



M U J E R E S
L A T I N A S E N A C C I Ó N

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Latinas Honor U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky at Leadership Conference *Mujeres Latinas en Acción Releases Report on Domestic Violence*

Chicago, Illinois - Mujeres Latinas en Acción held its first Latina Leadership conference: *Maria Mangual “La Mujer Despierta: Honoring our Past, Investing in our Future,”* It commemorates the rich history of Mujeres and the legacy of Mujeres’ founder Maria Mangual. The conference brought in an array of Latinas including elected officials, finance experts, business leaders, and executives along with community leaders, students, and professionals.

“We are ecstatic with the overwhelming positive response to this conference,” said Maria S. Pesqueira President and CEO of Mujeres Latinas en Acción. “Today, I feel like we have made our founder’s dream, Maria Mangual, a reality. It is impressive to see hundreds of Latinas with different experiences, backgrounds, ages and stories here today, to remind us of the power and contributions of Latinas.”

More than two hundred and fifty Latinas participated in the seven workshops offered at the conference. Workshops’ topics included career advancement, finances, education, leadership and the impact of the Latino consumer. The workshops offered Latina participants key information that allowed them to build upon their personal, professional and leadership skills. The keynote speaker was the renowned financial analyst Julie Stav, who provided tips on personal finance, investing, establishing and managing credit, understanding insurance products and their benefits, and practical guidance on personal financial planning.

Workshop presenters included Marlene Gonzalez, published writer and president of Life Coaching Group LLC; Rose Mary Bombela, journalist and public speaker; Ana Maria Soto, Director of Educational Programming for New Futuro, and Vanessa Figueroa, the Public Affairs and Event Manager of Public Affairs and Government Relations from Nielsen.

In addition to the workshops, Mujeres Latinas en Acción held an award ceremony in which U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky was presented with the distinguished Maria Mangual Leadership award. The Maria Mangual award is given to an individual who exemplifies the leadership and advocacy characteristics of Mujeres’ founder Maria Mangual. “We thank U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky for being a strong advocate for women’s rights. She has been fully committed to work on issues that are important to us, Latinas. In addition, her leadership and support to the Violence

Against Women Act (VAWA) has had a profound impact on Latinas and their families,” stated Pesqueira as she handed the award to the congresswoman.

“I congratulate Mujeres Latinas en Acción on its first Latina Leadership conference,” Rep. Schakowsky said. “The role of Latina women is essential to fully understanding American history. They deserve an event that recognizes their important contributions. I am honored to receive this award and I promise to continue to work on rights and freedom for women everywhere.”

Latino elected officials in attendance included City Clerk Susana Mendoza - the first woman and Latina to hold this position; State Senator Iris Martinez, and State Representatives Linda Chapa LaVia, Lisa Hernandez, and Toni Berrios. They discussed issues including economic parity, leadership, population growth and education.

As part of the conference, Mujeres unveiled the comprehensive research study *Latina Portrait: Domestic Violence and Latinas*, which examines the challenges and barriers that many Latinas face when accessing Domestic Violence services. The report shows that cultural, familial and religious values, low-income level, transportation and immigration status are the main obstacles Latinas face when seeking resources for domestic violence.

Key findings reveal that:

- As of March 2011, the 12th Police District, where Mujeres Latinas en Acción’s main site is located, reported an average of **1-9 cases** of domestic disturbance, domestic battery, and violation of orders of protection **each day**.
- In 2010, out of the 30 domestic violence homicides that took place in the City of Chicago, **four of the victims were Latina**.
- The 2010 Domestic Violence Help Line Report states that **29,641 phone calls** were answered: **6%** of the calls were conducted in Spanish.
- 93% of the victim series callers were female and most of them sought shelter and legal services. **21% of the victims were Latino**.
- Out of the **1,226 Latinas** who sought domestic violence services at Mujeres in 2011, **only 158** pursued an order of protection.
- While the overall number of clients served by Domestic Violence programs in Chicago in the last 5 years dropped, the number of Latinas served **increased by nearly 10%**.

The report also offers recommendations for both policy makers and service providers to respond more effectively to domestic violence affecting Latinas. “With the growth in population of Latinos, it is imperative to increase the scope of services for this group,” said Neusa Gaytan, Director of Programs at Mujeres Latinas en Acción and co-author of the report. “It is crucial for all agencies to be equipped to address the unique cultural and language barriers that Latinas encounter.”

The conference concluded with the first Latina Leadership Reunion hosted by Mujeres’ Young Professional Advisory board (YPAC). More than fifty alumni of the Latina Leadership program convened to network, reconnect, and converse about their accomplishments as a result of the program. The Latina Leadership program was created in 1988 and more than 2,000 participants have graduated since its launch. The program provides leadership training—encouraging the use of

strengths to affect positive change in their communities with a special component of a mother/daughter program that provides multi-generational learning and communication that builds on the strength of Latina teens and their mothers. “I cannot stress the gratitude that I feel toward the Latina Leadership program because it gave me the inner strength that I needed to become a professional and leader in my community,” said program alumni Patricia Villalobos who is currently attending school to graduate in Human Resources.

The Maria Mangual “La Mujer Despierta; Honoring our Past, Investing in our Future,” Leadership Conference was sponsored by **State Farm, AARP, Southwest Airlines, Verizon Wireless, Nielsen, YUM! Midwest Generation, and Chicago Mini Bus Travel.**

About Mujeres Latinas en Acción

Founded in 1973, Mujeres is one of the longest standing Latinas incorporated organizations in the United States primarily administered by, and working on behalf of, Latina women. Mujeres Latinas en Acción is a bilingual/bicultural agency that empowers Latinas through providing services, which reflect their values and culture and being an advocate on the issues that make a difference in their lives.

www.mujereslatinassenaccion.org

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