Carlos Salinas, Caty Polanco, Rev. Cleo Santiago, Edwin K.C. Matías, Elvin Dominici, Erick Cedano, Rev. Fernando Plaza, Gino Hernández, Heidy Hernández, Joannie Morales, José Colón, Rev. Juan Rosario, Manuel E. Martínez, María Isabel Alarcón, Miriam E. Younan, Patricia Bullón, Rossanna Genao, Sara Batres, Sebastián Rodríguez and Yrma E. Mercedes. Joining the Class of 2017: Dr. Maria Teresa and Nestor Montilla, Fernando Alonso, Esq., Martin Perez, Esq., Patricia Bombelyn, Esq. Rev. Professor Alejandro Benjamin, Historian Hector Bonilla, Angela Harrington, Berkeley College's Assistant Vice President of Communications and External Relations, Teri Duda, Berkeley College Vice President for Government Relations, and Sonia Rosado. Photo by Eduardo Hoepelman.

## ***Congratulations!!***





# President's Message



Dr. María Teresa Montilla

**I**t is with satisfaction and deep respect that I present to you *The Latino Leadership Academy (LALEA) Class of 2017*.

The Class of 2017 began in the spring of 2016 with a cohort of 35 men and women seeking a rewarding leadership development opportunity that would prepare them to serve their communities in a more holistic manner. They met such a challenge at LALEA.

Eligible candidates were selected based on their professional and community involvement and background, as well as their commitment to submit to the rigors of intense and demanding training.

Throughout the program, fellows were advised on, and made aware of key community issues, concerns, needs and opportunities involving those in leadership roles. They were motivated to take on leadership roles in the public, private and nonprofit sectors to influence actions that have a positive impact on the community.

Seminars were taught by seasoned experts and scholars at field related sites across the State and Washington, DC. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude and respect to them, including: Julio Marenco, Henry Sosa, Patricia Bombelyn, Esq., Michael J. Smith, President, Berkeley College, Martin Perez, Esq.,



Hector Bonilla, Fernando Alonzo, Esq., Nestor Montilla, Sr., Paul Perez, VP LLANJ, Tamires Oliveira, Ass. Superintendent, Paterson Board of Education, Mayor Wilda Diaz, US Marshalls Michael Schroeder, Juan Matos, Pedro Alvarez, and Oscar Alvarez, Mercer County Sheriff's Officer William Perez, Major Donald Hampton, NJ State Police, Special Agent Joseph Gonzalez, Dave Leonardis, Chief, Prosecutor's Supervision and Training Bureau, Ass. Attorney General Phillip Aronow, and Councilman Luis Quintana. I had the opportunity to teach a few sessions as well.

Topics covered included Latino History and Contribution to United States, US Government, Leadership Styles, Values & Ethics in Public Service, Education, A two-party System, Criminal Justice, Health, Social Services & Economic Development, Public Speaking and Media, and a special session on Running a Political Campaign.

Fellows acquired theoretical knowledge, as well as hands-on experience. They were guided to master poise, spur confidence, serve with distinction and inspire others in their leadership roles in society. Twenty-two fellows stood focused at their destination and completed the rigorous course.

Our heartfelt thanks to those who made significant contributions in scholarship or work to this effort such as LLANJ VP Paul Perez, Rev. Jose C. Lopez, Migdalia Rodriguez, Santiago Rodriguez, Angela Harrington, Eduardo Hoepelman and his wife Elena de Hoepelman.

On behalf of The Institute for Latino Studies, the Latino Leadership Alliance (LLANJ) and Berkeley College, join me in congratulating Class of 2017, a new generation of leaders who are now better prepared to continue serving their communities in a more holistic and independent manner.

*Congratulations to LALEA Class of 2017!!*



## 18 Years Mobilizing & Empowering Our Diverse Communities

The Latino Leadership Alliance of New Jersey is the largest and only statewide non-partisan non-profit organization composed of local, regional and state community-based organizations, leaders and professionals advocating for the socio-economic and political development of Latino diverse communities.

[www.llanj.org](http://www.llanj.org) or write to [info@llanj.org](mailto:info@llanj.org) or call (732) 249-0400.





## Mission

**T**he Institute for Latino Studies, Research & Development, Inc., (The Institute) is a non-profit entity, recognized by the federal government as a 501 C (3) organization. The Institute's main undertaking is to study, research, document, develop and highlight the rich heritage and contributions of Latinos in the United States. This goal is achieved through advocacy and the implementation of in-house and outreach programs, initiatives and activities.

## Objectives

The Institute demonstrates its commitment to its mission by becoming an effective community resource, which enhances the knowledge and awareness of Latino endeavors within the framework of a multicultural society. Through unity of purpose, its Board of Directors, staff and dedicated volunteers help forge a brighter future for the Latino community and the state. Since its founding in 2001, The Institute has endeavored to carry out programs, initiatives, and activities that improve the quality of life of the Latino and general community of the state of New Jersey.

## Certificate Programs

The Institute's Certificate Programs offer 50 hours of intensive training by experts in the target field with value of 3.0 college credit hours.

LAMP - Latino Youth Leadership Mentoring Program - A statewide 10-month youth leadership development program aiming to provide leadership development to Latino youth between the ages of 14 to 17, through "hands-on" experiences.

The Office - Youth Professional Mentoring Program - A statewide youth professional mentoring aiming to provide job readiness to Latino youth between the ages of 14 to 17, through basic office/job interview/computer use instruction; and 40 hours of professional mentoring, where participants 'shadow' a professional in their selected field.

LALEA - Latino Leadership Academy - A statewide ten-month leadership program to identify and prepare local leaders within our communities to enable them to serve their communities in a more holistic manner.

Pastoral Care - A ten-month certificate program for clergy and religious leaders intended to empower them with the pertinent skills in the area of counseling and crisis intervention.

The Business Bridge & Incubator - A Certificate in Entrepreneurship program (Low-Income Fast Track). This 6-week business plan boot camp is geared to help participants fine tune their business plan and prepare for the incubator; which provides a complete array of management support and business services.

We... The Legislature - A Mock Legislature simulation activity for high school students and an opportunity to experience what it's like to be part of the parliamentary process.

We... The Judiciary - A Mock Courtroom simulation activity for high school students and an opportunity to experience what it's like to be part of the judicial process.

## Programatic Initiatives

**FAMILIA** - Families Accessing Multiple Initiatives for Long-Term Improvement & Advance.

The Institute offers a variety of conferences, group interactive workshops and specialized instruction by professionals in the field of mental health.

**Raices - A Cultural Awareness Program** - The Institute believes that the essence of any culture is its ability to move into the future while retaining its tradition, history and uniqueness. America's Latino culture has persevered and thrived. RAICES explores the depth and breadth of Latino culture as an integral part of America's multi-cultural roots.

**Acción Juvenil Latina** - statewide college student's support organization which has three objectives: increase the college enrollment of Latino students; serve as support network for the retention of Latino college students, and college orientation for parents.

**Speakers Bureau** - The Institute's Speakers Bureau brings audiences quality speakers and experts, whose progressive ideas are changing our society and our world.

**Tu Cuentas! Naturalization Project** - Assists those in need in the Naturalization process through all steps of the process, including: Application for citizenship, Family Petitions, Self-Petitioning, Political Asylum Cases, Cancellation of removal orders, Correct, legal explanations for people seeking advice (deportation, filing, students' rights, marriage and divorce rules, etc.), and Employment authorization and work permit extensions.

**CODA-Conference on Dominican Affairs** - The statewide forum of analysis and development of action plans for Dominicans in the state. It is the state forum for analysis, planning, and action to advance the educational, economic, legal, social, cultural and civic interests of Dominican Americans and Latinos. Now in its 15th year, CODA brings together a powerhouse of philosophers, teachers, intellectuals and public personalities from throughout the state to address the urgent reality of Dominicans and Latinos residing in New Jersey.

**FILP – Financial Literacy Project** - Assisting small businesses and investors in their quest to participate fully in support programs that enhance their endeavors. The project offers workshops on: Personal investments, Diversifying short and long term investments, IRAs, Deferred Compensation Plans, How to start a business; Keeping records in order, Seeking small business loans, How to expand your business, and Advertising.

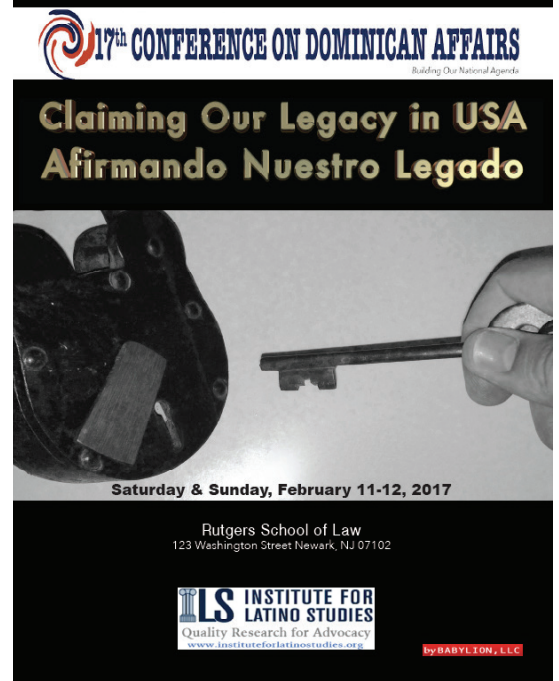
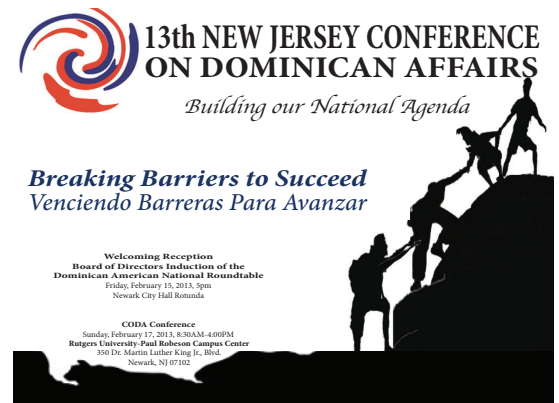
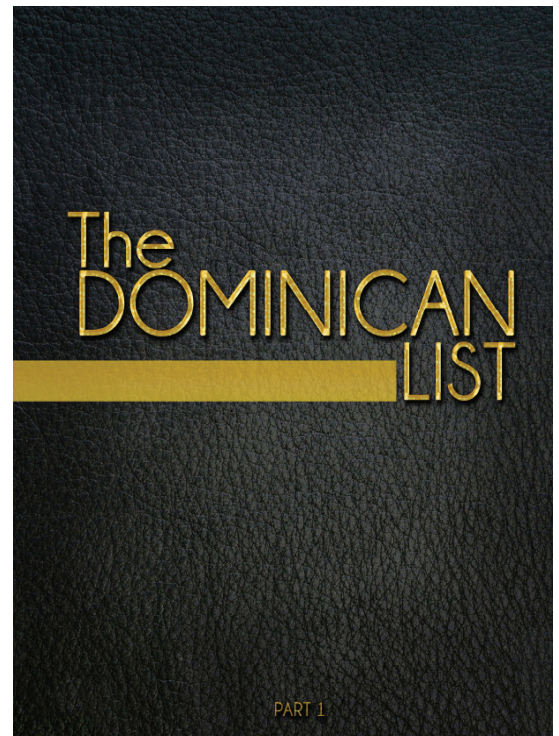
**Health Professionals Workshop** - Annual gathering of representatives of over 40 health professionals organizations who consider health issues affecting the Latino community and develop plans to educate and offer services to those in need.

### Research Documentaries & Publications

The Institute conducts studies and research of social & population trends that shape the composition of institutions of learning, legislature, and business landscape in the state.

Design and development of informational, educational and documentary tools for publication and use by advocacy and learning institutions.

*First socio-economic, demographic study of New Jersey Dominicans* Dr. Ramona Hernández, Director of the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute, and Rev. Alejandro Benjamin, Bergen Community College.





*New Jersey Dominicans: A Decade of Accomplishments* - A book and documentary about the journey of Dominicans to New Jersey, beginning in 1947. Researched and produced by María Teresa and Néstor Montilla, Sr.

*Dominicans in New Jersey: A Community on the Move* - is a salute to one of the state's fastest growing Latino populations. It is the first exhibition in New Jersey honoring one of the state's newest communities, which is predominately located in Passaic, Essex, Union and Middlesex counties.

*Los Panfleteros de Santiago (Santiago's Pamphleteers)* - A 150 pg. book and 57 minute-documentary about 32 youngsters who rebelled against the Regime of Dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo in 1959. They were captured, tortured and dismembered for a cause – a free and inclusive society – that is still in the making, in the Dominican Republic. Researched and produced by María Teresa and Néstor Montilla, Sr.

*Jewish Refugees in Sosúa* researched and produced by Néstor Montilla, Sr.- A 15 minute-documentary about the story of the first persecuted Jews who were welcomed, protected and embraced in the Dominican Republic in the late 1930's. Today, thousands worldwide can trace their family heritage to the Jews of Sosua.

*Jewish Dominican Generations* by Néstor Montillas, Sr., is an original English and Spanish subtitled short documentary depicting the story of Herbert Katz, a young Jewish Dominican man who is proud to be a second generation descendant of the persecuted Jews who were welcomed, protected and embraced in the Dominican Republic in the late 1930s. Original 2015 documentary by The Common Roots Project, BABYLON Production LLC and The Institute for Latino Studies.

*African-Americans in Samaná* - A 22 minute-documentary about the untold story of thousands of freed US slaves who settled in Hispaniola in 1824. Researched and produced by Néstor Montilla, Sr.-

*Dominican Identity and Migrations to Hispaniola* - A Film Documentary by Néstor Montilla, Sr. is a film that documents the roots of the different ethnic groups, including Arabic, African, Jewish, and Asian migrations as well as the cultural influence of Haitians and US freed-slaves to this Caribbean island. Dr. Irma Nicasio, Sociology Professor from the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo (UASD), and other prominent Dominican figures narrate the film.

*Diaspora & Identity* - A 37-minute documentary about the influence of the diaspora on Dominican Identity. Researched and produced by Nestor Montilla, Sr.

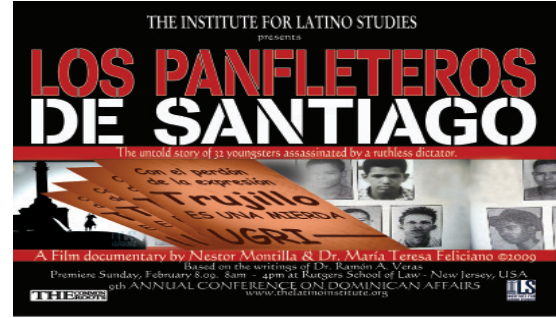
*Porfirio Rubirosa, Dominican Ambassador To The World* - A 27-minute documentary about the life of 'The Last Playboy'. Based on the book by Shawn Levy. Researched and produced by María Teresa and Néstor Montilla, Sr. (In planning stage)

*Carlos A. Cooks & Black Pride* - A 12-minute documentary about the contribution of David Cook to the Civil Rights Movement and 'Black Pride'. Researched and produced by Néstor Montilla, Sr. (In planning stage)

*Melaza & Sol* - A 57-minute docu-drama about the journey of a Dominican boy from Barahona to the United States and back. Researched and produced by Néstor & María Tresa Montilla, Sr. (In planning stage). Based on the book *El Desafío de un Pueblo* by Professor Alejandro Benjamin.



**JEWISH DOMINICAN GENERATIONS**  
By Néstor Montilla, Sr.



# Director's Message



**T**he Leadership Academy's fellows have been blessed with a rewarding and unforgettable experience: A full-year of demanding leadership training. I am pleased they stayed the course and endured until the end. Today, Saturday, May 20, 2017, they graduate as excellent holistic leaders, determined to continue advocating for the common good of the people. Join me, please, in congratulating them...The Class of 2017!

Most fellows were on-time, never missed a class, did their homework and strictly complied with rigorous Academy's requirements. They came from different walks of life and with different levels of education and represented various professions, ideologies and religious beliefs; and in spite of their differences, they revealed to have one thing in common: a keen commitment to advocacy for the socio-economic and political advancement of U.S. communities.

Of the several forums and topics discussed, they paid close attention to the seminar on government and politics. This seminar included in-depth discussions on principles that affect and permeate all areas of society, and thus of leadership in public service. Given the significance of this seminar and its impact on the Class of 2017, I thought important to take advantage of this opportunity to say that fellows realized and re-confirmed that politics influences everything—from where we live to what we eat; from our health and what medicine we consume to what we believe; from what kind of education we get to how we are treated based on our ascribed and achieved status; from our opinions about happenings in society to our very own behavior, choices and aspirations in the pursuit of happiness.

Sadly, in addition to influencing everything, politics has become an unfortunate dirty word per se, and moreover, a dishonest game we all MUST play, unless we decide to be inconsequential and forced into preposterous oblivion. Politics is no longer the noble idealistic quintessential universal process used to govern the people, regulate the affairs of the state and redistribute resources to achieve greater social equality. Instead, the practice of politics as a process seems rigged to the advantage of career politicians, the elitists and the two private organizations known as the Republican and Democratic parties. These organizations have become arrogantly overbear-

ing toward the people as both have become de facto government gatekeepers. They appear to be vindictive hurtful mafias posing as bonifide institutions advocating for the common good; some think of them as well funded and oiled mechanisms power elites use to preserve status quo and to determine who gets to be elected to public office.

We the people should realize that the purpose of these entities has perennially been the seizing of power to oppress, to undermine the people, civil rights, human rights, and our constitutional rights; their aim is to validate and advance the interests of the elitists, of Wall Street and those who invest billions and trillions in cajoling to perpetuate the status quo, laissez-faire, and the monopolization of policy formulation and implementation, as well as the administration of justice.

These incongruities and imperfections afflict our country and seem un-American. This is why I argue that partisan political membership and ideology seem irrelevant; what matters is to learn how to play the game of politics as it is practiced today to influence decision-making and successfully advocate for our diverse communities. It is time to begin playing this game by capitalizing on the imperfection of our political system and by treating our party affiliation like we treat our underwear—changing them daily or when they turn unbearable; it's perfectly legal. Learning this is necessary to become knowledgeable voters who will not be taken for granted any longer. I am glad LALEA fellows did learn this and will talk about it for years to come.

Consider that via legislation politicians direct taxpayers monies to pay for private primary elections held by their two private political organizations mentioned above. These two private parties have the monopoly of determining who will get vetted to run for office. In many states, only those registered in these parties can vote in Democratic and Republican primary elections. Regular citizens who wish to run independently or via a third or other minor party are excluded. Currently, independent or unaffiliated voters account for 39 percent of registered voters in USA; Democrats are 32 percent while Republicans are 23%. However, Independent or Unaffiliated candidates are only allowed to run in the general elections, but are subjected to an arbitrary political process, nitpicking, intimidation and perennial practices of deception, such as undesirable ballot placement.

It is perfectly fine for voters to register as a Democrat or Republican before any primary election if they deem necessary to elect a worthy candidate, regardless of party affiliation. The most important consideration in voting for such candidate should be his or her promise to represent the people as it should be. After voting in any of these private primary elections, voters can easily change back their party affiliation. It's legal, folks...perfectly, amazingly legal. Keep in mind that politicians flip flop and change their positions without much repercussion. Therefore, don't get fooled again with that deceiving thing called "permanent party affiliation." Partisan membership should be exchangeable.

Now, let us pause a minute to commend the fellows of LALEA Class of 2017. Let us thank them for their graduation today and for their sincere commitment to mentor the Class of 2018 (see page 25). Congratulations *mi gente* for your leadership and memorable graduation—indeed...a marvelous rewarding achievement.

Kudos!!!



# About The Latino Leadership Academy

## LALEA is...

an intense 10-month course to train and develop emerging leaders.

## The Program...

is intense by design to simulate the rigors and challenges of actual leadership. It helps participants develop, improve poise, and confidence in their leadership role, and ensures a new generation of leaders committed to the advancement of their communities.

## The Seminars...

include Latino History and Contribution to United States, US Government, Leadership Styles, Values & Ethics in Public Service, Education, A two-party System, Criminal Justice, Health, Social Services & Economic Development, Public Speaking and Media, and a special session on Running a Political Campaign.

## The Instructors...

are seasoned experts and scholars in diverse fields.

## The Fellows...

are selected based on their professional and community involvement and background, as well as their commitment to submit to the rigors of intense and demanding leadership development training.

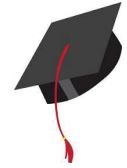
## The Application...

applications may be completed online via [www.instituteforlatinostudies.org](http://www.instituteforlatinostudies.org) or [www.llanj.org](http://www.llanj.org)



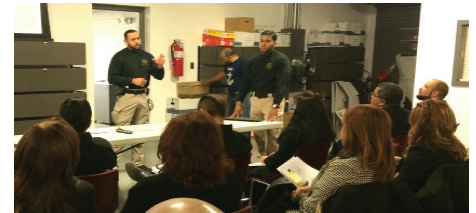
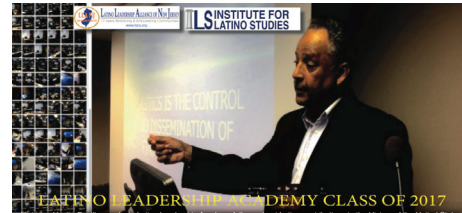
# Our Instructors

## The Latino Leadership Academy Class of 2017



Would Like to Extend Its Sincere Gratitude  
and Respect to Instructors

Dave Leonardis, Chief, Prosecutor's Supervision and Training Bureau  
Donald Hampton, Major NJ State Police  
Fernando Alonso, Esq., Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU)  
Hector Bonilla, Griot  
Henry Sosa, Political Strategist  
Joseph Gonzalez, FBI Special Agent  
Julio Marengo, Finance and Revenue Commissioner, North Bergen, NJ  
Luis Quintana, Councilman at Large, Newark  
Maria Teresa Montilla, President, Institute for Latino Studies (ILS)  
Martin Perez, Esq., Member of Rutgers University Board of Governors  
Michael J. Smith, President, Berkeley College  
Nestor Montilla, Sr., Chairman, Dominican American National Roundtable (DANR)  
Patricia Bombelyn, Esq., Education Advocate  
Paul Perez, VP, Latino Leadership Alliance (LLANJ)  
Phillip Aronow, Assistant Attorney General  
Tamires Oliveira, Assistant Superintendent, Paterson Board of Education  
US Marshalls Michael Schroeder, Juan Mattos, Pedro Alvarez and Oscar Alvarez  
Wilda Diaz, Mayor, Perth Amboy  
William Perez, Mercer County Sheriff's Officer



# Program

The Institute for Latino Studies, The Latino Leadership Alliance  
& Berkeley College

present

*Graduation Ceremony*  
of  
The Latino Leadership Academy  
Class of 2017

Saturday, May 20, 2017 - 11:00AM  
Berkeley College  
44 Rifle Camp Road  
Woodland Park, NJ 07424

## PROGRAM

### Entrance

Graduating Class of 2017

### Invocation

Rev. Alejandro Benjamin

### Welcome

Néstor Montilla, Sr., LALEA Director

### Remarks

Michael J. Smith, President, Berkeley College

Marin Perez, Esq., Member, Rutgers University Board of Governors

Dr. María Teresa Montilla, President Institute for Latino Studies

### Valedictorian

María Isabel Alarcón

### Presentation of Diplomas

Patricia Bombelyn, Esq.

Fernando Alonso, Esq.

Martin Pérez, Esq.

Sonia Rosado

### Graduation Luncheon



# Class of 2017



## Alex Calix Rodríguez

A Political Activist, Student, Entrepreneur, Public Servant.

Born in Trenton, NJ to a Puerto Rican mother and a father from Honduras who met in the 1970's while attending English classes. Alex is one of six children, and a lifelong resident of Trenton.

He plans to start his own business in general contracting, and is knowledgeable of interior work and remodeling.

Mr. Rodríguez is part of the Mercer County Board of the Democratic Committee. He ran for Freeholder in 2015 and would like to become Mayor of Trenton.

He is studying to become a Funeral Director at Mercer Community College.

*"LALEA has been a door that opened many positions for me. It's one of my biggest accomplishments, a stepping stone in my career in public life."*



## Carla A. Jiménez-Pérez

Carla is currently a Financial Coach/Director at Expansion at World Financial Group - Transamerica Financial Advisors.

Previously she worked for the New York Life Insurance Company.

She is a member of the Dominican American Council of the Bronx, NY., a chapter of the National Dominican American Council (NDAC), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization advocating for the socio-economic and political advancement of Dominicans residing in the United States, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

She graduated from George Washington High school, New York, NY. Subsequently, she studied Finance, International Business and Human Resource at Lehman College of The City University of New York.

# Class of 2017



## Carlos Salinas

Carlos was born in El Salvador, and migrated to the United States in 2015. His primary goal was to get the education he was unable to get in his country.

He attended Daylight Twilight High School in Trenton, NJ. While in school, he quickly became actively involved in student associations and the board of education. After 6 months of attending this school, he founded the *Latino Global organization*.

Currently, he volunteers for community-based organizations, such as Casa Cultura of Trenton, NJ.

Carlos was acclaimed by his Latino Leadership Academy fellows for demonstrating his public speaking skills after delivering a spell-binding presentation about government and politics.



## Yrma Eloisa Mercedes

Computer Engineer, Mother, Model, Community Activist, Pre-K Teacher.

Eloisa migrated to United States from her native Dominican Republic at the age of 21. She is currently employed with the Passaic Board of Education as a Pre-K Teacher.

She attained a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Engineering from New Jersey Institute of Technology, an Associate's Degree in Computer Science/Applied Math from Passaic County Community College, and she graduated from Pasarela School of Modeling, and from Plaza school of drafting in Mechanical drafting.

Ms. Mercedes community affiliations include volunteering with Desfile Dominicano de NJ, and numerous political campaigns.

*"LALEA has been a great experience. I obtained much information on history, politics, US Government, political campaigns, public speaking and leadership. I value the relationships I developed with the fellows."*

# Class of 2017



## Elvin Dominici

An Investment Broker, Mutual Fund Associate, Professor, Writer.

His community affiliations include: President of Hispanic Political Action Committee Inc. (HISPAC), Secretary of Hispanic American Commerce Association (HACA), Chairman of Hudson County Hispanic Collision for Governor Chris Christie.

He has authored *Flor de los Deseos*, poetry book (2011), and the novel *Rosa Negra* (2016).

Elvin is a political blogger and writer for *Acento.Net*, *El Sol de Mañana* y *Almomento.net* (online newspapers).

He attained a Master's Degree of Science in Business Administration from Saint Peter's University, Jersey City, NJ, and a Bachelor's Degree of Science in Finance from New Jersey City University, Jersey City, NJ.



## Erick Cedano

A Father, Graphic Artist, Technology Expert, Entrepreneur, Elected Official.

At the age of 11, Erick began working on software development. He coded accounting applications for El Banco Central for the Dominican Republic. By the age of 15, he developed an aviation reservation system and accounting software used by several Latin-American airline companies.

He is the CEO of *GraphiCore, LLC*, & *Photo Plus* in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

His community affiliations include volunteering at Runnells Center for Rehabilitation and Healthcare in Berkeley Heights, and the NJ Conference on Dominican Affairs; being a member of DAEOCNJ and the New Jersey Main Street Alliance; and serving as board member for the Girl Scouts of New Jersey, and as elected official and President of Roselle Public Schools Board of Education.



# Class of 2017



## Gino Hernández

A Businessman, Community Activist, Singer, Songwriter, Choir Director, Lawyer, Paralegal, Real State Agent.

Gino graduated from the Law School of Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo; holds a Paralegal Certificate from Mercer County Community College; and is a licensed Real Estate Agent in New Jersey.

Gino migrated to the United States in 1999 and since then has been involved in the movement to empower the Latino community in the City of Trenton. He is Co-founder of the Dominican Association of Mercer County; co-founder and advisor for the Colombian Civic Association of Mercer County; and guided the creation of the Guatemalan, Costa Rican and Ecuadorian Civic Associations.

His community affiliations include Latino Leadership Alliance of New Jersey; Small Business Association of Trenton; and the National Dominican American Council (NDAC).



## Heidi Hernández

Financial Analyst, Public Relations, Event Planner, Fundraiser.

She is currently the Executive Director of Chamber of Commerce of Washington Heights and Inwood. Prior, Heidi was business partner of "I am Bella Spa".

Her 24 years-plus tenure at Columbia University includes the following job titles: Finance Coordinator, Financial Analyst, Jr. Accountant, Bookkeeper, Accounts Payable Specialist, and Gift Recorder. She earned her Business Management/A.O.S. Degree from Katharine Gibbs School.

Her community affiliations include being board member of Dominican American National Roundtable; Member of the Board of Delegates of Latino Leadership Alliance; Secretary of Camara de Comercio Empresarias Latinas; and Secretary of the New Jersey Latin American Association.

# Class of 2017



## **María Isabel Alarcón**

Born in Cali, Colombia, Maria Isabel migrated with her mother to Jersey City Heights, New Jersey at the age of five. She returned to Colombia to complete a rigorous mathematics curriculum for her high school diploma. In 2012, Isabel graduated from Berkeley College with a Bachelor of Science degree in International Business.

Her community volunteering work includes: *Stupid Cancer Organization; Relay for Life; Habitat for Humanity; and the Hoboken Homeless Shelter.*

She currently serves as a Government Relations Associate at Berkeley College; and continues to work with legislative offices to make higher education available to all New Jersey students. Isabel continues to encourage and mentor the youth within her community to seek educational opportunities as a tool to acquire knowledge and progression.



## **Joannie Morales**

Honest, out-going, consistent, humble, friendly and community oriented.

Ms. Morales is currently CEO of J.MO Financial Group, a nationwide organization. She has been in the Banking Business along the past 17 years. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Ryder University, Lawrenceville, NJ.

My mission is to help individuals obtain financial security, stability and to provide a customer service experience that is second to none. I care about children, economic empowerment, education, environment and social services.

*"LALEA is an excellent program. Maria Teresa and Nestor put together a program like no other; a program that will benefit a lot of people. I encourage all to take. Among the many things I learned, I learned that you can overcome, no matter the circumstances."*

# Class of 2017



## José Colón

A Banker, Finance Consultant & Business Development Officer.

His professional affiliations include JPMorgan Chase Bank N.A., Sovereign Bank/Santander US, PNC Bank N.A., NJ Economic Development Authority, Washington Mutual Bank. F/A, and Washington Mutual Bank F/A.

Mr. Colón Attained an Associate Degree in Microcomputer Business Systems, from The City University of New York-NYC College of Technology, and completed numerous training programs at JPMorgan Chase & Co.- Advanced Business Cash Flow Analysis, The Risk Management Association-Business Cash Flow Analysis, Wolf & Sampson PC-Tax Exempt Bond Financing Training, and McManimon & Scotland PC-Tax Exempt Bond Financing.

His professional affiliations include: Devry University, United States Hispanic Advocacy Association, Rutgers University, Statewide Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey, Council For Trade and Investment Promotion, & delegate of the Latino Leadership Alliance (LLANJ).



## Caty Polanco

A Political Activist, Community Organizer, Mother.

Ms. Polanco is currently employed by the Bergen County Department of Health, and previously, by the US Census Bureau.

She obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and Accounting from Eastwick College in Hackensack.

Caty migrated to the United States from the Dominican Republic, with her family at the age of 18. They settled in Paterson, where she resided until relocating to Garfield, NJ in 2007.

Her Community affiliations include being Democratic Party Municipal Chair, Vice-President of Latin American Democratic Association, Board Member of the Dominican American Council of New Jersey, and volunteer for the *Desfile Estatal Dominicano of New Jersey*.



# Class of 2017



## Edwin Matías

An Entrepreneur, Political Contributor, General Contractor, Business Mentor

CEO of Quantum Dynamics Consulting, LLC, Diamond Tech Property Development, Inc., and Quantum Sound Bar & Lounge.

Mr. Matias finds satisfaction in mentoring emerging business leaders and influencing their success.

He was born in Jersey City, attended Dickinson High School, and has been a lifelong resident of Hudson County.

*"Among many other things, LALEA has shown me the importance of giving back and mentoring. It has reinforced my core belief that politics permeates everything, and has a particular influence in the success of entrepreneurship in this country."*



## Manuel E. Martínez

An Educator, Businessman, Elected Official, Community Activist

Currently CEO and Manager of Martinez Memorial, LLC. and Paterson Board of Education Commissioner.

Mr. Martínez professional affiliations include being Director of Community Schools, 2nd grade teacher, and Program Manager of the Great Falls Youth Corps (GFYC) and Paterson Youth Council (PYC).

His educational background includes a Bachelor's Degree of Mortuary Science from McAllisters Institute of Mortuary Science, New York; Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Family & Child Studies, Educational Leadership from Montclair State University; and an Associate's Degree of Arts from Bergen County Community College, Paramus, NJ.

# Class of 2017



## Miriam Younan

A Real Estate Agent, Insurance Broker, Community Activist.

Miriam is currently a Sales Associate at Coldwell Bank.

Along past years, Miriam has been actively working as a real state agent and insurance broker. She has provided key opinion to dozens of individuals interested in buying houses and properties. She has also interacted with dozens of buyers interested in obtaining insurance coverages for themselves and their families.

She graduated from James J. Ferris High School.

*"My dream has always been to make my clients very happy. Whether you are buying, selling or investing, together we can make it happen!"*



## Patricia Bullón

A Public Relations & Marketing Expert, Entrepreneur & Artist.

She migrated from Guayaquil, Ecuador to the United States as a child.

In 1997 she founded Metropolitan Media Marketing Services, and in 1999, she founded the Patzy Gatzky Co., an import and export company.

Ms. Bullón attained an Associate Degree from Passaic Community College and a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration/Public Relations from Farleigh Dickinson University.

She is also certified by Rutgers University in Food and Nutrition education. She is an instructor of arts and crafts at *Fundación Manos a la Ayuda*.

Ms. Bullón has produced more than 30 acrylic paintings, and is currently painting *The Aquarium Mural* for Paterson Public School #15.

# Class of 2017



## Rev. Cleo Santiago

Senior Pastor, Love of Jesus Family Church, Bayonne.

Reverend Santiago is a Clinical Chaplain at Serenity Hospice and Hudson County Correctional Facility. He is also certified in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).

Rev. Santiago serves as Chairperson of Evangelism & Community Outreach for the Latino Ministers of New Jersey, and member of the temporary Strategy Team for Jersey City Together, a coalition of 30 interfaith congregations.

After 13 years of service at the Love of Jesus Family Church of Jersey City with Pastors Rich and Alana McDonald, he was ordained pastor.

Rev. Santiago is happily married to Lizette Santiago and has four children - Jorge, Marissa, Lailani, and Caleb.



## Rev. Fernando Plaza

A Social, Political and Cultural Activist, Presbitero, Ministro Evangélico, Estudiante Eterno.

Reverend Plaza was born in Esmeraldas, Ecuador. He currently resides in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Rev. Plaza's community affiliations include being Chair of the New Jersey Latino Ministers Association.

Currently, he is the editor and publisher of a magazine about the Hispanic community in the State of New Jersey.

For his selfless and meaningful contributions, he has been the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions, including a special New Jersey Senate Recognition.



# Class of 2017



## **Rev. Juan Rodríguez de la Cruz**

Rev. Rosario de la Cruz is the Priest In Charge at Grace Church, which promotes a creative, loving and inspiring ministry to enhance discipleship and program development. In this Church each congregation's member is a central piece of the ministry. Each member is afforded opportunities to discover his/her gifts while engaging in God's Mission.

He has 24 years experience in parish ministry, as he was ordained as Deacon in 1992, and as Priest in 1993.

Rev. Rosario's educational background includes: Project Management Certificate, University Of Adelaide; Hispanic Latino Ministry; Church Pension Group/ Training Institute for Clergy; Pan American Health Organization - World Health Organization; Diocesan School for Theological Studies; Center for Theological Studies; Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias; and High School Manuel de Jesús Peña y Reynoso.



## **Rossanna Genao**

A Business Administrator, Entrepreneur, Public Servant.

Rossanna arrived in New York in 1989, on a visitor's visa, while a student of Business Administration. She got married in New York where she lived for many years. She then returned to her native Dominican Republic to start her own Clothing and Fashion Design business.

After several more years, she decided to return to the United States; she settled in Camden, NJ while pregnant, but determined to make a life for herself and her child.

After working for Pritchard, Inc., a residential and corporate cleaning service for several years, Rossanna started her own company; which she now operates successfully.

*"I'm grateful for all the knowledge I've acquired at LALEA. It has equipped me to carry out what I'm the most passionate about: helping in the growth and development of my community."*

# Class of 2017



## Sara Batres

A Community Organizer, Mother, Businesswoman.

Ms. Batres migrated to the United States from her native Guatemala, over three decades ago. She has been a resident of Trenton for most of that time. She is married and mother of five children: Arlyme, Axel, Derek, Kenneth and Manuel Jr.

She currently works for Essex County Small Business Administration, and volunteers with several non-profit organizations including *Salcajenses Unidos* and the *Guatemala General Consulate of New York*.

*"LALEA has meant so much to me. It has exposed me to areas I had not known before, like U.S. Government, Criminal Justice & Law Enforcement. I particularly appreciated the seminars on Leadership Styles and Public Speaking."*



## Sebastian Rodríguez

A Program Manager, Grant Contract Manager, Author, Elected Official.

Mr. Sebastian Rodríguez is currently the Director of Programs and Administration at Bergen Family Center Inc.

He has a M. S. in Nonprofit Management from The New School University of New York, and a B.S. in Athletic Administration from St. John's University, Jamaica, Queens.

He received the Jackie Robinson Foundation Scholarship from St. John's University Athletic Administration.

His community affiliations include being a Teaneck Board of Education Trustee, and Board Member of the Acelero Learning Inc. He has received the Community Service Award from Teaneck Chamber of Commerce.

# Special Message from Class of 2017



Photo by Eduardo Hoepelman

**Whereas there is an urgent need for more holistic leaders who can honestly and respectfully represent and advocate for the socio-economic and political advancement of our our diverse communities;**

**Whereas we, Class of 2017, are appreciative of the unique life-changing professional leadership opportunity we have been afforded by the Latino Leadership Academy, an educational initiative made possible thanks to the collaboration of the Institute for Latino Studies, Berkeley College and the Latino Leadership Alliance;**

**We, the members of the Latino Leadership Academy's Class of 2017, unanimously and wholeheartedly have resolved to support and mentor upcoming eligible candidates for Class of 2018 and beyond. Our pledge is sincere, and unconditional.**

Those interested in applying are encouraged to contact *the Latino Leadership Academy* via [llanj@gmail.com](mailto:llanj@gmail.com) and [thelatinoinstitute@gmail.com](mailto:thelatinoinstitute@gmail.com)



# LATINO LEADERSHIP ACADEMY 2017



Fellows examining prison wall writings at the Burlington County Prison Museum.



Patricia Bombelyn, Esq. teaching class on U.S. Government.



Fellows at the U.S. Capitol.



Fellow Carlos Salinas presenting on class project at Rutgers School of Law.



Fellows after a seminar at Rutgers School of Law.



Fellows on a tour at the Historic Burlington County Prison Museum.



LALEA fellow Edwin Matias participating in class at Berkeley College.



# LATINO LEADERSHIP ACADEMY 2017



Dr. Maria Teresa Montilla teaching the class on leadership styles at Rutgers School of Law.



LLANJ Vice President Paul Perez sharing at the political campaign class.



Fellows at the U.S. Marshal Training Center, Lawrenceville, NJ at class on criminal justice.



Henry Sosa teaching the political campaign class at Rutgers School of Law



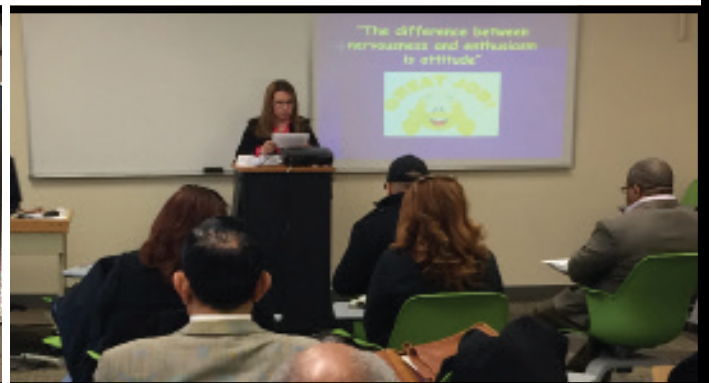
Fellows at the U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC after the class on Ethics and Values in Public Service.



Julio Marenco teaching the political campaign class at Rutgers School of Law.



Fellows at the at the Marshal Training Center in Lawrenceville, NJ.



Joannie Morales presenting at Berkeley College.



# LATINO LEADERSHIP ACADEMY 2017





# LATINO LEADERSHIP ACADEMY 2017



U.S. Capitol Official Tour Guide



U.S. Capitol Official Tour Guide



Fellows at the US Capitol



Patricia Bombelyn, Esq.

Newark City Council, NJ



# LATINO LEADERSHIP ACADEMY 2017



Fernando Alonso, Esq.

Newark City Council, NJ



Manuel E. Martinez

Newark City Council, NJ



Maria Teresa Montilla



Historic Burlington County Prison Museum



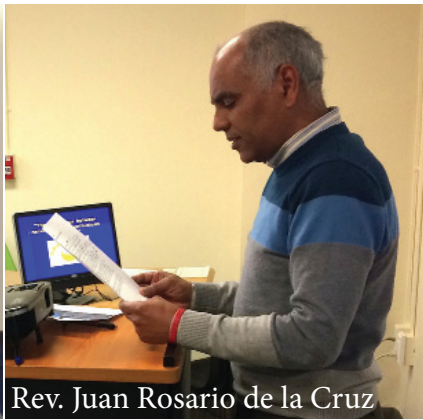
# LATINO LEADERSHIP ACADEMY 2017



Maria Isabel Alarcon



Yrma Eloisa Mercedes



Rev. Juan Rosario de la Cruz



Gino Hernandez



Councilman Luis Quintana  
Newark City Council, NJ



# Graduation Ceremony



Fellows getting ready for graduation ceremony.



Maria Teresa & Nestor Montilla presenting certificate to Alex Calix Rodríguez



Carla Jiménez



Carlos Salinas



María Isabel Alarcón



# Graduation Ceremony



**Yrma E. Mercedes**



**Edwin K.C. Matías**



**Elvin Dominici**



**Erick Cedano**



**Gino Hernández**



**Heidy Hernández**



# Graduation Ceremony



**Joannie Morales**



**Jose Colon**



**Caty Polanco**



**Manuel E. Martínez**



**Miriam Younan**



**Patricia Bullon**



# Graduation Ceremony



Receiving certificate on behalf of Rev. Cleo Santiago.



Rev. Fernando Plaza



Rev. Juan Rosario



Sebastián Rodríguez



Rossanna Genao



Maria Isabel Alarcon & Eric Cedano honoring Maria Teresa & Nestor Montilla on behalf of Class of 2017.



# Graduation Ceremony



FL Nestor Montilla, Sr., Lucilo Santos, Caty Polanco, Dr. Maria Teresa Montilla, Rev. Alejandro Benjamin, and Laureana Morgan and her husband and grandchild.



Fellows posing with Dr. Maria Teresa and Nestor Montilla and Jose Martinez, co-chair of the Civil Rights Committee of the Latino Leadership Alliance.



Photos by Eduardo Hoepelman

Reverend Alejandro Benjamin delivering graduation prayer.



# Graduation Ceremony



From left, fellow Edwin Matías, Teri Duda, Berkeley College Vice President for Government Relations, Valedictorian Maria Alarcon, fellow Jose Colon and a family member.



Some fellows posing after graduation ceremony.



Photos by Eduardo Hoepelman

From left, Patricia Bombelyn, Esq., Martin Perez, Esq., Nestor Montilla, Sr., Dr. Maria Teresa Montilla, Jose Martinez, Hector Bonilla and Fernando Alonso, Esq.



# Graduation Ceremony



From left, Angela Harrington, Berkeley College's Assistant Vice President of Communications and External Relations, Maria Teresa Montilla, Maria Isabel Alarcon, Teri Duda, Berkeley College Vice President for Government Relations, Nestor Montilla, Sr.



Class of 2017 posing with ILS and LLANJ leadership.



Valedictorian Maria Isabel Alarcon

Photos by Eduardo Hoepelman



# Graduation Ceremony



Photos by Eduardo Hoepelman

Nestor Montilla, Sr., Martin Perez, Esq., Hector Bonilla, Angela Harrington, Rev. Alejandro Benjamin and Fernando Alonso, Esq.

Teri Duda, Berkeley College Vice President for Government Relations



Some Fellows of Class of 2017 listening to the speech of National Civil Rights Leader Martin Perez, Esq.



Martin Perez, Esq., Member of Rutgers University Board of Governors



# Graduation Ceremony



Class of 2017 procession.



Class of 2017 procession.



Class of 2017 procession

Photos by Eduardo Hoepelman

# THE DIFFERENCE IS IN OUR PEOPLE

Berkeley College congratulates  
Maria Isabel Alarcon on her graduation from  
the Latino Leadership Academy.

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*So proud of you Joannie  
Congratulations!*

*Edwin Rosa*



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CONGRATULATIONS TO

*Commissioner Manny Martinez  
&  
The Latino Leadership Academy  
Class of 2017*

FROM

*Robert Guarasci and the  
New Jersey Community  
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*Passaic County Freeholder  
Tj Best*

*The Paterson Board of Education Commissioners*

*President Dr. Chris Irving  
Vice President Chrystal Cleaves  
Commissioner Oshin Castillo  
Commissioner Flavio Rivera  
Commissioner Nakeema Redmond*

Join Us In  
Congratulating  
Sara Batres  
on her  
Graduation From  
The Latino  
Leadership Academy

With Love,  
Mother Maria Hortensia  
Husband Manuel Sic

and

Children:  
Arlyme,  
Axel,  
Derek,  
Kenneth  
and  
Manuel Jr.

*Pura Vida Creations*  
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*Maria Isabel Marcon*

on her

Graduation From The  
Latino Leadership Academy

*Wishing you many years of Success*



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I am Jeffrey Rodriguez, a photographer based out of New Jersey, owner of Pura Vida Creations. I want to be part of a special moment in your life, and be there to capture the pure essence of the Pura Vida, into a photograph you will always treasure.

Jeffrey Rodriguez

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www.Pvc.Photography

973.405.1623





*Congratulations*

*to*

*Maria Isabel Alarcon*

*on her achievement.*

*Warm success in your future endeavors.*

**Hector Hidalgo**

**Vice President - Sales & Logistics division**

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# THE NEW JERSEY LATIN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION

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Salutes

*Heidy Hernández*

&

The Class of 2017

of

The Latino Leadership Academy

A signature educational initiative of  
The Institute for Latino Studies and the Latino Leadership Alliance  
preparing new generations of holistic leaders.





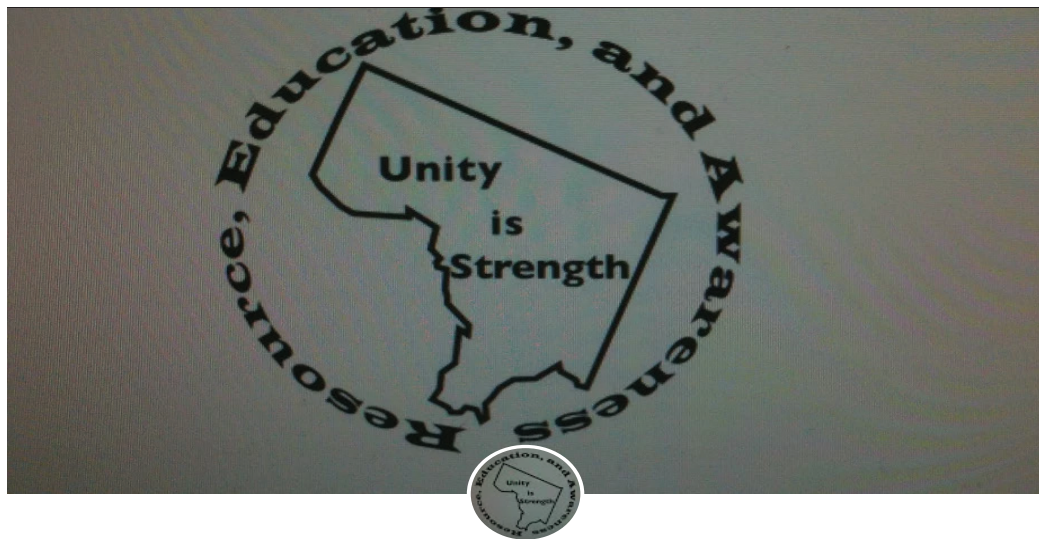
THE CITY OF  
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**Mayor Jimmy Davis**  
Congratulates Miriam Younan  
and  
The Latino Leadership Academy  
Class of 2017



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Latinos, Hispanics, Teaneck, Education, Advocacy, Culture

**Mission:**

To promote a positive awareness of the Latino Community in Teaneck, NJ, to be a resource for Latinos and others, through education, advocacy and participation in cultural/social community events.

**Goals:**

To share the richness, diversity, and uniqueness of the Latino community with the general population of our town through building community, networking, and participating in the life and growth of Teaneck.



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from**

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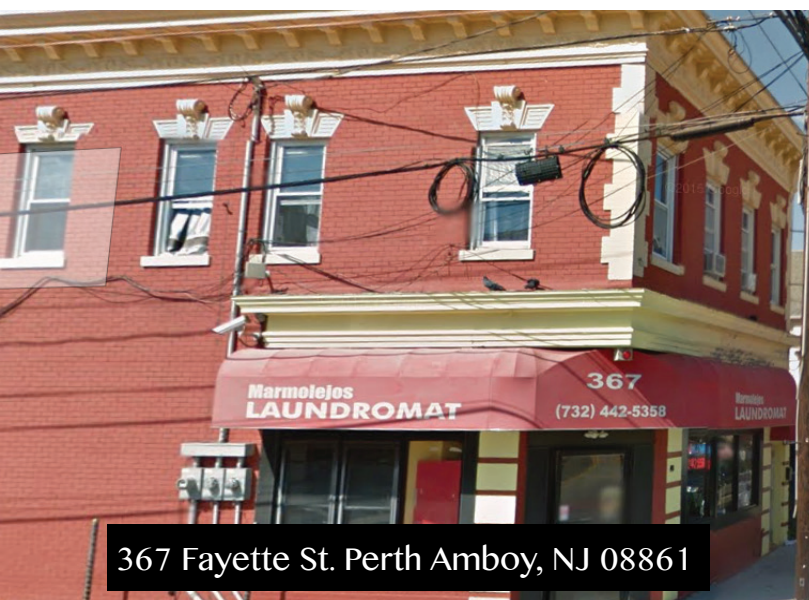
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The Latino American Democratic Association of NJ

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*Caty Polanco*

on Her Graduation from  
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**Congratulates**

***Ms. Patricia Bullón***  
on her Graduation  
from the **Latino Leadership Academy**  
on Saturday, May 20, 2017  
at Berkeley College in Woodland Park, NJ

# The Hispanic State Parade of NJ



Congratulates  
**Ms. Patricia Bullón**  
for Graduating from  
The Latino Leadership Academy



*Love of Jesus Family Church*  
*Jersey City*





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Graduation Ceremony - Saturday, May 20, 2017 at Berkeley College, Woodland Park, NJ 07424  
An initiative of the Institute for Latino Studies in collaboration with the Latino Leadership Alliance (LLANJ) & Berkeley College.

[www.instituteforlatinostudies.org](http://www.instituteforlatinostudies.org) [www.llanj.org](http://www.llanj.org)

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