

La Biblioteca

A Latinx Resource Guide: Civil Rights Cases and Events

Episode 5: Ahora Es Cuando: Exploring the Latinx Electorate

Library of Congress: From the Library of Congress, in Washington D.C.

Representative Leger Fernandez: There are only ten Latinas in Congress—ten. Now we all know, we are a much larger percentage of the American citizenry than that, of the American population than that.

Representative Joaquin Castro: There have been so many wonderful Latinos and Latinas who have served in Congress, really fighting that good fight and making sure that Latinos are well represented in American society. And, that's as important now as it was back then, because there remain a lot of challenges towards equality and justice for the Latino community.

Representative Teresa Leger Fernandez: Ahora es cuando, and so I answered the call and said it's time now for me to run because, "ahora es cuando" that we start addressing these major structural issues that have been holding our community back. So, that's why I decided to run, and it's been a wonderful ride so far.

Representative Joaquin Castro: Part of what it means to be Latino, is making sure that our voices are heard in every corner of American society.

Herman Luis Chavez: Hola, and welcome to La Biblioteca, an exploration of the Library of Congress collections that focus on the cultures of Spain, Portugal, Latin America, and the Hispanic community in the United States. I'm Herman Luis Chavez, a Huntington Fellow in the Hispanic Reading Room.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: I'm Maria Guadalupe Partida, also a Huntington Fellow in the Hispanic Reading Room. Hola, Herman.

Herman Luis Chavez: Hola, Lupita.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Season two of La Biblioteca focuses on A Latinx Resource Guide: Civil Rights Cases and Events in the United States, a research guide which has been curated here at the Library of Congress. This is our fifth episode, which discusses the Latinx electorate and voter engagement in the United States.

Herman Luis Chavez: The first National Hispanic Heritage Month was commemorated in 1981 as a celebration of Hispanic roots, culture, and legacy stretching from September 15 to October 15. Flashforward 33 years later, and as the Hispanic community in the U.S. surpasses 60

million, more and more Latinos are entering the electorate, receiving educational degrees, and making their voices heard.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: In 2021, we celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month, and acknowledge the diverse and rich culture that our community transcends.

Herman Luis Chavez: At the same time, we also allude to the challenges and critical changes ahead that we will need to overcome. In the 2020 U.S. Presidential election, Latinos cast a total of 16.6 million votes. This is an increase of 30.9% percent from the 2016 presidential election, marking substantially higher voter turnout and participation.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: In states across the country, Latino participation in political processes is increasingly critical. In several so-called battleground states, Latinos are considered decisive, but their representation in policy making—as interns, staffers, and/or legislators still pales in comparison to their population numbers.

Herman: The Latinx electorate's contribution to political outcomes demonstrates their potential impact for policy, especially as the fastest growing demographic in the United States. Even so, there is a lot of ground to cover to ensure equal access to the halls of government.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Pay Our Interns, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization is committed to ensuring that all students, especially minority students—Black, Latinx, and Native American students—have access to paid internships nationwide, including at our nation's capital. In a 2020 report, Pay Our Interns found that Latinos make up 20% of the nation's undergraduate students, yet they only constitute 5% of the U.S. House of Representatives' interns. Legislative internships form a pipeline, an avenue for low-income and minority students to gain professional experience and represent their communities and experiences at the national level. Many congressional interns climb the ladder into permanent positions, permitting them to have a seat at the table in policymaking.

Herman Luis Chavez: Each and every day, the Latino community is growing; individuals with Venezuelan, Dominican, Guatemalan, and Honduran origins are currently the fastest growing populations within the Latinx community.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: More and more young U.S.-born Latinos are reaching their 18th birthday and joining an estimated 32 million people in the Latino electorate.

Herman Luis Chavez: Today, we speak with Congressmembers about their Latinx electorates and the implications and insights they have as our communities continue to transform. Congresswoman Teresa Leger Fernandez represents New Mexico's 3rd Congressional District. Among other committees, Congresswoman Leger Fernandez has been appointed to the House Committee on Natural Resources, where she serves as the Chair of the Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States. Before coming to Congress, Leger Fernandez worked as an attorney and advocate, and won important legal battles to advance voting rights, promote

tribal sovereignty, and protect our environment and acequia waters. She has helped secure nearly a billion dollars for, and then helped build, schools, rural health clinics, broadband, businesses, affordable housing and critical infrastructure for New Mexico.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Hi Congresswoman Leger Fernandez. Welcome to La Biblioteca.

Representative Leger Fernandez: I love engaging in these conversations that bring in all of our community and our interests, so thank you for inviting me.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: You're the first Latina and woman to be elected to represent New Mexico's third Congressional district, could you tell us a little bit about your trajectory as a Latina as and a working mother, who won the third Congressional district just this past election?

Representative Leger Fernandez: Well, I like saying that 100 years ago the very first Latina to ever to run for Congress was Adelita Otero Warren. She was a suffragist. And, after she convinced the State of New Mexico to ratify the 19th Amendment, she ran for office. She didn't win, but 100 years later, I'm really proud to represent this district. It really was truly a calling to step up and run because I had worked for 30 years with my community on the range of issues—whether it be from helping to start up an immigration clinic when I was at law school to working with Native American tribes to voting rights. Right? And so, I knew I had a breadth of experience that was important to take to Congress, that this voice about multiculturalism, which I lived, was important to take to Congress. I used my father's rallying cry which is, “ahora es cuando.” Ahora es cuando, and so I answered the call and said it's time now for me to run because, “ahora es cuando” that we start addressing these major structural issues that have been holding our community back. So, that's why I decided to run, and it's been a wonderful ride so far.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: It's so wonderful to hear about how you were influenced by your community in the many roles you played throughout your time as a public servant and by the many pressing issues that you have addressed for and alongside your community in New Mexico. Although Adelita Otero Warren did not win a congressional seat, your father's rallying cry “ahora es cuando” rings true today, as you rise to be the first woman to represent New Mexico's third Congressional district. We have seen similar victories in Texas and other states, where more and more women are winning congressional seats. We would love to hear your thoughts on how we can obtain even greater female representation in Congress and and beyond, including in all sectors where women lack representation.

Representative Leger Fernandez: There are only 10 Latinas in Congress—10. Now we all know, we are a much larger percentage of the American citizenry than that, of the American population than that. I can tell you I've been in lots of rooms where we have wonderful allies, but if I don't raise the issue, it might not get raised. Once I raised the issue, I get support for it. Right? There's strong support among our allies, but sometimes you need to come out of that lived experience to raise the issue. In New Mexico, women participate at much greater percentages than men in turnout. In my district, 55 to 45. So, women are the ones getting people elected. My district is a majority-minority district. We're helping elect people. It's important that we then become the candidates as well, and that's what I've done and what my

race indicates. Hispanos and Latinos in my district show up, but we need to show up everywhere. Nine million more Latinos participated in the 2020 election than before. That's a huge, right? That's not still enough. We still don't have the high levels of participation that other groups do, so we need to not ever be taken for granted. And we need to keep showing up, we need keep putting forward candidates who reflect the community. And, that's how we will gain political power, which then translates into policies that impact our community, that favor our community.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Thank you representative. Indeed, we need to show up everywhere. We are now a little bit over a year into the pandemic, and data has shown that COVID-19 has disproportionately affected women. Studies show that women, especially women of color, are more likely to bear the toll of lacking healthcare, receiving less income, or having less access to child and elder care. All of these issues have created setbacks for women in general. Representative Leger Fernandez, you are a cancer survivor and you are aware of the difficulties of health care in the United States, could you tell us more about the economic and healthcare impact that your district has faced during this pandemic and how can we address the issues that women of color are currently facing.

Representative Leger Fernandez: It is key to talk about the disproportionate impact, right? Those are two words that are ingrained in our mind now. Why? Because it's a disproportionate impact on people of color, but especially on women. And, that comes out of have several issues. One is that women, and Latinas in particular, have been those who have been shall we call, the essential workers. Right? They are the ones who are engaged in those jobs that were hardest hit by the pandemic. As an example of that, Latinas at the lowest paid of all women. Right? We know that Equal Pay Day comes different for different people. Right? We need to look at this moment where Latinas were kicked out of the workforce or had to stay out because they have to care for either their parents or their children because they didn't have access to daycare and they didn't have access to eldercare. We need to focus on working families, we need to focus on creating and strengthening a middle class. And, the way you do that is: invest more in childcare, invest more in increasing the pay that women get, so we're not making \$7 an hour, but we make 15, 20, 25 and up. Right? So, we were pushing for raising the minimum wage. The child tax credit—that's going to lift 4 million children out of poverty. I want everybody to make sure that they go and file their taxes, because, even if you don't have to pay, we need to get you in line so you could start receiving that child tax credit. Because if you get that child tax credit, that's going to help you pay for the child care, that's going to help you in the next steps. So, everything we're doing we're like building the blocks for us to be able to walk out of poverty. And, that includes: childcare, that includes early childhood education, that includes the community college, investments that we're doing. We're going to be putting more money into minority serving institutions, Hispanic Serving Institutions, so that you can get additional skills and training and certifications and degrees. So, that helps you walk out of poverty and into the middle class. Everything is interconnected, but we are addressing it all for the first time in generations. And, I am so excited to be part of that effort.

Herman Luis Chavez: Thank you so much Representative. It's so interesting to see the relationship that so many different aspects of policy can have to support those communities that are most disproportionately affected, especially now, as we start to look to the future with this pandemic and what it might mean for us to really rebuild for those communities that have been affected most. I want to pivot to some of the other aspects of your role in Congress. You were recently elected in February as the Chair of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States to empower and support tribal nations. Can you tell us about the relationship between indigenous and Latinx American communities? How can these communities connect with and support one another?

Representative Leger Fernandez: I'm a 17th generation New Mexican. Anybody who's been in New Mexico, you know over 17 generations means that I have this beautiful Indigenous heritage as well. So, I need to celebrate my own history, recognizing both the negative aspects of it. Right? Because we did do horrible things but also recognizing the beautiful aspects of it, why of this intermarriage between the cultures. Tribes are their own political entities and we need to honor the fact that they are governments. We are connected, and we need to recognize that we're allies because we do share this genetic heritage. We share this very far you know historical heritage, where we were both the oppressors and the oppressed. But now, at this point in time, that we face the need to be allies against some of the discrimination that we face. We need to be allies in favor of protecting our planet. We need to be allies in favor of dismantling the structural basics of discrimination and racism. And, that's where we're allies and we share so much. We share land here in New Mexico. We live right next to each other. So, all of New Mexicans in the northeast region, where we have this large oil and gas, we all have respiratory problems because of our oil and gas exploitation which we've used to power, but we now need to address that. And so, we are allies on environmental justice issues because we suffer the same consequences from it. It's building those relationships, being honest about that historical trauma that we both live through and sometimes create, but then saying what do we do moving forward. And, I think that's a wonderful partnership that we are seeing building definitely here in New Mexico we're building it. And, I look forward to us building it across the country.

Herman Luis Chavez: I think it's really interesting that you mention this aspect of environmental justice. You are coming from a ranching and farming background and you also really advocate for environmental rights in New Mexico and beyond. So, I would love to hear a little bit more about this coalition and collaboration with environmental issues and how we can really you know, work together as not only a Latino community but, as this Latino community that does have these intercultural relationships to advocate for environmental justice.

Representative Leger Fernandez: One of the things to do is to recognize that a lot of Latinos are very tied to the land, where either working the land for others or we actually working the land for ourselves. In New Mexico, we have a lot of families that are ranchers and farmers that are Hispano Latino families. Let's face it, we put food on the table because we rely on our farm workers who are Latinos right and who are working in the plants. And, so we are most directly impacted if we are using pesticides that aren't good for the land or the lungs. If we are pursuing policies that lead to drought, we're not able to grow the crops we need. We are in many ways

stewards of the land together, and we need to sort of say what too can we do to bring our experience about caring deeply about this beautiful place we call home and turn it into policy. And, the way you do that is: you first off say what are the major contributors of climate change. Let's address that, but let's not forget those communities that are most impacted by the climate crisis. And so, what we need to do is invest more heavily into those communities that have fueled our growth, invest more heavily into those communities that have been subject to environmental injustice. I expect everybody listening: hold us accountable, call us up, tell us we're doing the right thing, tell us we're not doing the right thing, communicate with us. Because it only works if the community is out there advocating for the policies. We only get to do our jobs if I can say my constituents want to see this happen. If I can say my constituents, meaning, not just those who elected me, but those who I serve across this nation, want to see this happen. All of you listening, you are the experts on the ground on issues, give us the ideas of how we solve some of these problems.

Herman Luis Chavez: I absolutely I love to hear. I think there's definitely such a great relationship that our communities can be having when it comes to political support that we have with our elected representatives. I want to touch on some of the things that you mentioned today. We have been able to talk about environmental justice, cross community collaborations, we've talked about health disparagement and supporting those most marginalized individuals. I would love to hear what you believe is the most important issue facing the Latino community that you represent—this third district in New Mexico when it comes to policy and community.

Representative Leger Fernandez: Well, we're still coming out of the COVID pandemic and the recession that was induced by the pandemic. So, that is still something we need to do to come out of. We are like the best state in terms of vaccinations and so we're going to be coming out of it, but then, what are we going to see? We're going to see the need for jobs. I want to see us having a high impact jobs. I want to see Northern New Mexico become part of the innovation hub. Right? So, that we're not asking our community to just continue to take the low wage jobs and service, but rather that we needed then feed into what I already talked about—getting the skills that we need, so that we are participating in the higher paid jobs and the jobs in our environment. We need to do a lot to save our environment. So, go out and work in the land you love so much, but let's start getting you paid for working on the land you love so much. Right? And, so I think it's it's that combination of coming out of COVID but then focusing on jobs. Let's make sure those jobs are well paid in they are helping us solve the climate crisis. Because if we don't solve the climate crisis, the hurts going to be worse than this pandemic. And to get that, education is key. Right, that education is at that crux of how we move beyond that. We also need to be healthy, and so we need to make sure we have those rural health clinics built out there, and we need to make sure that everybody has access to healthcare. You start looking at what are the elements that make a thriving community thrive, and they are many. And, we need to remember all of them and how they're all interconnected. Finally, I think it'd be great to see more Latinas running for office so everybody out there listening, get in the pipeline. There are lots of organizations that will help you run, and we need to see more of you running, so we can have Latinos representing our issues in Congress, at the state houses, in city council, at the board of education, everywhere.

Herman Luis Chavez: Thank you so much, I really appreciate those responses, especially these calls to actions. We absolutely believe that there's so many things that our listeners hopefully can be doing. Well, thank you again for your time, Representative. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the Latinx community you would like our listeners to know before we end our time together today?

Representative Leger Fernandez: Voting rights are so important to our community. That ability to vote is at the essential element of what we are as a democracy, and we must reclaim and strengthen our democracy. And so, wherever you're at, get involved in that issue because that is the foundational issue of us to be able to address any of these major policy issues that face our community.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Now, we welcome Representative Joaquin Castro, who represents Texas' 20th district in the U.S. House of Representatives. Serving his fifth term, Representative Castro is the immediate past Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. Before Congress, Representative Castro graduated from Stanford University and Harvard Law School, and served five terms in the Texas Legislature.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Hi Representative Castro, welcome to La Biblioteca.

Representative Joaquin Castro: Yes, great to be with you all, thank you for having me.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: So, you represent the 20th Congressional district of Texas, primarily located in San Antonio and Bexar County, a predominantly Hispanic community where you were born and raised. How has your Latino identity shaped your passion for public service? Is there any former Hispanic member of Congress that has influenced your public service?

Representative Joaquin Castro: Well, in my Congressional district, it was represented by a maverick member of Congress, Henry B. Gonzalez, who represented the district from the 1960s until almost 2000, and he was somebody that fought for civil rights of all people, but especially the Latino community, and there have been so many wonderful Latinos and Latinas who have served in Congress, really fighting that good fight and making sure that Latinos are well represented in American society. And, that's as important now as it was back then, because there remain a lot of challenges towards equality and justice for the Latino community. I grew up in neighborhoods on the West Side of San Antonio, that were more than 90% Mexican American, and I grew up in a family with my mom. She was part of the Chicano civil rights movement, so you know my brother Julian and I—and my brother served as Mayor and HUD Secretary under President Obama—we were constantly made aware of the different societal challenges that Latinos faced in just about every industry that you can imagine. In law and medicine, but also institutionally in government, in being woefully underrepresented and that has shaped, of course, my approach to public service, and also for me what it means to be Latino. Part of what it means to be Latino, is making sure that our voices are heard in every corner of American society.

Herman Luis Chavez: That relationship of community and identity, I think, also factors into the work that can go into public service, and I think when we talk about the idea of you know, being

Latino and what that representation looks like, we have to think really critically about the Latinx Latino electorate in this country. I think the last election really showed us how, you know, different and non monolithic this electorate is. We saw very different voter engagement behaviors and demographics and participation in places like California, Texas, Florida, the Midwest, the East Coast, and all these different areas. There's this really diverse Latino electorate, so we would love if you could tell us a little bit about this incredibly diverse Latino electorate, what those issues of demographics are and what you think its prospective future is.

Representative Joaquin Castro: Well, those are all great questions. As relevant and important as they are now, because the Latino community continues to grow, and not just in places that we've traditionally thought of as having sizable Latino communities, like New York and Florida and California and Texas and Illinois, but increasingly in other parts of the country, where Latino communities are electing their first, the first state representative, the first school board member, in states like Iowa, Minnesota, in South Carolina, and that will continue to be ever more true as the years go on, and so its first of all, a very young community compared to the overall larger American voting community, and so it's a young community, a very diverse community. Even within the Latino population, you have Mexican Americans mostly concentrated in the Southwestern United States, Cuban Americans in along the East Coast and places like New Jersey and New York, Florida, Puerto Ricans, of course, but also Central American, South Americans, and so just a very rich and very diverse community that's making growing impact on American politics. And, it's been a challenge over the years, to make sure that we register folks in the Latino community, but that's going better and then also mobilizing folks and that's improving as well.

Herman Luis Chavez: I think it's really interesting and important that you bring up these issues of voter registration, participating in elections. And, of course, you have a very incredible history as well, both in Congress and with the Texas legislature. Although this is sort of a big question, we'd be really interested to hear what you think is the biggest issue or maybe the a couple of the biggest issues that are affecting the Latinx electorate in the United States, especially when it comes to things like a voter engagement.

Representative Joaquin Castro: Well, I think that probably the largest challenge that we've had for young voters, for Latinx voters, is a lack of outreach by the traditional political establishment to them. A big part of the reason for that is that campaigns, for example, tend to court consistent voters. Because they're limited with time and money, they often go after people who have already availed themselves of the political process: people that have voted in one of the last three elections, for example. Well, you have a lot of young Latinos and Latinas, in particular, but the community generally that sometimes has not voted consistently or hasn't voted at all. And so those folks are oftentimes the ones who are not getting the phone calls to go vote, they're not getting the door knocks, they're not getting the pieces of mail reminding them or asking them to go vote and trying to educate them on the issues. I remember a few years ago, I was going to visit my mom who still lives on the deep West Side of San Antonio, not too far from St Mary's University, and I stopped at this panaderia, this bakery on the way. And, it was around election time and the man behind the counter, a Latino man, recognized me. Although I think he thought I was my brother, but still, I'll say he recognized one of us. And

so, we struck up a conversation, and because the elections were close, I asked him if he was going to go vote. And he said something that has stuck with me these few years. He said that he wanted to vote, but he didn't know what the candidate stood for. And so, he didn't want to make the wrong choice. And, I think you see that with a lot of Latinos and Latinas. When they don't vote, I think there's a tendency to assume that they're disinterested or they just don't care, and I actually think it's the reverse. It's that there's almost this mindset that I don't want to do any harm. If I don't know what these candidates stand for, I don't want to make it worse for everybody by picking the wrong person. And I really think that the onus falls on those of us who have been involved in politics, who were in politics, to make a real effort to engage people who don't who haven't been engaged before. Unless we really do that and really start to reach out in earnest, I feel like we're always going to fall short on our participation rate among Latinos.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Thank you Representative Castro. This story that you just shared with us highlights the importance of community outreach to these underserved communities. When considering the younger Latino population, the Latino Gen Zers, make up 22% of the general Gen Z population, a high percentage that we must take into account. During the 2020 elections 32 million Hispanics were eligible to vote, accounting to 13% of the total electorate, and thus making Hispanics the biggest minority. As more and more Latinos reach their 18th birthday and as outreach remains limited within these communities, what are some common challenges you think are for to both Hispanic registered voters and non-registered voters.

Representative Joaquin Castro: When I think about the challenges, part of the challenge—and let me speak to Texas, as an example. For years, I had asked a lot of the Texas voter registration groups to go down to the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) and engage voters there, register more voters, mobilize more voters. But because the Rio Grande Valley has been overwhelmingly democratic for generations now, oftentimes resources, rather than going there, the resources tend to go to areas that are considered swing districts: competitive districts between Republicans and Democrats. So, that's where you send your block walkers, that's where you have an infusion of people making a bunch of phone calls, that's where outside groups will come in and do a lot of the voter voter mobilization efforts by mail, for example, Well, we've got to do a better job of actually engaging parts of the country, like the Rio Grande Valley. They shouldn't be put off or ignored just because they sided with one party or the other for years.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Thank you Congressman Castro for your commentary. Community outreach and mobilizing voters should extend to each and every single community, especially those who have historically been left behind. Their vote is as important as any other vote. Community outreach is essential but so is individual involvement. As the Latino community continues emerging, How could Latino citizens from differing geographical locations, age groups, and backgrounds, be more engaged with their national or local governments? How could they connect to their representatives?

Representative Joaquin Castro: Well there's different ways I think people can get connected. First, I think folks should always try to reach out to a member of city council or school board member or their state rep or even their member of Congress. Reach out to that person or their staff about issues they care about you know, I think that the easiest way that people should

think about approaching government is to think about it when when you're talking about just starting out in contacting somebody in government or getting involved, get involved based on something that you're interested in or something that you need. For example, when my brother was city on city council for four years and then served as Mayor for about five and a half years, people would reach out on things that directly affected them, you know their sidewalk hadn't been fixed for generations, or their street was very badly beat up or some reason that they were reaching out directly to a member on the city council. Other people reach out and get involved in advocacy groups on issues that they care about, whether it's the rights of immigrants, for example, or animal rights or whatever it may be that somebody's got a passion for, that's what kind of gets them in the door of politics and gets them interested.

Herman Luis Chavez: Absolutely. that's so important, I think that you mentioned this, you know issue of need. I think that connects me a little bit to a comment that you made earlier about how large and important the young Latino community is and how that you know really does have a lot of ramifications for the work that is going to be happening politically, but I would love to talk a little bit about that community, and you know their their current involvements and ways to support and then be supported by by government. There are currently national internship programs like HACU, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, as well as the CHCI Program. How do these programs help Latino students get involved with their government and community issues and, what is the importance of continuing to offer programs like those?

Representative Joaquin Castro: In the United States, I think what we've tended to do better than many countries around the world is build and maintain an infrastructure of opportunity to help people pursue their American dreams, so when we fight for things like great schools and universities, a strong healthcare system, an economy that's built around well paying jobs, so that when people go to work, they can actually support themselves and their family members. When we fight for those opportunities, what you're fighting for is a society where there is an infrastructure of opportunity to help people pursue their dreams. And that means the world, I think, for young Latinos and Latinas, because if we build that infrastructure of opportunity as people in government and as Americans, then you will have a generation that has a chance to actually pursue its dreams. And if we don't, then unfortunately you will have a generation that was much like my parents and grandparents, where there was incredible potential and an incredible talent, but there wasn't always a pathway for people to pursue their dreams. And so you know, I can't imagine how many doctors, we would have had, how many lawyers in the Latino community, how many engineers. how many folks that would have graduated from college in my grandmother's generation if the Latino community had not faced the racism and lack of opportunity that it faced at the time. And so, it's incumbent upon all of us to make sure that this American society is one that provides opportunity for everyone. And also because the policies that are made now by people in Congress, by people in the state legislatures, and even on city councils everywhere, like these decisions that are made now that politicians are going to affect Generation Z for a lot longer than they're going to affect the Baby Boomers or Generation X, my generation.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: This infrastructure of opportunity that you mention, is a critical point, one that gives space for all of members of the community, especially the younger population to have a voice and become equipped to assume larger positions of influence. And with that being said, we would like to ask you if you have any calls to actions or any piece of advice that you would like to convey to our audience listening today

Representative Joaquin Castro: Well, I would just ask people to get involved, to be sure that you vote, of course, but also to get involved where you can on something that you care about. There is so much good to be done in our government and in politics, and I want people to feel like their voice matters, that they can make a difference. Oftentimes, I think sometimes people will shy away from being involved in politics are disengaged because they think that their single vote or their single voice won't matter. And, as somebody now, who has been in public service for 18 years at the state level, and now the federal level, I can tell you there are plenty of times, where I've seen single people—many of whom were new to politics, had never been involved before—make a significant difference in the course of legislation or in the course of our politics, and I hope that people will get involved.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: What a great conversation we just had with Representative Leger Fernandez from the state of New Mexico and Representative Joaquin Castro from my home state of Texas. It was great talking to them. In particular, I want to bring into the spotlight a photo item and a collection item from the Library: a picture of Adelita Otero Warren. As Representative Leger Fernandez mentioned, Otero Warren was a suffragist from New Mexico. She served as New Mexico's first female government official and later on made an unsuccessful Congressional bid in 1922. It's important to note past figures who have contributed to Latino representation and who have paved the path for other women of color to decide to run and of course as Leger Fernandez mentioned, there are currently 10 Latina women who are Congressional members, and of course rallying for more representation in the Latino community is key. Now that Leger Fernandez is the Congressional member of New Mexico's she mentioned in her interview about the importance of coalition building with indigenous population, especially an indigenous population that has close roots with the Hispanic community in New Mexico. It all starts with coalition building with partnerships with all other groups to create accessibility and create more political power and, of course, more policies that benefit such groups.

Herman Luis Chavez: Yeah absolutely Lupita, and for me it really comes back to Congresswoman Leger Fernandez's rallying cry of *ahora es cuando*. That really is the case now really is the time that we are not only growing as a community, but that we are taking up space and these really important electoral positions. We really have to work towards a more representative electoral body for the Latino community and that we are doing that, people are getting elected across local, state, and national elections and our elected officials are also working on that and it's important for us to be aware of what that access means.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Absolutely Herman, *ahora es cuando*, and, as you mentioned, access comes in different forms in different manners and I think one of the access that is very important to acknowledge is the lack of access of Congressional paid internship programs for Latino youth, for Black, Native American students. It is essential for young Latino youth for

Generation Z to also be exposed to policymaking to be at the forefront of the policy decisions that are going on in Congress

Herman Luis Chavez: And it even goes beyond these national internship programs and federal internship programs when we think about access, because there are, of course, Latino electorates in local communities as well. We need to consider how communities and representatives work together in spaces like city councils and school boards and even in university undergraduate government. These are all spaces in which Latino communities are present and where finding representatives that align with those communities' identities is also happening. Identifying that this issue of the Latino electorate is one that happens in every voting space is incredibly important. Both of our guests today have really given us the opportunity to understand what it means to not only stand up for our community, but also to look to the future and what it means for the entire Latino voting base as we continue to grow and expand in this country.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Happy Hispanic Heritage Month 2021! Thank you for tuning in to La Biblioteca, Season 2. I'm Lupita.

Herman Luis Chavez: And I'm Herman. Be sure to tune in to the next episode of La Biblioteca! For more information on the Latinx community and civil rights, visit us online at guides.loc.gov/latinx-civil-rights.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Hasta pronto!

Library of Congress: This has been a presentation of the Library of Congress. Visit us at loc.gov.