

# EMPOWERING LATINO FUTURES BOARD MEMBERS



## **Edward James Olmos, Empowering Latino Futures Board Chair**

Edward James Olmos is an actor, director, and activist. Among the many memorable roles he has created are William Adama in the re-imagined *Battlestar Galactica*, Lieutenant Martin "Marty" Castillo in *Miami Vice*, teacher Jaime Escalante in *Stand and Deliver*, patriarch Abraham Quintanilla, Jr. in the film *Selena*, Detective Gaff in *Blade Runner*, and narrator El Pachuco in both the stage and film versions of *Zoot Suit*. In 1988, Eddie was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role for the film *Stand and Deliver*. Eddie has 140+ acting credits, movie and TV directing credits, and producing credits on 19 films. Just as important to him have been his efforts to help facilitate meaningful changes within underserved communities. Over the past four decades, he has given more than 5,000 speeches before millions of people across the United States and around the world. He co-founded and chaired Empowering Latino Futures and The Los Angeles Latino Int'l Film Festival.

## **Kirk Whisler, President of Empowering Latino Futures**

Kirk Whisler is the president of Western Publication Research, Inc., whose programs include a variety of Hispanic media programs: Latino 247 Media Group, serving 900+ Hispanic newspapers, magazines, websites across the U.S.; and WPR Books that publishes a variety of Latino-focused books including The Nat'l Latino & American Indian Scholarship Directory. WPR Research has carried out more than 440 readership studies for Latino media companies. In 1982 he was honored to serve as the founding president of the Nat'l Association of Hispanic Publications. In the 1990's he co-founded with Edward James Olmos the 501c3 nonprofit Empowering Latino Futures and Los Angeles Latino Int'l Film Festival. He has also created four major award programs: Int'l Latino Book Awards; the NAHP's José Martí Awards; LLN's Latino Books Into Movies Awards; and Caminos Magazine's Hispanic of the Year Awards. Kirk has served on Nat'l Latino Media Council; Nat'l Association of Latino Independent Producers (co-chair); Commission of the Californias; and National Hispanic University Boards. He was publisher of *SOMOS*, *Caminos*, *NEVADA*, and *Mexico Events* magazines; developed the marketing campaigns for several dozen movies and TV shows; and authored 40+ books or studies. Kirk lives with his wife, Magdalena, an educator, in Fallbrook, CA. In 2019 the AARP honored Kirk's nonprofit work with an AARP Purpose Prize Fellow Award.

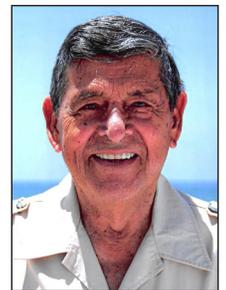


## **Julia Abrantes, Vice President of Author Programs**

Julia Abrantes, a lover of Latino literature, has been an integral part of the Las Comadres Book Club since she joined in 2009. For over 7 years, she was one of the book club discussion leaders in NYC. Since 2012, she has been a judge in the International Latino Book Awards. She has also been a part of the backstage production in the presentation of the ILBA's since 2010. Julia lives in Loganville, GA and is the Submissions Coordinator for the Las Comadres & Friends National Latino Book Club.

## **Dr. Julian Nava, Vice President of Education Programs**

Julian Nava was born into a Mexican-American family in Los Angeles in 1927, one of eight children and whose parents were both immigrants from Zacatecas, Mexico. Nava went through Los Angeles schools from kindergarten to East Los Angeles Community College. He served in the U.S. Naval Air Corps during WWII. He graduated from Pomona College in 1951 after which he attended Harvard for a Ph.D. in history. Nava taught humanities in Spanish for two years at the University of Puerto Rico, then history at California State University, Northridge. He served 12 years on the Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education. He served as U.S. Ambassador to Mexico under President Jimmy Carter. He continues to be active in politics. Nava has published numerous books for schools and college. The latest is a historical novel based on travel to Tibet, *Taming the Chinese Dragon*. He has traveled widely and produced a number of TV documentaries like *Voices of Cuba* and *Song of the Basques*. He lectures and consults with school districts. He lives in Valley Center, CA, with his wife of more than 50 years, Patricia.



## **Edward Becerra, Education Begins in the Home Program Director**

Edward Becerra has been married for 44 years, has five children and three grandsons. He graduated from the University of California, Riverside in 1974 with a double major in sociology and economics. He worked 26 years with Pacific Bell/SBC, retiring as a senior network manager in the Computer Records Center in San Diego. He then utilized his sociology degree and began working for San Diego County as a social worker, where he worked nearly 12 years, retiring in 2012. Through this experience, he established ties with various community organizations and saw a need to help education efforts for the youth in Oceanside. Inspired by this work, Edward founded Education Begins in the Home in May 2015 and serves as its director. A passionate community activist, in May 2015 he received the Everyday Hero Award from the LGBTQ North County Resource Center in recognition for his exemplary activism in creating a greater understanding and awareness of civil rights, justice and equality. In June 2015, he received the Comerciantes Latinos Asociados Volunteer of the Year Award for recognition of outstanding volunteerism, leading by example and upholding the ideals of CLA. Edward is a member of the Route 78 Rotary and the Blue Wave Kiwanis organizations and has been involved with several other efforts within the community including the city of Oceanside's Noche Mexicana program over the past four years. He enjoys spending time with his family and grandsons, teaching them the love of music and reading.

## Rene Aguilera

Rene has been an elected school board member of the Roseville Joint Unified High School District/Placer County since 2002, and he is the founder and coordinator of the Cesar Chavez Youth Leadership Conference at UC Davis, his alma mater. Rene served on the board of directors of the Latino Leadership Council and of the American Leadership Forum. Rene received a bachelor's of arts degree in political science and government in 1983. Rene has spent much of his career as a journalist and community activist. Additionally, he has served on and held positions with other boards, including the California Latino School Board Association and Empowering Latino Futures.



**Katharine A. Díaz** is a writer, editor and broadcaster. As a freelance writer, specializing in writing about Latino issues, music, food, culture and travel, her work has appeared in various AARP publications, *Latino Magazine*, *VISTA*, *Aboard Magazine*, *South Florida Gourmet Magazine*, *Corporate and Incentive Travel Magazine*, *Hispanic Trends*, the *Encyclopedia Latina* and other publications. She was managing editor for *Hispanic Magazine* and edited six other national magazines, including the groundbreaking *CAMINOS*. Díaz recently published her first book, a cookbook titled *Sabores Yucatecos: A Culinary Tour of the Yucatán* (WPR Books: Comida, 2012). The Spanish-language edition—*Sabores Yucatecos: Un recorrido culinario a Yucatán*—was published in 2014. Her broadcast experience includes producing and hosting two radio programs on KPFK-90.7 FM in Los Angeles—Canto Tropical (since 1986) and Global Village—that focus on Afro-Cuban and world music. The programs can be heard globally at [www.kpfk.org](http://www.kpfk.org). She has also hosted similar radio programs in Miami and Austin.

**Victor Gonzalez**, Award-winning author of *Insurgency: 1968 Aztec Walkout*, resides in the Azusa, California.

He enjoys playing Chicano *corridos* on his guitar, speaking to high school and college students, and attends powwows, museums, and La Raza celebrations throughout the southwest. His association with other authors has fueled a political passion to help expand the Ethnic Studies Now (ESN) movement in California. His book is read in four English literature classes and three Chicano studies sections at the three high schools in Azusa. He strongly encourages everyone to get involved in creating and expanding ESN in their school district to introduce students to the wonderful world of the cultural-rich La Raza literature being published today. He is currently busy writing another sequel that recalls his active participation in the Chicano movement of the late 60's and early 70's. The title of his upcoming book is *Insurgency 1970: The State Strikes Back*.



**Lisa Montes** Empowering youth has been a lifelong passion for Lisa Montes, a resident of La Colonia de Eden Gardens in Solana Beach. She trained in the Chicano Federation of San Diego County's Leadership Training Institute (LTI), a leadership development training program. Lisa attended San Diego State University, majoring in Spanish and minoring in Mexican-American studies. She has a background in financial aid, employment preparation and résumé writing, having worked for Palomar College and MiraCosta College in Financial Aid and Career Services. She currently serves MiraCosta Community College in the Office of School Relations & Diversity Outreach. She was instrumental in helping the college increase their full-time Latino student enrollment to become a Hispanic Serving Institution by bringing thousands of middle and high school students to MiraCosta to explore college as a real possibility at events such as Encuentros Leadership conferences, GEAR UP conferences, Latino Film Series, and others important events.

She has served as a statewide board member for the Latina Leadership Network of the California Community Colleges, an educational organization committed to empowering Latinas through education. Additionally, she served as statewide conference co-chair for the Latina Leadership Network's Annual Statewide Conference. She was responsible for establishing a student chapter of the Latina Leadership Network at MiraCosta College, and served as their club advisor for several years. Because of her dedication to this organization, she was selected as a statewide Latina Leadership Network Madrina in 2000. Today, she continues to mentor Latinas who are attending college to help them see their full potential. In 2010, she joined the effort to form La Colonia de Eden Gardens, Inc. (LCEG) and became deeply involved in the organization's mission of helping youth and families to achieve their dreams by facilitating unified community collaborations that create positive change. She has since served as the organization's vice chair, as well as a co-coordinator for the organization's Summer Youth Camp and the first annual Día de los Muertos steering committees. Lisa joined the Latino Literacy Now Board in July of 2018.

**Martin Valdez** is a native of San Bernardino, California, where he attended public schools and graduated from California State University, San Bernardino. He served four years in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War. He and his wife, Maxine, have been married more than 50 years and have three children and three granddaughters. Martin has held several positions in both the private and public sectors. He has been a marketing executive in international sales in transportation and advertising, specializing in the Hispanic and Mexican markets. He has served as chief of staff for the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, Fifth District and special assistant to the County Superintendent of County Schools. He served as vice president of marketing for Latino Print Network. Martin has worked as a community organizer and community leader. In 1975, he served as president of Los Padrinos of Southern California, a youth-serving organization and later served as its first executive director. In 1978, Los Padrinos received the California Youth Authority, Best Juvenile Delinquent Divergent Program Award. Martin has served on the boards of numerous community-based organizations, including Boys and Girls Club, Girl Scouts of America, Casa de San Bernardino, Hispanic Inland Empire Chamber of Commerce and Librería Del Pueblo. He currently serves as president of the board of directors for Librería Del Pueblo that serves the immigrant community. Martin has also served as co-chairman for the Latino Book and Family Festival at Cal State University, San Bernardino since 2014.

