

PRESS RELEASE



NEW USC AND HOPE STUDY FINDS LATINAS ARE A MAJOR FORCE, LEADING WITH EQUITY IN MIND, AND KEY TO SOLVING CALIFORNIA'S MOST PRESSING CHALLENGES AS A STATE

The study presents transformational impacts of Latina leadership in California, challenges, and pathways to building more equitable communities

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LOS ANGELES, August 10, 2022 – Today, USC Equity Research Institute (ERI), in partnership with Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) released an in-depth study highlighting the impact of Latinas in California as a demographic force and as leaders who are building a more equitable state, and arguing for the need for more philanthropic investment in their leadership. The report titled “Leading with HOPE: Supporting Latina Leaders for a Better California,” finds that Latinas are key to the future of the state both in terms of demographics, as 39% of the women in California and mothers to more than half the children under 18, and as leaders who tend to lead in ways that center equity, build bridges, and will be key to sustaining a robust multiracial democracy.

Despite immense barriers ranging from educational access challenges, sexism and discrimination in the workplace, and persistent wage disparities that limit the financial capital needed to start businesses and run political campaigns, the report also finds Latinas have made remarkable progress at assuming new positions of leadership, particularly in the public and non-profit sectors, and that leadership development programs such as the HOPE Leadership Institute (HLI) are key to impart the skills, create the networks, and build the infrastructure needed to lead and build power among Latinas in California.

“The main impetus for this report is to demonstrate through data and testimonies that Latinas are the drivers of positive change and investments in local community,” said Helen Torres, CEO of HOPE. “Our secondary goal is to raise the need for the philanthropic community to invest beyond the [less than 2%](#) of U.S. philanthropic dollars that are currently allocated toward Latino-led nonprofits and Latina leadership development.”

“Ensuring Latinas thrive will help determine the future of the state, both in terms of their own well-being and the prospects for their children. Although Latinas are political, demographic, and community powerhouses, the dramatic lack of investment is evident. Imagine what the state could accomplish if we give Latinas equitable support,” said Dr. Manuel Pastor, Director of the USC Equity Research Institute and one of the authors of the report. “By continuing to support

HOPE and similar organizations that are committed to the development of Latina leadership, ripple effects will be felt throughout private and public sectors of leadership, communities of color, and by all Californians.”

Key findings and recommendations from the study include:

- 1. Latina leadership benefits the entire state – and this deserves far more philanthropic support than is currently being received.** Latinas are fundamental to the fabric of the state, constituting the largest ethnic-gender group in the state and raising nearly half of the state’s next generation. They also tend to lead in ways that are inclusive of other communities – and they tend, particularly when supported by programs like HLI, to work to make sure that other leaders can also step into their own. But philanthropic funding for this sort of efforts is frequently inadequate to the long-term tasks and opportunities at hand.
- 2. Latinas bring forward and advocate for issues that matter to historically marginalized communities – and more can be done to expand roles and broaden issue sets.** HLI alumnae connect their lived experience or their Latina identity to their work, community engagement, and commitment to see through structural changes for communities of color. A continued focus needs to be on business: Corporations need to appoint Black, Latina, Indigenous, and Asian American people to the C-suite beyond the token few – and they need to alter corporate culture to ensure their presence is valued.
- 3. Networks of support help Latinas magnify their talents and reach – and boosting mentorship would yield big dividends.** HLI alumnae stress the far-reaching influence of the HLI network, noting the statewide reach and emphasizing how they felt empowered to stand up for issues affecting Black and brown communities, women, and low-income communities.
- 4. Latinas have achieved greater political representation – and we need to do more and address lags in areas outside the public and non-profit sectors.** While Latinas’ gender and ethnic identity has had its advantage – providing differing insights, skills, and perspectives that make for impactful leadership in their communities – addressing challenges of sexism and racism in the workplace and pushing hard for advancement in the public, civic, and private sectors is critical and could benefit the state as a whole.
- 5. Latinas create bridges through multiracial efforts – and more needs to be done to encourage such collaboration and intersectionality.** HLI alumnae stress the need to infuse racial equity in policy, budgets, programming, and organizational culture not just for the benefit of Latinos, but for the benefit of all communities of color. Cross collaboration needs to happen in advocacy work and in the public and private sectors, with a particular role for progress in the corporate sector.
- 6. Latinas lead with racial equity and economic justice in mind – and this can benefit the entire state.** Many respondents connected their experiences as descendants of

immigrants or immigrants themselves and coming from primarily working-class backgrounds to the sort of professional work and impact in the community they want have. In a state that consistently ranks in the top five states in terms of income inequality, it is critical to have leaders who realize that their rise up the ranks requires that they extend a hand to others and that they also lift up the bottom rung so all have a decent living and a chance at success.

7. **Latinas face numerous barriers to becoming leaders – and we need to recognize both the professional and personal challenges.** Advantage and disadvantage are generational – and many Latinas who want to run for office do not have their own funds or access to wealthy donors and funders. This is one of the reasons that Latinas and women of color more broadly need access to something like the HLI network.
8. **Latina leaders need organizations that can create and promote pipelines – and that should start with a reach to young people.** Because many HLI alumnae were the first or only in many spaces, they expressed a commitment to guiding new generations of leaders. Latina leaders and HLI alumnae mentor a wide range of individuals, including men, women, LGBT and non-binary individuals of a variety of ages but the majority of those mentored by our respondents were overwhelmingly women, particularly young adult/early career women. This needs to continue and expand.

USC ERI draws on existing research, secondary analysis of key Latina demographics and economic data in California, as well as an analysis of survey results for nearly 300 HLI alumnae, interview data from 30 individual interviews, and three geographically distinct discussion groups.

For more information, please visit <https://dornsife.usc.edu/eri/leading-with-hope/>.

About USC Equity Research Institute

The USC Dornsife Equity Research Institute seeks to use data and analysis to contribute to a more powerful, well-resourced, intersectional, and intersectoral movement for equity. For more information on USC ERI and our work, please visit our [website](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), or [Instagram](#).

About Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE):

HOPE® is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization that has empowered our communities through advocacy, Latina leadership training, and increasing knowledge on the contributions Latinas have made to advance the status of women for the past 32 years. To date, HOPE's innovative programming has served 64,000 Latinas and touched the lives of several thousand more through our advocacy. For more information on HOPE, please visit Latinas.org or follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

EMBARGOED UNTIL AUGUST 10, 2022 AT 9:00 AM PST

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