

Illustrious Award Recipients - Religion

The Illustrious Awards

Honoring Distinguished Latinos



Most Hispanics in the United States are affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church. But the Catholic share of the Hispanic population is declining, while rising numbers of Hispanics are Protestant or unaffiliated with any religion. Indeed, nearly one-in-four Hispanic adults (24%) are now former Catholics, according to a major nationwide Pew Research Center's survey of more than 5,000 Hispanics. Altogether, trends suggest that some religious polarization is taking place in the Hispanic community, with the shrinking majority of Hispanic Catholics holding the middle ground between two growing groups.



Rev. Ephraím Rivera



Rev. David Greco

Illustrious Award Recipient - Religion

Pioneering



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Ephraim Rivera was born in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico on May 15, 1941, one of eleven children. He was raised in a Christian home, and ordained to the ministry by *Iglesia de Dios*, Mission Board in New Jersey. He obtained a bachelor's degree in theology from Universidad Teológica del Caribe in Puerto Rico; and a Doctorate Honoris Causa in Divinity from Seminario Sud-Americano in Quito, Ecuador.

He recounts preaching his first sermon at the age of 11, and pastoring his first church at 17, when he took over the church his father had founded in 1936, in Cupey Bajo, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico. He is second generation Pentecostal. His parents were Pastors all their lives. Rivera's Pastoring ministry spans 31 years.

During the 13 years he pastored in Puerto Rico, he founded churches in Aruba and Curaçao. He was led by the holy spirit to move to New Jersey in 1982, Paterson, specifically, where he remained for seven years. Pastor Rivera was always aware that God's purpose for his life included venturing outside the walls of the church. He was a 'Pastor without walls'.

It was in 1989, when he would expand his realm of influence to millions, in the United States and Latin America by becoming the first program director of Radio Vision Cristiana, the first and largest Spanish radio station in the tristate area.

A group of visionaries, including pastors Calin Castelo, Luciano Padilla, Miguel Mena, Pablo Fernandez, Franklin

Simpson, Kittim Silva, and David Greco, who was the facilitator of the project, and first general manager of the station, forged forth with the founding of Radio Vision Cristiana, 'La Emisora de Dios'. Rivera never imagined RVC would become the vehicle for Latino Evangelicals in New York to make their mark in the United States. RVC transcended geographical and denominational boundaries to become the most listened to Spanish radio station in US, with frequencies in the Dominican Republic, and Ecuador.

In August 1998, the Executive Committee of Iglesia de Dios assigned him supervision of the New England Hispanic Region.

In 2000, he became Northern Central Regional Bishop of Iglesia de Dios in the United States.

An avid reader and writer, he published his first book *Aguijones y Clavos*, and is currently working on two new books.

A charismatic preacher, Ephraim Rivera is a pioneer religious leader who has left a legacy in the United States and Latin America, in the area of church participation in society; and the church as an agent of social change.

When asked about the biggest accomplishment of his life, he replies without hesitation: "My biggest accomplishment as a good servant of Jesus Christ is to have been able to fulfill God's purpose in my life, and that is to serve the people."

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David Greco was born in Argentina, he migrated to NYC with his parents, as a young child. A man of faith who has dedicated his life to being one of God's instruments to save lives, disseminate the gospel to the world, and to the advancement of the church on earth.

His accomplishments are many, and include the founding, establishment and development of Radio Vision Cristiana, the largest Spanish radio station in US, 'La Emisora de Dios', dedicated to promoting the kingdom of God among millions of listeners in the United States and the American Continent, including the Caribbean. His ministry has extended throughout the Americas.

Currently, Greco is the Sr. Pastor of Kingsgate Church, in Woodland Park, NJ. He, and Denise, his wife, are fourth-generation Christians. They both were born and raised in Christian homes in an environment of faithfulness to the Lord and in service to others. They have dedicated their lives to serve God, loving Him, loving others and extending that love to their region and the world.

The Kingsgate family has purposed to live out the commandment of Jesus to first love God with all of their heart, mind, strength and soul and second, they are to love their neighbors as they would love themselves.

The Grecos teach that when people have a healthy relationship with God, they will have a healthy view of themselves and healthy relationships with their neighbors. David also travels throughout the world encouraging believers to grow in their relationship with God and to bring the Kingdom of God into their sphere of influence.

Their three children Anafaye, Christi and David are all involved in ministry.



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Passaic *New Jersey*

A Clean, Safe & Welcoming Community for All

A Special Message from the Mayor



MAYOR HECTOR C. LORA

I would like to take this opportunity to salute

*The Institute for Latino Studies
at Berkeley College*

for its efforts to ensure that our legacy as Latinos
in the United States is properly documented.

Our children and their children will know that our
generation of Latinos have made significant
contributions to what
the United States of America is today

Congratulations to all 2018 Illustrious Awards Honorees

Special Message from Hon. José Arango *Hudson County Republican Party Chairman*

As I accept the *2018 Illustrious Award in Politics*,
I am humbled by the men and women
I join as an honoree on this memorable occasion.

My heartfelt CONGRATULATIONS to all Illustrious Awards Recipients
on the honorable endeavor of well-representing your professions.

Our gratitude to
The Institute for Latino Studies at Berkeley College
for capturing our individual and collective stories for generations to come.

Thank you!



