

***A Speech by Sergio D. Suárez***

***Translated by Sergio D. Suárez for the 2017 MEX talks***

The road to empower our Mexican community **relies on** wanting and being able to unite our skills and **willpower**.

The road is getting to know one another, as individuals and as a community. With our strengths and challenges. Understanding our identity as we perceive it, whether it's transnational, Mexican-American, Chicano, immigrant, on a path to integration, or already fully integrated, and still being able to find a common agenda.

The path is knowing that an attack on one of us is an attack **on** all of us.

When I first got to Chicago at 17 years old, there was an integration course in Pilsen, at the San Adalberto Temple, where they taught us to fill out job applications and basic English, **in order** to be able to be part of a strong work force.

At first, I didn't understand why they paid me to take this **15-week course**, but a few years later, after paying taxes for my first business, I **understood** that there is a way to provide for yourself and your family, **while** contributing to the greatness and riches of this country.

I also noticed that both cultures had very positive values to impose on me, **along with** negative things, which **gave me the** opportunity to pick and **choose** amongst them. **This** would become my cultural identity.

Years later, during an interview, they asked my youngest son, Eric, who was 16 at the time, how he **felt—did he feel Mexican? or American?—to** which he replied that in Mexico he felt American, and in the U.S., he felt Mexican. That made a lot of sense to me!

At that point, the importance of our identity became very clear to me. We are the product, the blossom, of both here and there. **We** are transnational. Take this for example: in Mexico, are we Spaniards or Aztecs? Or Spaniards or Mayan? Zapotec, or Nahuas? What we are is a product of fusion. **From** there, we get our Mexican-ness. I am Mexican-American, "transnational," I am the product of both here, and there.

[VIDEO] The national anthem of this, my country, and the music of my mariachi, and the charro clothing. This is integration; it's Mexico and the United States. This is my transnational identity.

This video was taken on August 30th at **Millennium** Park, as part of a cultural national tour that integrated mariachi and folkloric ballet. This was possible thanks to the collaboration of 12 organizations, **and was presented** 22 times, with great success, in 19 cities in **eight** states. During this tour, we travelled more than **7,000** miles within a month, and **it's** only possible with the organization and collaboration of local governments, organizations, and sponsors. And we made it possible! We filled

up the Pritzker Pavilion and many other venues. At the very least, we can say that we know how to work together!

It is very important that we speak of the path to power of our Mexican community for two reasons: responsibility and dignity.

Nobody defends another's dignity; that wouldn't be deserving! Each person must defend their own dignity, and as a community, we must do the same, in alliance, as a group or team.

We must do it because it's our responsibility, because we must continue to keep offering the same opportunities that this country offered us.

What will the U.S. be like in 25 years? It is estimated that in 25 years, we will become the biggest ethnic group in the country. It is hard to imagine a strong and successful country without our community's development. The Mexican community must do well for the United States to do well. We must take this as a great responsibility, not just an opportunity.

If we do not have power, then someone else has it.

There are different types of power: power to hurt, to harm, to steal, to prevent, or to abuse. There is also power to help, to develop, to empower, to serve. To educate . . .

What can we do? We can decide, make laws, and create riches for our families and our country to be able to distribute those goods.

We can follow and empower the defined agenda. ~~DESyCT~~

Economically speaking, how can our children study with college fees at \$43,000 per year? Buy a house? Have medical insurance? A retirement plan? Etc.

Socially speaking, we must empower human capital. Evolve and create positive changes. Human capital and social development. This provides a positive change and creates a better relationship between individuals, groups, and institutions within a society.

In civics and politics; we must empower to create public policy and laws that favor our agenda. Plato once said "those who believe themselves to be wise enough to get involved in politics will end up being governed by the inept." There's truth in that! If the wise do not get involved in politics, then that space is open for the not-so-wise.

This social, economic, civic, and political development gives us power. This power helps us reach our goals and purposes. The power within the Mexican community will allow us to create positive changes in society. As transnationals, this will allow us to create change in our places of origin and residence alike.

Here and there!