

2026
Women of Impact Awards
&
50th Anniversary Celebration



March 6, 2026





KAREN BASS
MAYOR

March 6, 2026

Dear Friends,

It is an honor to welcome you to the 36th Annual **Women of Impact Awards** and to celebrate alongside the City of Los Angeles **Commission on the Status of Women** as we recognize this year's extraordinary honorees.

Hosted by the Civil + Human Rights and Equity Department (LA Civil Rights), this annual gathering reflects Los Angeles' enduring commitment to advancing gender equity and expanding opportunity for women and girls across our city. The Women of Impact Awards shine a light on leaders who are breaking barriers, strengthening communities, and driving meaningful change for Angelenos every day.

For nearly five decades, the Commission on the Status of Women has served as a powerful advocate for fairness, representation, and justice. Its work in partnership with community leaders, advocates, and residents continues to shape a city where women and girls can thrive in every neighborhood and every sector.

Tonight, we celebrate not only individual achievements, but the collective progress we are making together. The honorees we recognize embody resilience, innovation, and service. They are mentors, trailblazers, and changemakers whose impact will be felt for generations to come.

On behalf of the City of Los Angeles, I thank you for your leadership and your dedication to building a more equitable future. Congratulations to all of this year's Women of Impact honorees, and best wishes for an inspiring and memorable celebration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Bass". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Karen" and "Bass" being capitalized and prominent.

Karen Bass

CAPRI MADDOX
GENERAL MANAGER

CLAUDIA LUNA
ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
CALIFORNIA



KAREN BASS
MAYOR

CIVIL + HUMAN RIGHTS
AND EQUITY DEPARTMENT

250 East 1st St., Suite 1000
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

(213) 978-1845

civilandhumanrights.lacity.org



March 6, 2026

Dear Friends,

I am honored to co-host the **36th Annual Women of Impact Awards** with the Commission on the Status of Women. This year's celebration is especially meaningful as we also commemorate the Commission's 50th Anniversary. For half a century, this body has served as a catalyst for progress and a steadfast advocate for women and girls across Los Angeles. Today, we honor that enduring legacy by recognizing the trailblazers who continue to shape our City's future.

To our honorees: congratulations on your extraordinary achievements. Your leadership, vision, and unwavering commitment to equity inspire us all. The impact of your work is tangible - strengthening neighborhoods, influencing policy, and expanding opportunity.

Los Angeles has made historic strides in advancing gender equity. From the representation on our City Council to the women leading critical departments and institutions, we are demonstrating that inclusive leadership strengthens our democracy and our communities. Yet as we reflect on five decades of advocacy, we are reminded that progress requires vigilance, courage, and continued action.

As Executive Director of the LA Civil Rights Department, I remain committed to confronting the challenges that persist, advancing pay equity, expanding access to opportunity, protecting workers' rights, and ensuring Angelenos can live and thrive free from discrimination and harm. The progress of the past fifty years fuels the work ahead. Together, we must build on this foundation so that the doors opened by today's leaders remain open for the next generation.

Congratulations on your well-deserved recognition. Your leadership strengthens Los Angeles and moves us closer to a more just and equitable future. It is an honor to celebrate with you!

Keep the faith and keep the fight,

Capri Maddox, Esq.
Executive Director, LA Civil Rights Department



March 6, 2026

Dear Honorees, Community Leaders, and Friends,

It is an honor to join you in celebrating this year's Women of Impact Awards.

My sincere gratitude goes to the City of Los Angeles Civil + Human Rights and Equity Department and the Commission on the Status of Women for their leadership in uplifting and recognizing the extraordinary contributions of women across Los Angeles. Their commitment to advancing equity, protecting civil rights, and ensuring women's leadership is visible and valued is essential to building a city that works for all.

Across our neighborhoods, women are leading in workplaces, in movements, and in homes. They are organizers, entrepreneurs, caregivers, public servants, artists, and advocates building safer communities and challenging systems that were never designed with them in mind.

Impact does not always make headlines. Often, it is found in the steady work of showing up: fighting for tenants, mentoring young people, standing up for immigrants, protecting workers, and caring for elders. As a daughter of immigrants and a lifelong Angeleno, I know that the progress being celebrated today is the result of generations of women who refused to be underestimated. That legacy continues through the leadership being honored.

Congratulations to this year's honorees. Los Angeles is stronger because of their vision, commitment, and impact.

Sincerely,

Eunisses Hernandez
City of Los Angeles Councilmember, First District

Los Angeles City Hall
200 N. Spring Street, Room 460,
Los Angeles, CA 90012



KATY YAROSLAVSKY
COUNCILWOMAN, FIFTH DISTRICT

March 6, 2026

Dear Friends,

I am proud to join you in celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Commission on the Status of Women. For five decades, this Commission has advanced equity in Los Angeles. You have advised policymakers, elevated the needs of women and girls, and pushed our city to act.

In 175 years, only 24 women have served on the Los Angeles City Council. One third of them serve right now. Los Angeles has its first woman Mayor, its first woman City Attorney, and a female majority on the City Council. That progress did not happen by accident. Women organized, mentored, ran for office, and supported one another to make it possible.

When women lead, policy reflects lived experience. Under this City Council, we passed the largest expansion of domestic violence survivor services funding in City history. We advanced legislation to expand leave for families after late-term pregnancy loss. We are examining how the City can better support employees going through menopause. Before this year, the word menopause had never even appeared in a City Council file.

The women we honor today bring that same clarity to their work. They see what needs to change and they act. They organize communities, build institutions, and create solutions that respond to the needs of women in Los Angeles. Their leadership strengthens this city in lasting ways.

Fifty years of impact reflects decades of persistence and courage. The next fifty will require the same focus and resolve. I look forward to continuing this work with you.

All my best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Katy Yaroslavsky'.

Katy Yaroslavsky
Councilmember, Fifth District



YSABEL JURADO
L.A. CITY COUNCIL MEMBER
DISTRICT 14

March 6, 2026

Dear Friends:

I am honored to welcome you to the 36th Women of Impact Awards as we gather to celebrate Women's Herstory Month and recognize the extraordinary leaders who shape our City.

For more than 50 years, the Los Angeles Commission on the Status of Women, in partnership with the Los Angeles Civil + Human Rights and Equity Department, has advanced gender equity and expanded opportunity across Los Angeles. Through policy leadership, community partnership, and continued advocacy, they have worked to ensure that women are not only represented but also empowered to lead and transform our institutions.

The Women of Impact Awards carry that legacy forward. Our 2026 honorees are organizers, creators, caregivers, entrepreneurs, and public servants whose work strengthens our neighborhoods and deepens our commitment to justice. They remind us that progress is not abstract; it is built day by day through service, courage, and collective action.

To our honorees: thank you for your leadership, your resilience, and your unwavering dedication to a more just and inclusive Los Angeles. It is a privilege to celebrate you and to stand alongside you in this work.

Sincerely,

Councilmember Ysabel Jurado
Los Angeles City Council, Fourteenth District
City of Los Angeles

**CIVIL + HUMAN RIGHTS
AND EQUITY DEPARTMENT**
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CAPRI MADDOX
Executive Director
General Manager

CLAUDIA LUNA
Assistant General Manager

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES
CALIFORNIA**



KAREN BASS
MAYOR

**COMMISSION ON THE
STATUS OF WOMEN**
50th Anniversary
1975-2025

TRACY D. GRAY
President

SIMONA GRACE
Vice President

**ERMA BERNARD-GIBSON
LUCIG H. DANIELIAN
ANA KAREN ESTRADA
CRISTINA ROSE
KATHERINE YEOM**

March 6, 2026

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 2026 Women of Impact Awards and the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Los Angeles City Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

It is an honor to celebrate the extraordinary contributions of this year's Women of Impact nominees as we mark five decades of advancing gender equity in Los Angeles. Today, we recognize not only individual leadership, but a collective legacy of courage, persistence, and transformative change. We are deeply grateful for the leaders in this room who are helping shape a more equitable city for all.

While today is a celebration, our mission remains urgent. Women comprise more than half of our population, yet gender equity is too often treated as a side project rather than an economic and civic necessity. As an engineer and venture capitalist, I've approached my presidency by focusing on data, identifying gaps, and investing in solutions that deliver meaningful returns for our communities.

For 50 years, the Commission has advanced historic milestones, from integrating women into the LAPD and LAFD to achieving gender parity across City commissions. At a time when equity efforts face renewed challenges nationwide, gender equity remains essential to Los Angeles' strength and competitiveness.

The disparities are clear. In California, Black women earn only 63 cents and Latinas 44 cents for every dollar earned by white men. Unsupported menopause symptoms alone cost the U.S. economy \$1.8 billion annually. These inequities are solvable, which is why the Commission is advancing initiatives such as a City workplace menopause policy, strategizing to expand access to capital for women-owned and led businesses, focusing on the safety of all women and reducing human trafficking in communities across Los Angeles.

To our Women of Impact awardees: we see you and your embodiment of the purpose of this Commission. CSW would not exist without your strength, resilience and innovations. Through your leadership and commitment, you are not waiting for change, you are creating it. Your work strengthens our city and inspires the next generation.

Congratulations, and thank you for your extraordinary impact.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tracy D. Gray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Tracy D. Gray

President

Los Angeles City Commission on the Status of Women



MISSION STATEMENT

- **Inform and advise** the Mayor and City Council of the needs and challenges that Los Angeles women face, with special emphasis placed on women in City government.
- **Investigate** problems and conditions adversely affecting women.
- **Recommend** solutions to problems impacting women; identify programs that offer greater opportunity and ability for Los Angeles women to pursue choices without discrimination.
- **Propose** methods to alleviate gender-based inequity in job opportunities and pay.
- **Promote** awareness about trends affecting roles, responsibilities, and opportunities for women.
- **Maintain** relationships with advocacy groups committed to identifying and removing obstacles in order to facilitate personal development for women.

Commission on the Status of Women



Tracy D. Gray

President Gray is a leader in the movement towards equity and justice in the financial sector. Using a gender lens, she educates women on the importance of investing. Her company, The 22 Fund, intentionally targets women- and BIPOC-owned businesses to create clean, quality jobs in low- and moderate-income communities. She currently serves as the CSW's President.



Simona Grace

Vice President Grace is an advocate for women in politics and champions policies that promote gender equity. In 2018, she founded Moms in Office (PAC) in efforts to get more women in elected office. She is nationally recognized for her advocacy and has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *USA Today*, among other publications. She is the chair of the 2026 Women of Impact Ad Hoc Committee.



Erma Bernard-Gibson

Commissioner Bernard-Gibson works to enhance women's welfare and involvement in Los Angeles City government. She advocates for programs benefiting women, removes obstacles to their development, and supports AARP. With a background in business administration, she retired from Shell Oil after 25 years. Active in the Los Angeles Drifters, she served in various roles and is involved in community organizations. She serves on the 2026 Women of Impact Ad Hoc Committee.

Commission on the Status of Women



Katherine Yeom

Commissioner Yeom is the Executive Director at Korean American Family Services (KFAM) since 2020. She has significantly expanded KFAM's services and budget since 2015. Katherine is actively involved in advocacy for API communities and has served on various boards. She was recognized as an Emerging Leader in Koreatown in 2020. Prior to KFAM, she was a teacher in Los Angeles and South Korea, holding degrees from UMBC and USC. She served on the 2026 Women of Impact Ad Hoc Committee.



Cristina Rose

Commissioner Rose has diverse experience in government, business, and board positions. She has held leadership roles in various organizations and currently chairs multiple boards including the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Los Angeles YMCA, the Claremont Colleges, and the Trusteeship, the Southern California Chapter of the International Women's Forum. Commissioner Rose has received various awards for her work and is a UCLA graduate.



Lucig H. Danielian

Commissioner Danielian is a human rights advocate with a focus on women's rights. She has a strong academic background and extensive experience in research and consulting. Commissioner Danielian has worked in Armenia, leading various projects related to democracy building and human rights. She is committed to serving her community and supporting initiatives for justice and equity in Los Angeles.



Ana Karen Estrada

Commissioner Estrada brings experience to the Commission as the first in her family to graduate college (Cal State Northridge, Cum Laude) and a deep understanding of the barriers faced by working-class Latine women in accessing education and opportunity. Her passion is driven by a commitment to expanding opportunities, improving safety, and increasing representation for women and girls in Los Angeles.

1975-2025

The 50th Anniversary

Los Angeles City Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty years ago, under the inspired leadership of Mayor Tom Bradley and the City Council, the City of Los Angeles established the groundbreaking Commission on the Status of Women, a precedent-setting body tasked with “ensuring to all women the opportunity for full and equal participation in the affairs of City government and to promote the general welfare of women in the community.”

From the beginning the Commission has been a driving force for change, championing the rights of women and women’s rights and amplifying women’s voices. Over the decades it has made important achievements in support of the rights and issues concerning women, girls and gender diverse people in our City: from promoting parity in governance and decision making to working toward gender equity in City policies and services. Today the work of the Commission is needed more than ever.

In 2021, the Commission on the Status of Women found a new and fitting home under the newly established Los Angeles City Civil, Human Rights, and Equity Department. With this transition came an updated mandate: to continue to ensure women and girls have the opportunity for equal participation in City government and to promote “the general welfare and human rights of all women and girls in the greater community through policy, advocacy, and education.”

Today Los Angeles stands at a remarkable moment in its history, led by Mayor Karen Bass, the City’s first woman– and first woman of color– Mayor. For the first time women comprise the majority of the City Council. With such hard-won representation, the opportunities to achieve gender equity have never been greater.

The Commissioners remain steadfast in their mission to advance the health, safety, and economic empowerment of women and girls; to guarantee that women and girls are represented in and by City government; and to elevate women’s issues in the public sphere.

As the Commissioners of the Los Angeles City Commission on the Status of Women commemorate this 50th Anniversary, we do so with a renewed commitment to serve the women and girls of our City by listening to their voices and ensuring that their concerns, needs, and rights are included in every policy and decision that shape our shared future.

President Tracy D. Gray
Vice President Simona Grace
Commissioner Ana Karen Estada
Commissioner Erma Bernard-Gibson
Commissioner Katherine Yeom
Commissioner Cristina Rose
Commissioner Lucig H. Danielian

Date November 21, 2025

CSW OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS

1975-2025

Happy 50th, CSW! A Look Back at Half a Century

Council Backs Creation of Unit to Aid Women Rights

BY ERWIN BAKER
Times City Bureau Chief

Women won their second major victory in nine days Thursday in a drive to exert more influence on local government.

By a vote of 14 to 0, the Los Angeles City Council instructed the city attorney to draft an ordinance establishing a Los Angeles City Status of Women Commission.

Passage of the ordinance, when it is presented, seems assured.

On June 17, the Board of Supervisors created a Los Angeles County Commission on the Status of Women with far-reaching powers.

to needs of women in city government so that they could be "adequately dealt with."

The commission would consist of seven members who would serve five-year terms, unless removed by the mayor and concurred in by a council majority, or by action of two-thirds of the council alone.

The mayor's proposal was recommended to the council by the State, County and Federal Affairs Committee in lieu of a similar measure by Councilman Robert M. [unclear] [unclear]

Welcome to 1975. Bell-bottoms are in, the second wave of feminism is making serious national waves, Title IX was recently passed, and the Equal Rights Amendment is dominating the headlines.

Here in Los Angeles, Mayor Tom Bradley realized that if the city was going to truly thrive, women needed a permanent, institutionalized voice in local government. So, he signed Ordinance No. 147478, officially instituting the City of Los Angeles Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

For the last 50 years, the CSW has been the city's advisory body, investigator, and loudest cheerleader for gender equity. From 1975 to 2025 the Commission has gone from fighting for women in the typing pool to shaping modern, data-driven city policy.

The 1970s & 80s: Out of the Typing Pool and Into the Field

In its early days, the Commission fought to move women out of strictly clerical jobs and into paraprofessional administrative aide positions, and successfully lobbied to reduce some preference points in hiring to level the playing field for women seeking City jobs. They pushed for affirmative action to integrate women into the ranks of the LAPD and LAFD.

A Woman Climbs the Fire Department Ladder

■ **Equality:** After some difficult times, the promotion of a female to the rank of captain reflects an era of increased opportunities.

By JANE FRITSCH
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Seven years after the first woman joined the Los Angeles Fire Department, Roxanne V. Bercik is to take charge of a Los Angeles fire station today as the first female in the department's history to reach the rank of captain.

Bercik, 31, a firefighter since 1984, was among the first women to make it through the department's rigorous physical ability tests, the traditional stumbling block for women.

Bercik will take charge of one of three shifts at Fire Station 21 in South-Central Los Angeles, overseeing two firefighters, two paramedics and an engineer, all

2,700 firefighters and 42 of 350 paramedics are women. The department has no specific numerical goals for women firefighters, officials said.

At a press conference Monday, Mayor Tom Bradley called Bercik's promotion a "historic development." Fire officials initially said she is the first female captain in any major city, but later said there are higher-ranking women firefighters in San Diego and a number of other cities.

Ann Reiss Lane, president of the Board of Fire Commissioners and a longtime backer of efforts to hire female firefighters, said Bercik will be "a role model for so many women who will join the Fire Department."

Bercik and most of the other female firefighters were the beneficiaries of an affirmative action program that did not lower Fire Department standards but instead helped the women develop the strength to pass the test. The training program helps women where they are weakest—in upper-body strength—and shows them how to work with weights and other devices that mimic the specific actions firefighters most frequently perform.



Roxanne V. Bercik is introduced as first female and rides mountain bikes to promotion. "It's ju... maintain her strength... training job and v...

CSW OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS

1975-2025

Tougher Sex Harassment Policy for L.A. Begins

By TED VOLLMER,
Times Staff Writer

A toughened policy that requires the city's department heads to closely monitor and investigate charges of sexual harassment was instituted Thursday by Mayor Tom Bradley.

The policy, which takes effect immediately, calls for employee supervisors to be trained not only in what constitutes sexual harassment but also in how to deal with

The new policy is based on a recent recommendation by the city's Commission on the Status of Women. The final version differs slightly in that certain definitions of sexual harassment, such as the "display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons or posters," were stricken after consultation with the city attorney.

Instead, specific forms of sexual harassment will be spelled out in educational materials that will be supplied to department heads. "Including a training program," off said.

They also broke the silence on workplace safety long before it was a national talking point. In 1987, the CSW unveiled the City's first comprehensive draft policy against sexual harassment, making it clear that bad behavior was costing the city both productivity and great employees. And because they knew women's achievements needed a spotlight, they launched the Pioneer Women Awards in 1988, a beloved annual tradition now known as the Women of Impact Awards, that honors local barrier-breakers.

The 1990s & 2000s: Taking on the Challenges

As the 90s rolled in and the national Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) passed in 1994, the CSW was already deep in the trenches. They expanded their focus to tackle the HIV epidemic and formed a Domestic Violence Task Force to transform how the city supported survivors.

In 2003, they achieved a massive global milestone right here at home: Los Angeles became one of the very first U.S. cities to adopt the principles of CEDAW (the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women). A few years later, in 2006, they took an innovative approach to combating human trafficking. Instead of just raising awareness, they mobilized the City, training over 600 municipal employees, including fire marshals and building inspectors, to spot the hidden signs of trafficking while out on their daily routes.

Second Women and HIV Conference Slated

The Los Angeles City Commission on the Status of Women will co-sponsor the 2nd annual Women and HIV Conference on Nov. 14 at the Los Angeles Hilton, 930 Wilshire Blvd.

The conference, hosted by the Minority AIDS Project, is directed primarily to women with HIV/AIDS, individuals in HIV/AIDS service organizations, health-care providers, psychologists and social workers in the community.

The

CSW OVER THE LAST 50 YEARS

1975-2025

Mayor announces results of report on city's women

BY EDWIN FOLVEN / APRIL 2, 2015

The initial results of The Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Los Angeles, the first-ever study focusing on the issues and trends affecting the women and girls in the city, were announced on Tuesday.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti asked the Los Angeles Commission on the Status of Women to commission the report to guide policymaking to address economic, social and other inequalities facing women.

...

Garcetti noted that three of his four deputy mayors are women, and of the 12 new general managers he's appointed, six are women. On the city's 41 boards and commissions, women hold 54 percent of the positions.

The 2010s: The Data Revolution

If the early years were about changing the culture, the 2010s were about bringing the receipts. In 2015, the CSW teamed up with Mount Saint Mary's University to drop the first-ever data-driven Report on the Status of Women and Girls in L.A.. The bombshell finding? Women made up only 28% of the City workforce.

That single statistic sparked a minor revolution. It led to Executive Directive 11, which forced every single city department to create a Gender Equity Action Plan. Because of that push, within six months, Los Angeles achieved 50/50 gender parity on its city boards and commissions for the first time in history. It also led to a historic surge of female hires in the Fire and Police departments.

The Next Frontier

Today, the CSW has a new home in the Civil + Human Rights and Equity Department (LA Civil Rights). While the outfits have changed since 1975, the hustle hasn't. The Commission is currently tackling some of the unspoken barriers to equity, like leading the charge to make L.A. the first city in the nation to formalize a municipal workplace menopause policy addressing a health issue that costs the U.S. economy \$1.8 billion annually in lost productivity. So congrats to 50 years of the CSW! They've spent half a century changing the laws and the culture of Los Angeles. Here's to the next 50 years of building a city that truly works for everyone.



Special thanks to our

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HERNANDEZ
L.A. City Councilmember | District 1



COUNCILWOMAN

KATY YAROSLAVSKY

LOS ANGELES COUNCIL DISTRICT 5



YSABEL JURADO

L.A. CITY COUNCIL MEMBER
DISTRICT 14



KAREN BASS

MAYOR OF LOS ANGELES



LA Civil Rights

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special acknowledgment to the
Los Angeles City Council for the recognition of the
Women of Impact in their districts

COUNCILMEMBER EUNISSES HERNANDEZ, CD1

COUNCILMEMBER ADRIN NAZARIAN, CD2

COUNCILMEMBER BOB BLUMENFIELD, CD3

COUNCILMEMBER NITHYA RAMAN, CD4

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COUNCILMEMBER YSABEL JURADO, CD14

COUNCILMEMBER TIM MCOSKER, CD15

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

2026 HONOREE

Natalie



Samarjian

Natalie is President and CEO of Coro California. Coro's mission is to strengthen the democratic process by preparing individuals for effective and ethical leadership. Under Natalie's leadership, Coro has developed a new strategic plan, expanded programs, partnerships, and revenue, and cultivated a growing community of Coro alumni who are transforming communities across the country.

Natalie comes to Coro California from the California Women's Law Center (CWLC), where she worked to address the comprehensive and unique legal needs of women and girls through impact litigation, public policy advocacy and legal education. Prior to CWLC, Natalie was Staff Attorney and Dickran Tevzian Fellow at Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County (NLSLA), where she provided individual representation to victims of domestic violence, supported impact litigation, including a successful appeal in *Montagner v. Montagner*, engaged in public policy advocacy, and conducted extensive community outreach and legal education. Before joining NLSLA, Natalie was a Labor and Employment litigator at Rutan & Tucker, LLP. While at Rutan, Natalie was actively engaged in pro bono efforts, successfully representing an asylum seeker before the Department of Homeland Security. Prior to embarking on her legal career, Natalie was a Human Capital Consultant in Deloitte & Touche LLP's Public Sector practice where she led the firm's National Public Sector Human Capital Community of Practice Initiative.

Natalie earned her Juris Doctorate from UCLA School of Law, her Master of Science at the Heinz School of Public Policy & Management at Carnegie Mellon University, and her Bachelor of Arts UCLA. Natalie is an alumnus of the Coro Fellows Program in Public Affairs and Emerge California, and was a recipient of the Empowerment Congress' Emerging Civic Leaders 40 Under 40 award and a recipient of LA Impact-Makers to Watch award. Natalie serves on the boards of Public Counsel, Haynes Foundation and the UCLA Alumni Association.

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

2026 HONOREE

Nora



Nora Hovsepian has spent her adult life advocating for justice and volunteering her time serving the community.

Professionally, she has been an attorney at law for over three decades specializing in representing victims of medical malpractice and seeking accountability when the healthcare system has failed them. She is in private practice in Encino.

As the granddaughter of four survivors of the Armenian Genocide, Nora has dedicated herself to seeking justice for the Armenian People and ensuring that the Armenian-American community's interests are protected and promoted. She recently completed multiple terms as Chair of the Armenian National Committee of America - Western Region, having served on its Board since 2011 and representing the organization in the halls of government, in the media, and in developing coalitions with other racial and ethnic advocacy groups to advance common causes and human rights. Amongst many successful projects during her tenure was the HyeVotes initiative which served to educate the community on the importance of electoral participation, registering over 50,000 newly naturalized citizens to vote.

In 2015, Nora was honored for her leadership and advocacy in the state capital by the California Assembly as one of its 80 statewide Women of the Year.

Hovsepian

In 2022, Nora was appointed to serve on the newly elected Los Angeles Mayor's transition team.

Having spent countless hours in the halls of justice both in Sacramento and Washington DC, Nora has worked tirelessly on a bipartisan basis for many years to advocate for human rights and to promote civic engagement by under-represented segments of society.

Nora is married and has one daughter.

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

2026 HONOREE

Veronica



De Lara

Veronica De Lara was born and raised in the Northeast San Fernando Valley. She is the eldest daughter of immigrant parents and is proud of her Mexican and Guatemalan roots. She is a champion for working families as well as a leader in her community. She has over ten years of experience working in the public sector alongside community members at the grassroots level.

Veronica is currently a Senior Political Organizer at SEIU United Service Workers West, a statewide labor union representing over 50,000 workers across various industries, including janitorial, security, airport service, and other property service workers throughout the State of California.

She has spearheaded USWW's environmental justice campaign that prioritized airport workers' rights and fought for environmental protections intersecting the labor and environmental justice movements. She organized and mobilized community members, elected officials, and airport workers to fight for a more sustainable airport at LAX. LAX will establish 21st-century standards that require airlines to reach zero-emission electric equipment and vehicles, reduce transportation costs while improving transit choice, and strengthen worker protections and safeguards.

Most recently, she has been advocating for working-class families by passing policies that will protect those who are most vulnerable. She is fighting for fair wages and healthcare coverage for airport and hotel workers in the City of Los Angeles. This policy would expand the health benefits requirement to catch up with rising healthcare costs and ensure quality coverage for workers and their families in the City of Los Angeles.

Veronica served on an all-women board as Vice President. During her Vice Presidency, she focused on highlighting and uplifting community-based organizations that bring resources to our communities. In addition, she serves as an Executive Board member of the Los Angeles County Democratic Party, where she is a part of the labor committee.

Veronica is deeply involved in the community. She serves as a long-time member of the Cesar Chavez Commemorative Committee of the SFV. Through this committee, Veronica has organized over six annual local marches to honor the legacy of civil rights and labor movement leader Cesar E Chavez.

Beyond her professional role, Veronica sits on the Board of Directors for two non-profit organizations, Alcohol Justice and Pueblo y Salud, Inc., which focus on advocating for public health and social justice-informed policies that address the health disparities in communities of color.

Veronica's educational journey includes earning a Master's degree in Public Administration from California State University of Los Angeles (CalStateLA) as well as three Bachelor's of Arts degrees from the University of California, Davis (UCDavis).

MAYOR KAREN BASS'

2026 HONOREE

Jocelyn



Duarte

Jocelyn Duarte is the Executive Director of the Salvadoran American Leadership and Educational Fund, SALEF. During her time at SALEF, she has expanded the services of the organization to create direct legal services. Under her leadership, the educational fund has a strong focus on college access for youth of color by creating direct access to college courses as a satellite for East Los Angeles College. Ms. Duarte works transnationally with various organizations to support migrants in Tijuana awaiting asylum. She is a board member of El Rescate and Casa Libre, both organizations that focus on immigrant communities in Los Angeles.

Jocelyn's work is focused on immigrant communities originating in Central and Latin America, with a focus on migratory patterns to the United States from those regions. Further, her research interests include transnational mothers and their use of technology to mother from afar. As a result, her community work at SALEF is also focused on providing educational and legal services to the immigrant community, family and youth services and homelessness prevention for recently arrived immigrants.

She is a faculty member at East Los Angeles Community College in the Chicana/o Studies Department focused on bringing Central American Studies introductory courses to the Pico Union/Westlake area. Her teaching expanded across different departments at East Los Angeles Community College. She holds a faculty position in the Non-Credit Department where she provides immigrant communities instruction on the naturalization process. She has been a part-time faculty member in the Central American Studies Department at California State University since spring of 2016. Her research interests include transnational mothers and their use of technology to mother from afar.

Jocelyn holds an M.A. in Latin American Studies from California State University, Los Angeles. In addition, she holds a B.A. in Central American Studies and a second B.A. in Gender and Women's Studies from California State University, Northridge.

Maegan Ortiz



Maegan E. Ortiz is a NYRican in LA with over 30 years of experience as a community organizer, driven by a deep commitment to social justice and equity. As a mom of two daughters and one dog, her dedication to building a better future is both personal and professional. For over a decade, she has served as the Executive Director of the Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA), a vital organization advocating for the rights and empowerment of day laborers and household workers.

Under Maegan's visionary leadership, IDEPSCA has flourished, leading critical initiatives centering on powerful, community-led change through leadership and workforce development programs, executed alongside an incredible team of strong Latina leaders. This work is rooted in her own experience as the eldest daughter of a single mother who raised her and her sister while working in retail, providing Maegan with firsthand knowledge of the struggles faced by working families.

Beyond her organizing efforts, Maegan is an accomplished freelance journalist. She has contributed insightful pieces on immigration, media representation, and social justice to several notable publications, including *The American Prospect*, *The Progressive*, *Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting's Extra!*, *The Nation*, *Colorlines*, *Latina* magazine, *Cosmo for Latinas*, and *El Diario la Prensa*. Her writing not only informs but also amplifies the voices and experiences of marginalized communities.

Maegan Ortiz embodies the intersection of advocacy, journalism, and committed leadership, consistently working to uplift and empower, making her a formidable force in the Southern California landscape and beyond.

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL – DISTRICT 2

2026 HONOREE

Chantel



Lopez

Chantel Lopez is a Latina leader, advocate, and community changemaker born on March 8, 1993, and raised in the San Fernando Valley. Her birthday falls on International Women's Day, perhaps contributing to her passion and strength of mind. As the daughter of immigrant parents, she is breaking barriers as the first generation in her family to work in the governmental space. She is the proud mother of three daughters and is committed to showing them that being a Latina is a strength in the political arena, and that their voices belong in every room where decisions are made. She embraces her role as both an honor and a responsibility to serve her community with purpose and integrity.

Chantel's journey is one of resilience and transformation. In 2021, she joined Hope The Mission as an overnight client monitor and rapidly rose into leadership through determination and a commitment to excellence. Today, she serves as the Government Relations Manager at Hope The Mission, where she builds strategic partnerships with local and state elected officials and serves as a vital liaison between the City and the organization. Through her work, she strengthens collaboration and expands critical resources for vulnerable communities across Los Angeles.

Chantel Lopez represents what is possible when perseverance meets opportunity. Her leadership is redefining what public service looks like, rooted in lived experience, driven by compassion, and fueled by an unwavering commitment to uplift people and create lasting change.

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL – DISTRICT 3

2026 HONOREE

Geovanny



Ragsdale

Geovanny Ragsdale, MIB, CFRE, has served as Chief Executive Officer of Boys & Girls Club of the West Valley since March 2021, where she leads with a servant-leadership approach grounded in community partnership and measurable impact.

Under her leadership, the Club has experienced transformational growth—expanding annual revenue from \$1.2 million to more than \$5 million by 2025. Geovanny has strengthened organizational infrastructure, cultivated strategic relationships, and built a high-performing team focused on sustainability and outcomes for youth and families across the San Fernando Valley.

With more than 25 years of experience in fundraising and nonprofit leadership, Geovanny has led initiatives supporting education and health care both domestically and internationally. Earlier in her career, she worked across 11 countries over a decade, advancing educational programs centered on entrepreneurship and the free-enterprise system. She has been a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) since 2019 and is known for her ability to connect those with resources to those seeking opportunity.

A trilingual California native, Geovanny earned a Master of International Business Administration from EAE Barcelona and a Bachelor of Science in Marketing and International Business Management from La Sierra University. She is an alumna of Leadership Chattanooga and Leadership Simi Valley, and remains deeply engaged in civic service through Rotary, where she was named a Paul Harris Fellow in 2020.

Her leadership has been widely recognized, including being named one of the LABJ Valley 200 Most Influential Leaders in 2024 and 2025, honored as a Woman of the Year by Senator Henry Stern, and leading the Club to recognition as Nonprofit of the Year by Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel.

For Geovanny, leading the Club is about uplifting the next generation—ensuring young people are equipped to navigate today's challenges and emerge as confident, future-ready leaders.

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL – DISTRICT 4

2026 HONOREE

Mylene Marie



It was March of 2020, the beginning of Covid. Mylene Marie, a singer/songwriter living in Lake Balboa California, opened her front door to find a stack of paper plates, a large case of bottled water and a box of mini taquitos. With no address indicating who the package was to or from, she used the plates to make a couple of meals each week for the unhoused people near her home. Soon the meals turned into burritos. Members of Ms. Marie’s church wanted to help and by July 2020 The Bethel Encino Lutheran Church officially began the Bethel Burrito Ministry.

Currently, Bethel serves 110 meals a week on average and collaborates with LAFH for delivery, as well as LAHSA, The Unitarian Universalist Church in Studio City, and the monthly Free Market on Van Nuys. Bethel also collaborates with Central Lutheran church in Van Nuys every Monday providing Care Days offering showers, Burrito meals, coffee, donuts, soda, water, wipes, clothes, and other needed items.

Mylene is grateful to be a part of Bethel Church, described as an “inclusive, affirming, and progressive faith community seeking to transform lives by exemplifying the unconditional love of Jesus.” She currently serves as the Vice President on the church council and is Bethel’s Outreach Coordinator and Musical Director.

She is also a member of the board of the Interfaith Solidarity Network, which seeks to “break down barriers and inspire solidarity among faith communities in the San Fernando Valley,” She has helped ISN organize two music festivals and is a part of a current effort to bring more faith communities together. Mylene’s personal goals are to encourage faith, hope, and love through music, words, and deeds and she looks forward to the journey ahead.

Emiliana



Guereca

Emiliana Guereca is an immigrant, community organizer, entrepreneur, and proud mother of two teenage boys. Deeply committed to uplifting women, Latinos, and the Jewish community in which she is raising her family, Emiliana believes we are only as strong as the communities we live in. Rooted in resilience and driven by purpose, she has spent the past decade creating spaces where women and families feel seen, supported, and empowered.

As the founder of the Women’s March Foundation, Emiliana has mobilized hundreds of thousands in Los Angeles and developed year-round programs focused on leadership, education, and community care. A natural bridge-builder, she brings together diverse communities—from East Los Angeles to the Westside—through initiatives that foster connection, service, and belonging. She continues to advocate for women’s rights while expanding her work through community-based projects.

Most recently, Emiliana is opening *Caféina*, a community coffee shop centered on civic engagement and gathering—an extension of her belief that meaningful change begins with people coming together. At home, Emiliana and her husband, Alvin, are raising their two teenagers in the same West Los Angeles neighborhood where he grew up, grounding their family in deep community ties and shared history. Above all, her greatest pride is raising her sons to value compassion, faith, and the responsibility to care for others.

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL – DISTRICT 6

2026 HONOREE

Sara



Mena

Sara Mena is a Honduran entrepreneur based in Los Angeles, California, known for her resilience, leadership, and deep commitment to serving her community.

Originally from Puerto Cortés, Honduras, Sara immigrated to the United States at the age of 16 alongside her father in search of greater opportunities. Entering a new country with a different language and culture was not easy, but she was determined to build a better future. To achieve her educational goals, she worked multiple jobs while attending college, balancing long hours with relentless discipline and ambition.

Sara earned an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in Paralegal Studies and later completed her Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, equipping herself with both legal and business knowledge that would later become foundational in building and managing multiple successful enterprises.

Through hard work, sacrifice, and an unwavering spirit of service, Sara co-founded and now leads several ventures that have become pillars within the Central American community in California. These include:

- Doña Bibis Restaurant, a recognized destination for authentic Honduran cuisine in Los Angeles.
- La Pulpería Catracha (#1, #2, and #3), specialty stores offering nostalgic Honduran products that reconnect immigrants with the flavors of home.
- La Ruta Catracha, a food concept celebrating Honduran pride and culture in Van Nuys.
- The nonprofit foundation Juguetes por Sonrisas, dedicated to providing school supplies, toys, and essential support to underserved communities in Honduras. The nonprofit has also done projects locally, providing food to homeless people, and working with the farmers of Ventura county and Fresno.

Sara has built each of her businesses with a simple yet powerful philosophy: listen to the community and serve with excellence. Her enterprises do more than sell products — they create emotional and cultural bridges between Honduras and the United States.

Behind every achievement are long nights, difficult decisions, and relentless perseverance. Sara credits God, her husband and children as her greatest inspiration and driving force, motivating her to continue growing both as a woman and as a business leader.

More than an entrepreneur, Sara Mena is a cultural ambassador. Through food, commerce, and philanthropy, she has helped her community and thousands of Hondurans in California feel closer to home.

Her philosophy is clear: Never give up. Stay persistent. Believe in your dreams. If something doesn't work today, it may become the lesson that makes it work tomorrow.

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL – DISTRICT 7

2026 HONOREE

Maria J. Luviano



Maria J. Luviano is the Program Director and Certified Credit Counselor for ICON CDC's North & South Valley BusinessSource Center, with over 20 years of experience in social and economic development. A bilingual nonprofit leader, she specializes in program management, business development, and expanding access to capital for small businesses.

Since joining ICON CDC in 2013 and serving as Program Director since 2022, Maria has exceeded contractual metrics for three consecutive years, secured more than \$10.6 million in funding for small businesses, and supported the creation and retention of over 400 jobs. She oversees multimillion-dollar contracts, compliance, HR structure, and high-impact technical assistance across the Valley—intentionally focusing on underserved communities such as Pacoima, where she was born and raised.

Maria holds a BA in Business Administration from National University and is certified in Human Resources Management, Credit Counseling, and as an Intake Specialist. She remains committed to advancing equitable economic opportunity and sustainable community growth.

Tanisha Hall



Tanisha Hall is a celebrated music educator and founder of White Hall Arts Academy (WHAA), a South Los Angeles-based performing arts organization committed to expanding access to transformative arts education. Under her leadership, WHAA has supported thousands of students, many of whom have gone on to appear on *The Voice*, *American Idol*, Broadway productions, and even win Grammy Awards. WHAA is a two-time recipient of the Infusion Award from The Lewis Prize for Music.

Beyond her work at WHAA, Tanisha is a dedicated foster parent and music minister. She has been recognized as a "Rad Human" on *The Kelly Clarkson Show*, honored as a Los Angeles Clippers Community Hero, and named a Los Angeles Sparks Lendistry Leader. Tanisha and WHAA are also featured in Disney's Create Your World campaign on the Disney Princess YouTube channel.

As part of her commitment to community revitalization and cultural celebration, Tanisha launched Rock The Block, a free, family-friendly arts and wellness festival in the heart of South LA. The event features live music, youth performances, community panels, and local vendors. The festival welcomes over 3,000 attendees, transforming 54th Street into a vibrant celebration of creativity, connection, and community pride.

Jessica Guerrero



Jessica Guerrero has over 15+ years of experience working with youth and families. From empowering local youth, to becoming involved at community events, and providing family crisis case management. Ms. Guerrero takes pride in working on behalf of South Los Angeles.

As a South L.A. native, Jessica has lived and worked in the Ninth District her entire life. After graduating from Thomas Jefferson High School, she began her community engagement journey with other well-known nonprofit organizations in the area before settling down with Soledad Enrichment Action (SEA).

Serving as a Program Coordinator for SEA, Jessica oversees all activity for the Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD) Prevention component in the area. Under her leadership, Jessica's team has reached and changed the lives of countless at-risk youth through leadership development and engagement. Ms. Guerrero has led numerous community peace initiatives that serving the area, such as the Annual Community Health and Resource Fairs, which are tailored to South Los Angeles families. She has coordinated and collaborated with many different agencies to provide as many resources as possible to underserved communities. Ms. Guerrero works hard to strengthen partnerships between the community members and law enforcement. Not only does her organization work closely with children and adolescents, but it provides much-needed resources to their families. Ms. Guerrero is committed to bringing solutions and giving back to her community.

Jessica is also a full-time mother to Deziree & Erik whom she describes as her biggest motivation.

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL – DISTRICT 10

2026 HONOREE

MAEVE – West Adams



MAEVE West Adams is the West Adams, Los Angeles chapter of MAEVE, a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering all who mother in support of one another and their communities. Rooted in connection, care, and collective action, MAEVE West Adams exists to ensure that no one parents alone.

Our chapter is comprised of more than 600 members living in West Adams and surrounding neighborhoods, primarily within the 90016 and 90018 zip codes. Our membership reflects the diversity, creativity, and resilience of our community—caregivers at every stage of parenting, from pregnancy through adolescence, coming together to share resources, wisdom, and support.

At its core, MAEVE West Adams is a village. We are your neighbors, your friends, and your advocates. We provide a welcoming space where members can build meaningful relationships, find encouragement during challenging seasons, and celebrate the everyday and extraordinary moments of parenting. Through members-only programming and events, we foster connection and joy, while offering opportunities for learning, rest, and mutual support.

Beyond our internal community, MAEVE West Adams is committed to making a tangible impact locally. Our chapter engages in community service, charitable giving, and partnerships with local organizations to support families and address critical needs in West Adams. We believe that empowered caregivers create stronger families, and stronger families build stronger communities.

We aim to inspire our members to step into leadership, use their voices, and create positive change—both within MAEVE and beyond it. Together, we are building a connected, compassionate, and empowered community for all.

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL – DISTRICT 11

2026 HONOREE

Nancy



Voss

For Nancy Voss, leadership begins in moments of urgency—and is sustained through lifelong service.

A Southern California native and proud graduate of Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles, a historic women's institution dedicated to leadership and service, Nancy built her career protecting lives and strengthening systems of care. She served as an Emergency Department Manager and House Supervisor across multiple Los Angeles hospitals, overseeing nursing operations in high-acuity environments.

Nancy later founded and owned a nursing agency that provided critical staffing support to hospitals and private-duty patients throughout Los Angeles County, ensuring continuity of care during periods of high demand and workforce shortages. Her leadership bridged frontline clinical care with operational oversight, reinforcing patient safety across the region.

When wildfires ignited in Pacific Palisades, Nancy once again led in crisis. Within hours of witnessing the fires from her home, she mobilized the newly formed Rotary Club of Marina del Rey into coordinated relief operations. As one of only two volunteer-led organizations granted access inside the secured perimeter, she directed logistics supporting LAFD, LAPD, the National Guard, and displaced families.

Under her leadership, more than 250 volunteers mobilized 45 truck and flatbed deliveries, distributing over 80,000 pounds of water, thousands of hot meals, and essential supplies. In total, an estimated 500,000 pounds of relief materials were collected and delivered across both the Palisades and Eaton Canyon fire zones.

Nancy has represented nurses statewide and nationally as a Delegate to the American Nurses Association, advocating for patient safety and professional excellence.

As President of the Rotary Club of Marina del Rey for 2026–2027, she will launch life-saving child drowning prevention initiatives, expand equitable coastal access for underserved families, and champion environmental stewardship along Los Angeles' shoreline—continuing her lifelong commitment to protecting lives and strengthening communities.

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL – DISTRICT 12

2026 HONOREE

Thuy



Trifunovic

Born in Vietnam, Thuy Dinh Trifunovic came to the United States with her family at age two as a refugee of the Vietnam War. The Catholic Church in Grand Island, Nebraska sponsored her family, helping them assimilate and begin a new life filled with hope and opportunity. They later moved to Orange County, California, where Thuy grew up in a close-knit community that nurtured her values of gratitude, service, and perseverance.

Thuy attended Loyola Marymount University, where she met her husband. Together they started their family in Northridge, embracing Los Angeles as home and raising three boys. As a mother, she has always believed in leading by example and giving back to her community.

For more than 13 years, Thuy has served on the Board of Managers at the North Valley Family YMCA, including terms as Board Treasurer. She has helped raise funds to support many of the Y's initiatives, including sending children to camp, child care, and youth & government programs. In addition she has taken part in a number of outreach and support endeavors, including packing 4,500 Thanksgiving baskets; joining a committee that supports foster youth throughout Los Angeles; and participating in many projects in conjunction with Councilmember John Lee of Council District 12.

In 2013, Thuy joined the Granada Hills Rotary Club, embracing Rotary's motto of "Service Above Self." She served as Club President for two terms (2021–2022) and currently serves as Treasurer for Rotary District 5280. Her Rotary work includes leading and supporting the club's high school scholarship program the Pageant of the Arts, taking part in food packing events that provide over 17,000 meals annually, providing disaster relief for local fire victims, blanket-making for children with kidney disease, beautification of Granada Hills Rotary Veteran's Park, raising funds to end polio, and others, many alongside Councilmember Lee.

Professionally, Thuy has spent over 25 years in public accounting, guiding nonprofits, businesses, and individuals through tax preparations and financial audits. Since 2017, she has been with Stern, Kory, Sreden & Morgan.

Thuy's story is one of gratitude and purpose, from refugee child to dedicated volunteer committed to creating hope, opportunity, and connection through service.

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL – DISTRICT 13

2026 HONOREE

Pilar



Quispe

Originaria de Perú y con una vocación de servicio inquebrantable, Pilar S. Quispe ha dedicado los últimos 23 años a transformar la realidad de las familias en el Distrito 13. Su trayectoria como líder comunitaria y voluntaria se ha definido por una misión clara: ser el puente entre los recursos esenciales y las comunidades más necesitadas, dejando una huella profunda en sectores como Lemont Grove Park y Juntos Family Park.

A lo largo de más de dos décadas, Pilar ha demostrado una capacidad excepcional de gestión y resiliencia. Ha encabezado desde campañas de saneamiento ambiental hasta redes estratégicas de distribución de alimentos, además de ser la fuerza organizadora detrás de "Noche de Paz", un evento emblemático diseñado para llevar esperanza y recursos directos a la comunidad.

A pesar de los retos constantes derivados de la limitación de fondos, su labor ha prosperado gracias a su liderazgo inspirador y al apoyo de un sólido grupo de mujeres líderes y empoderadas que comparten su visión. El éxito de Pilar no solo se refleja en la logística de sus eventos, sino en el respeto, el cariño y el agradecimiento genuino de las familias a las que sirve. Su historia es un testimonio de cómo el compromiso comunitario y el trabajo colectivo pueden generar un impacto real y duradero.

Originally from Peru and driven by an unwavering vocation for service, Pilar S. Quispe has dedicated the last 23 years to transforming the lives of families within District 13. Her trajectory as a community leader and volunteer is defined by a clear mission: to serve as a vital bridge between essential resources and the most vulnerable communities, leaving a profound impact on areas such as Lemont Grove Park and Juntos Family Park.

Throughout more than two decades, Pilar has demonstrated exceptional management skills and resilience. She has spearheaded initiatives ranging from environmental cleanup campaigns to strategic food distribution networks, while also serving as the organizing force behind "Noche de Paz" (Night of Peace)—a flagship event designed to bring hope and direct resources to the community.

Despite the constant challenges of limited funding, her work has flourished thanks to her inspiring leadership and the support of a dedicated group of empowered women leaders who share her vision. Pilar's success is reflected not only in the logistics of her events but in the genuine respect, affection, and gratitude of the families she serves. Her story stands as a testament to how community commitment and collective action can generate real and lasting change.

Vanessa



Gutierrez

Vanessa Gutierrez is a proud first-generation Latina and community-rooted entrepreneur born and raised in El Sereno. Vanessa earned her Associate’s Degree from East Los Angeles College and her Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration from California State University, Monterey Bay.

She began her professional career with Los Angeles County Public Works, where she spent five years managing pilot programs in the Environmental Programs Division. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Vanessa took a leap of faith. She left her stable career to pursue a dream: building something of her own that would reflect her heart and values.

That dream became Mas Amor, a thoughtfully curated women’s boutique rooted in the mission to spread love. What began as an online shop and pop-up evolved into a personalized boutique experience in her hometown of El Sereno. Mas Amor offers a curated collection of clothes and accessories designed to make women feel confident, joyful, and beautiful.

Alongside growing Mas Amor, Vanessa co-founded the El Sereno Night Market (ESNM), a safe and welcoming weekly outdoor marketplace providing reliable income opportunities for primarily immigrant street vendors and small businesses. In 2022, Vanessa and co-founder Isidro Rea established ESNM as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Through hands-on support and financial assistance, the nonprofit uplifts street vendors during these times of economic and social instability, while also creating a vibrant space where families gather, our culture is celebrated, and community thrives.

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL – DISTRICT 15

2026 HONOREE

Maya



Maya Suzuki Daniels grew up on the Flathead Indian Reservation in western Montana (though she is not of Tribal descent). At 15, she moved to Berkeley, California, where she graduated from Berkeley High School and later attended Macalester College in Saint Paul, Minnesota. After earning a degree in Creative Writing and spending a year working as an outdoor educator in New Orleans, Maya moved to Los Angeles, where she found home.

Maya has worked as a teacher in private, charter, and district settings and is deeply passionate about unionism, equity and accessibility in decision-making spaces, and racial and economic justice. In 2024, she was part of a group of educators who founded the Educator Defense Network, a collective dedicated to defending educators' rights to open dialogue and activism around trans, Palestinian, and Black solidarity. Within her union, Maya is known for her know-your-rights work among rank-and-file members, advocacy for childcare and parental leave, and contributions to racial and social justice efforts. She received an NEA We Honor Ours Award for her advocacy in 2025 and is a 2026 CTA Human Rights Award recipient.

With the support of Unión del Barrio and San Pedro Neighbors for Peace and Justice, Maya and her husband, Elijah, founded Harbor Area Peace Patrols, a network of community members committed to the Constitutionally-protected defense of immigrant neighbors. Since its first patrol in June 2025, Harbor Area Peace Patrols has provided daily information on ICE staging and activity in San Pedro, Wilmington, and the Port of Los Angeles. As an organization affiliated with the Community Self-Defense Coalition, Harbor Area Peace Patrols stands as a testament to the power of grassroots organizing, community solidarity, and the principle that solo el pueblo salva el pueblo.

When not teaching or in meetings, Maya enjoys reading, knitting, and spending time with her family.

Suzuki Daniels

The Next 50 Years Start With You

For 50 years, the **Commission on the Status of Women** has challenged inequity and expanded opportunity across Los Angeles. Today, the Commission continues to lead and advise on advancing gender equity, alongside the **LA Civil Rights Department**, as partners in protecting rights, expanding opportunity, and building a more equitable Los Angeles.

The “Impact” in Women of Impact does not end with this ceremony. It begins when you leave this room.

How Will You Lead?

Build Equity Where You Are

Audit pay practices. Create clear pathways to promotion. Formalize mentorship and sponsorship. Normalize policies that support caregiving, reproductive health, and midlife transitions. Equity is built in systems, not slogans.

Use Your Influence Intentionally

Recommend women for leadership roles. Sponsor diverse candidates for boards and commissions. Say her name in rooms where she is not present.

Stay Connected to the Work

Progress requires sustained engagement. Stay informed on emerging policies, resources, and opportunities to advance equity across Los Angeles. Sign up for the LA Civil Rights Department newsletter to receive updates, attend commission meetings, and remain connected to the work shaping our city's future.

Protect and Enforce Civil Rights

Civil rights protections are only meaningful when they are enforced. If you or someone you know experiences discrimination in the private sectors of housing, employment, education, or commerce, the LA Civil Rights Department is here to act. File a civil rights complaint, access support, and help ensure accountability. Your voice helps protect not only your rights, but the rights of others across our city.

Progress is not a gift - it is a commitment.

As we honor 50 years of impact, let us leave here not only inspired but accountable to the future we are shaping.

Thank You!



LA Civil Rights

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