

What is the National Council of La Raza?

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR)—the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States—works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. Through its network of nearly 300 affiliated community-based organizations, NCLR reaches millions of Hispanics each year in 41 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. Founded in 1968, NCLR is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization headquartered in Washington, DC. NCLR serves all Hispanic subgroups in all regions of the country and has regional offices in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Phoenix, and San Antonio.

What does the term “La Raza” mean?

The term “La Raza” has its origins in early 20th century Latin American literature and translates into English most closely as “the people,” or, according to some scholars, “the Hispanic people of the New World.” The term was coined by Mexican scholar José Vasconcelos to reflect the fact that the people of Latin America are a mixture of many of the world’s races, cultures, and religions. Some people have mistranslated “La Raza” to mean “The Race,” implying that it is a term meant to exclude others. In fact, the full term coined by Vasconcelos, “*La Raza Cósmica*,” meaning the “cosmic people,” was developed to reflect not purity but the mixture inherent in the Hispanic people. This is an inclusive concept, meaning that Hispanics share with all other peoples of the world a common heritage and destiny.

Whom does NCLR serve?

NCLR serves all Hispanic nationality groups in all regions of the country through its formal network of nearly 300 Affiliates—reaching millions of Hispanics annually. NCLR welcomes affiliation from independent Hispanic groups that share NCLR’s goals and self-help philosophy. NCLR also assists Hispanic groups that are not formal Affiliates through issue networks on health, education, housing, leadership, and other areas.

How does NCLR work toward achieving its mission?

NCLR works through two primary, complementary approaches:

- **Capacity-building assistance.** NCLR supports and strengthens Hispanic community-based organizations nationwide—especially those that serve low-income and disadvantaged Hispanics—by providing them organizational assistance in management, governance, program operations, and resource development.
- **Applied research, policy analysis, and advocacy.** NCLR provides an Hispanic perspective in five key areas—assets/investments, civil rights/immigration, education, employment and economic status, and health—to increase policymaker and public understanding of Hispanic needs and to encourage the adoption of programs and policies that equitably serve Hispanics.

NCLR strengthens these efforts with public information, media activities, and collaboration. These include formation of and participation in coalitions and other special activities that use the NCLR structure and credibility to create other entities or projects that are important to the Hispanic community.

How does cooperation and collaboration with partners advance NCLR’s mission?

NCLR staff belong to and help lead many issue-focused coalitions and associations, cooperating with other nonprofit organizations and private-sector entities on issues ranging from welfare reform to charter schools. All of NCLR’s national projects include efforts to educate public and private organizations about Hispanic needs and help them develop partnerships with community-based organizations. As a member of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, NCLR also carries out joint projects with other Latino organizations and its sister civil rights organizations to advocate for increased opportunities for Latinos throughout the country.

What is NCLR’s role in providing an Hispanic perspective on national issues?

NCLR’s Policy Analysis Center is the premier voice in Washington, DC for Hispanic Americans. Its unique capacity to provide timely policy analyses, combined with its considerable advocacy expertise, a reputation for political independence, and an identifiable constituency, permits NCLR to play an important role in policy and advocacy efforts. Its policy-oriented documents command extensive press and policymaker attention, and NCLR is consistently asked to testify and comment on public policy issues such as immigration and education, as well as other issues of broad concern, from affordable housing to health policy and tax reform. It uses a synergistic and complementary approach between its capacity-building efforts and its advocacy-related activities to achieve its goals.

Who are NCLR's leaders?

As someone who has experienced the promise of the American Dream firsthand, **Janet Murguía** has devoted her career in public service to opening the door to that dream to millions of American families. Now, as a key figure among the next generation of leaders in the Latino community, she continues this mission as President and Chief Executive Officer of NCLR.

Murguía has sought to strengthen the Latino voice on issues affecting the Hispanic community including education, health care, immigration, civil rights, the economy, and the rise of hate rhetoric and hate crimes targeting the Latino community. In her role as NCLR's spokesperson, she has appeared on *ABC World News Tonight*, *CBS Evening News*, *NBC Nightly News*, *NBC's Today Show*, *CNN's Larry King Live*, *PBS's NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, *CNN's Anderson Cooper 360°*, and *CNN's Lou Dobbs Tonight*.

Murguía has also focused on strengthening NCLR's relationship with sister civil rights and advocacy organizations. She has spearheaded efforts to build bridges between the African American and Latino communities in conjunction with organizations such as the NAACP and the National Urban League, and was the first Hispanic leader to give the keynote speech at the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity Breakfast in Birmingham, Alabama.

The visibility of Latinos in the media has also been a key concern for Murguía. Through her efforts at securing a host of new partners and resources, the NCLR ALMA Awards returned to television in 2006 after a three-year hiatus as part of NCLR's strategy to promote fair, accurate, and balanced portrayals of Latinos in the entertainment industry.

Murguía is currently a board member of the Independent Sector, a coalition of leading nonprofits, foundations, and corporations. She is also an executive committee member of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and serves on the board of the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility and the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda.

Murguía has been recognized on numerous occasions for her work. She was featured in *Newsweek* magazine's "Women and Leadership" issue, chosen as one of the *NonProfit Times*' "Power and Influence Top 50" leaders and one of *Washingtonian* magazine's "100 Most Powerful Women in Washington," named to *People en Español's* "100 Most Influential Hispanics," and selected as one of *Hispanic Business* magazine's "100 Most Influential Hispanics," *Hispanic* magazine's "Powerful Latinos," *Latino Leaders* magazine's "101 Top Leaders of the Hispanic Community," and *Poder* magazine's "The Poderosos 100." In 2005, she received the KU Law Alumni Association Distinguished Alumnus/na Award.

NCLR Board Chair **Daniel Ortega** is a partner with the law offices of Roush, McCracken, Guerrero, Miller and Ortega in Phoenix, Arizona and whose legal practice focuses on serious personal injury and wrongful death cases.

A respected attorney and longtime community leader, Ortega brings a wealth of experience and expertise to his role as Chair. His community involvement began during high school and continues to this day with a focus on educational reform, political empowerment, and the protection of human rights. His contributions have been recognized with many awards, including the Chicanos Por La Causa Community Service Award and the Anti-Defamation League Leader of Distinction Award. He serves on the board of directors of the National Farm Workers Service Center, Los Abogados Hispanic Bar Association, and the Stewardship Board for The Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Arizona State University and a juris doctorate from the university's College of Law.

What constitutes NCLR's governing structure?

NCLR's governing board of directors represents the constituency it serves. Bylaws require that the Board include representatives of all geographic regions of the U.S. and all Hispanic subgroups, that half the Board represent Affiliates or have identifiable constituencies, and that the Board include equal representation of men and women. The Board's leadership consists of a Chairperson and an Executive Committee—members who share responsibility for Board governance and organizational oversight issues. NCLR also receives guidance from its Corporate Board of Advisors (CBA). Established in 1982, the CBA is made up of senior executives and liaison staff from 26 major corporations. The CBA meets with NCLR leadership twice a year to discuss issues and programs of common concern. CBA members also assist NCLR and its network through financial, in-kind, and programmatic support.

What resources are available from NCLR?

NCLR has produced and offers a variety of resources to educate the public and the Latino community about important issues. In particular, its publications are a credible source of facts and information on a wide range of issues, from education and health to political and social empowerment. They present a uniquely Hispanic perspective, particularly on issues affecting minority, limited-English-proficient, and low-income Hispanics. Materials include research and policy papers, training materials, statistical analyses, fact sheets, issue updates, congressional testimony, and selected speeches and presentations. These materials can be obtained through NCLR's website.