

2006 Outstanding American By Choice Recipients

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February 13, 2006
Orlando, FL

The Honorable Melquíades "Mel" Rafael Martínez
U.S. Senate (Florida)
Orlando, Florida

Melquíades "Mel" Rafael Martínez was sworn in as Florida's thirty-third senator on January 4, 2005. Upon taking office, he became the first Cuban-American to serve in the U.S. Senate. Prior to serving Florida in the U.S. Senate, Martínez served as U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President George W. Bush.

Mel Martínez has called Florida home since the age of 15. He came to Orlando from his native Sagua la Grande, Cuba as part of "Operation Pedro Pan," a humanitarian program that helped Cuban children escape communist Cuba. Martínez lived with foster families who generously opened their homes to him until he was reunited with his family at age 19. After graduating from Florida State University with his undergraduate and law degrees, Martínez established a successful law practice and became active in many youth, civic, and community organizations in the Orlando area. He now proudly represents the people of Florida as a U.S. senator.

"Who would have thought, when I arrived as a frightened 15-year-old boy that one day I might be serving the president of the United States or would become a senator."

-Senator Mel Martínez



March 9, 2006
Washington, DC

The Honorable Thomas Peter Lantos
U.S. House of Representatives (CA-12)
San Mateo, California

Thomas Peter Lantos has served as a Member of the U.S. Congress since January 3, 1981 and is the only holocaust survivor ever to serve in Congress. He was born in Budapest, Hungary on February 1, 1928. In 1944, when he was 16 years old, Nazi Germany occupied his home country. Following the end

of World War II, Lantos was awarded an academic scholarship to study in the United States.

He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in Economics from the University of Washington and later earned his doctorate in Economics from the University of California, Berkeley. For three decades prior to his service in Congress, Lantos was a professor of economics, an international affairs analyst for public television, and a business consultant. He is a leading advocate for Human Rights around the world and in 1983 founded the Congressional Human Rights Caucus. He and his wife Annette have two children and 17 grandchildren.

"My life today, given my background, is something I cannot believe possible. I am privileged to serve the Congress of the United States. I think back to my life fifty years ago, when I was a hunted animal in the jungle, and how I am dealing with issues of state of a country I love so deeply. It all seems like a dream and it all places an incredible sense of responsibility on me. I didn't achieve this because of what I am, it happened because of what this country is."

-Representative Tom Lantos



February 16, 2006
Philadelphia, PA

Anne M. O'Callaghan
Executive Director, Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Anne M. O'Callaghan is the executive director of the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians. She has been heavily involved in assisting immigrants in the United States for over three decades.

Trained as a physical therapist in Ireland, Ms. O'Callaghan came to the United States in 1970 and worked in the field for 20 years as a practitioner, college-level instructor, and service director. She brought her entrepreneurial skills to the founding and building of a software development company which serves the home health care industry and is active in the Alliance for the Mentally Ill, the Visiting Nurses Association of Greater Philadelphia, and the Southwest Community Enrichment Center. Under her leadership, the Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians has provided the greater Philadelphia area with a significant resource and support center for immigrants as they begin life in the United States.

"As the day goes on, I am more and more humbled and honored by [the 'Outstanding American by Choice' recognition]. My mother will be very proud and will tell everyone in Ballybay!"

-Anne M. O'Callaghan



April 19, 2006
Des Moines, IA

Clementine M. Msengi
Founder and Executive Director, Bright Move Network
Waterloo/Cedar Falls, Iowa

Clementine M. Msengi first arrived in the United States in 1995 as a refugee from Rwanda. After completion of an intensive English course, Ms. Msengi enrolled at the University of Northern Iowa. In three years, she earned her undergraduate degree in Health Promotion and received the "Purple and Old Gold Award," an award given to the department's graduating senior with the highest grade point average. Ms. Msengi continued her education at the University of Northern Iowa where she earned her graduate degree in Community Health.

Ms. Msengi founded Bright Move Network in 2003, which is a community organization that provides education and referral services to refugees and immigrants in Waterloo/Cedar Falls, IA. Bright Move Network is also working to ensure that these new community members have the skills, resources, and capacity needed to fully contribute civically and economically to their communities.

"I really hope that someday immigrants and local residents will get to know each other very well. So much of the prejudice and cultural misconceptions will disappear and we can all work together to grow our communities and make them better for the future generations."

-Clementine M. Msengi



April 28, 2006
Miami, FL

The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
U.S. House of Representatives (FL-18)
Miami, Florida

A childhood refugee from Cuba, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen has emerged as a powerful voice in her South Florida community. Ros-Lehtinen served in the Florida House of Representatives and in the Florida Senate before her election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1989. Upon her election, she became the first Hispanic woman and the first Cuban-American elected to the U.S. Congress.

Ros-Lehtinen earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from Florida International University. In 2004, she received her doctorate in Higher Education from the University of Miami. As a leader in the South Florida community, Ros-Lehtinen advocated for the cleaning and dredging of the Miami River; Port of Miami; and the expansion of Miami International Airport, which provide important revenue and jobs for South Florida. On the international front, she is a leader in the spread of Human Rights.



April 28, 2006
Miami, FL

John F. Timoney
Chief of Police, Miami Police Department
Miami, Florida

John F. Timoney was appointed Chief of Police of the Miami Police Department in 2003, after serving one year as Chief Executive Officer of an international private investigation and security company in New York City. Prior to that, he served four years as the Police Commissioner of the Philadelphia Police Department, where he commanded a diverse police force of approximately 7,000 officers and over 900 civilian employees in the fifth largest metropolitan city in the United States.

Mr. Timoney, a native of Dublin, Ireland, immigrated to the United States at the age of 13. He has earned two graduate degrees and is a very vocal proponent for enhanced formal education of police officers and democratic policing throughout the world. Mr. Timoney is considered among the nation's highest authorities on terrorism. To this end, he created and laid the groundwork for the establishment of the City of Miami Institute for Democratic Policing.



April 29, 2006
Miami, FL

Dr. Eduardo J. Padrón
President, Miami Dade College
Miami, Florida

Dr. Eduardo J. Padrón is president of Miami Dade College, the nation's largest institution of higher education. He serves as chief administrative and academic officer, responsible for the affairs of six campuses and several outreach centers enrolling over 163,000 students.

Dr. Padrón came to the United States from Cuba at the age of 15 and transformed his life through his dedication to learning. He attended public high school in Miami, began his college studies at Miami Dade College, and received his doctorate in Economics from the University of Florida. He has spent over thirty years championing higher education opportunity. Dr. Padrón has been recognized by a series of U.S. Presidents. Among his national involvements, he has served on the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans; the boards of directors of The College Board, American Association of Colleges and Universities, American Council on Education, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.



May 15, 2006
Philadelphia, PA

The Honorable Carlos M. Gutierrez
U.S. Secretary of Commerce
Washington, District of Columbia

Carlos M. Gutierrez is the 35th Secretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce. He was sworn into office on February 7, 2005. Born in Havana, Cuba in 1953, Secretary Gutierrez came to the United States with his family in 1960. In 1975 he joined Kellogg as a sales representative. Rising to president and chief executive officer in 1999, he was the youngest CEO in the company's nearly 100 year history. In April 2000, he was named chairman of the board of Kellogg Company.

As Secretary of Commerce, Gutierrez oversees a diverse Cabinet agency with approximately 40,000 workers and a \$5.8 billion budget focused on promoting American business at home and abroad. Opening international markets to U.S. companies to create jobs and building a stronger America is a top priority for Secretary Gutierrez. Secretary Gutierrez studied business administration at the Monterrey Institute of Technology in Queretaro, Mexico. He and his wife, Edilia, have three children, Carlos, Erika, and Karina.

"Immigrants bring to America the values of faith, love of family, hard work, and self-reliance—the values that made us a great nation to begin with."

-Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez



June 16, 2006
Miami, FL

The Honorable Jose E. Martinez
U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Florida
Miami, Florida

Jose E. Martinez was confirmed as a U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Florida on September 13, 2002. Judge Martinez was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. He attended the University of Miami where he earned undergraduate and law degrees and was president of the Iron Arrow Honor Society.

Judge Martinez was a legal officer in the U.S. Navy and an assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida. In July of 1991, he joined the law firm now known as Gutierrez & Associates as counsel and became a name partner in September 1992. During a two-year leave from his firm, he became the regional director for the Office for Drug Abuse Law Enforcement within the U.S. Department of Justice.

Judge Martinez served as the vice chairman of the Federal Court Practice Committee of the Florida Bar. He is also a member of the American Bar Association, the Federal Bar Association, the Cuban American Bar Association, and the Hispanic National Bar Association.



June 16, 2006
Miami, FL

Gepsie M. Metellus
Executive Director, Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Center
Miami, Florida

Gepsie M. Metellus is cofounder and executive director of Sant La, Haitian Neighborhood Center, a social service organization that serves the Haitian community of South Florida. Sant La seeks to provide information and referral services in the areas of social services, education, housing opportunities, economic self-sufficiency, and access to healthcare and legal services.

Ms. Metellus is a Haitian-American, born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. She earned an undergraduate degree from Queens College, City University of New York and a graduate degree from Florida International University. Ms. Metellus has experience in education and public administration from the Miami-Dade County Public Schools and Miami-Dade County Government. She is a founding member of Haitian Women of Miami, the Association of Haitian Educators of Dade County, and the Haitian American Grassroots Coalition. Ms. Metellus has authored several books on the Haitian community in South Florida. She is a strong advocate for Haitian-American women and Haitian political refugees.



June 16, 2006
Miami, FL

Guarione M. Diaz
President and Chief Executive Officer, Cuban American National Council, Inc.
Miami, Florida

Guarione M. Diaz is president and chief executive officer of the Cuban American National Council, Inc., a private nonprofit organization involved in education, employment, housing, and economic development services. The Cuban American National Council has helped over 3,500 at-risk students remain in school; made 36,800 direct job placements; created more than 4,400 new jobs; awarded over 85 internships to needy students; and built new housing units for 1,700 persons of low and moderate income.

Mr. Diaz was born in Havana, Cuba and is presently living in Dade County, Florida. He holds an undergraduate degree from St. Francis College and a graduate degree from Columbia University. In 1994, Mr. Diaz served as the U.S. Ombudsman/Civilian Liaison in Guantanamo, Cuba. He has been actively involved in many community organizations and has served on the Board of Directors of a number of local and national organizations.



June 22, 2006
San Antonio, TX

Caitriona Lyons
Refugee Program Coordinator, State of Texas
San Antonio, Texas

Caitriona Lyons, a native of Ireland, began her work in the field of immigration many years ago and has extensive experience in the non-profit sector. Ms. Lyon's career in government began as an immigration specialist with the State of Texas and she is currently the coordinator of the Refugee Program within the Department of Human Services. Before the state realigned its offices and programs a couple of years ago, Ms. Lyons was the coordinator for all immigration matters for Texas. There is no comparable position now, and she remains the state's most prominent expert on immigration matters.

Before joining the State of Texas, Ms. Lyons was the director of the Refugee Resettlement Program in Austin for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. She has a graduate degree in Human Services Administration from St. Edward's University in Austin and is a licensed social work associate. She currently serves on the State Bar of Texas Immigration Affairs Committee and holds the office of President for the State Coordinator's of Refugee Resettlement Association.



June 22, 2006
San Antonio, TX

Dr. Marion P. Primomo
Physician, Hospice and Palliative Medicine
San Antonio, Texas

Dr. Marion P. Primomo is a physician in Hospice and Palliative Medicine, and a Professor in the Department of Family Practice at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA). Born in Germany, Dr. Primomo obtained her medical degree at Loyola University in Chicago. It was at Loyola that she met and married her classmate, Dr. John Primomo. In 1978, she became medical director of San Antonio's first hospice at St. Benedict's facility. Today over 1,000 patients a day are served by San Antonio's 28 hospices, 5 of which named Dr. Primomo as their medical director.

Dr. Primomo has been recognized for her work in hospice and palliative care. She is a founding member of the Academy of Hospice Physicians, now known as the Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine, and the International Hospice and Palliative Care Institute. In 1998, Dr. Primomo developed and coordinated the Palliative Medicine Fellowship at UTHSCSA, the 4th such Fellowship Program in the United States. Presently, Dr. Primomo serves as Hospice Consultant to several San Antonio Hospices in addition to teaching. She has four children, nine grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.



July 6, 2006
New York, NY

Marina Belotserkovsky
Director of Russian Communications and Community Outreach, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
New York, New York

Marina Belotserkovsky is currently director of Russian Communications and Community Outreach at the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), where she is responsible for assisting over one million members of the Russian-speaking community in America. She produces and hosts "HIAS Answers" for both radio and television. The program was developed to provide information for new immigrants when they arrive in the United States. Together with her HIAS colleagues, Ms. Belotserkovsky has been instrumental in the success of Local Russian-speaking Émigré Organizations (LOREO) and The Civic and Voter Educational Initiative, HIAS' key national outreach programs for Russian Americans.

Ms. Belotserkovsky immigrated to the United States in 1989 as a refugee from the Former Soviet Union. In 1996, she became a naturalized U.S. citizen. Before coming to the United States, Ms. Belotserkovsky founded and ran a school for gifted children in St. Petersburg, Russia. She has a graduate degree in linguistics and teaching from the Pedagogical State University in St. Petersburg.



July 6, 2006
New York, NY

Dr. Guillermo Linares
Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
New York, New York

Dr. Guillermo Linares serves as commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs for New York City. As commissioner, he works to ensure immigrants know how to access city services and meets with civic, religious, and business leaders to discuss the needs of immigrant communities. His advocacy on behalf of workers, immigrants, and families started 30 years ago when he was a school teacher.

In 1991, Dr. Linares made history by becoming the first Dominican-American elected to public office in the United States when he won a New York City Council race. As a member of the Council, he advocated for education, health services, and affordable housing. Dr. Linares also served in a national capacity as a member of the White House Initiative for Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans. President William J. Clinton appointed him in 1999 as chair of this initiative. Dr. Linares immigrated to the United States in 1966. He earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from City College and a professional diploma in administration and supervision from Fordham University. He recently achieved his doctorate in education from Teachers College at Columbia University.



July 6, 2006
New York, NY

Fang A. Wong
Special Operations Specialist with L3 Communications, ILEX Systems
New York, New York

Fang A. Wong has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to his community as a member of senior leadership in the veterans organization, the American Legion. Mr. Wong was born in China and came to the United States in 1960. He entered the U.S. military in 1969 as an enlisted soldier. Mr. Wong's distinguished military career spanned 20 years and included a 25 month long tour in Vietnam. He is entitled to wear the Bronze Star, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, three awards of the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendations and Achievement Medals, and Republic of Vietnam Service and Campaign Medals. He retired from active service in 1989 as a chief Warrant Officer-3.

Mr. Wong's contributions within the American Legion include becoming Commander of the New York County/First Legion District, National Legion Vice Commander, and other volunteer positions. Notably, his legion post was the closest one to Ground Zero, site of the 9/11 disaster in New York City. He and his Post assisted in organizing and providing relief support and translator services to the community in need after the tragedy.



August 22, 2006
San Diego, CA

Rear Admiral José Luis Betancourt, United States Navy, Retired
Chief Administrative Officer, San Diego City Schools
San Diego, California

José Luis Betancourt serves as the Chief Administrative Officer for the San Diego City Schools. Prior to beginning this assignment, he most recently served as the United States Navy's Commander for the Southwest Region. Mr. Betancourt attained the rank of Rear Admiral and earned numerous awards while on active duty in the United States Navy, including the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, and Humanitarian Service.

Mr. Betancourt is the oldest of eight children and was born in Matamoros, Mexico. When he was young, his family moved to Brownsville, Texas and while still in his youth he became a naturalized citizen. Despite the family's economic situation, his parents insisted that the children finish high school. Later he enrolled at Texas Southmost College (TSC), distinguishing himself academically and in student government. He went on to earn an undergraduate degree, graduating Cum Laude from Pan American University. He holds graduate degrees from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and completed course work in international relations at Harvard University.



November 11, 2006
Camp Victory, Iraq

Dr. Zalmay Khalilzad
United States Ambassador to Iraq
Baghdad, Iraq

Dr. Zalmay Khalilzad was nominated Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Iraq by President Bush on April 5, 2005. He was sworn in on Tuesday, June 21, 2005 in Baghdad. Before serving as U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Dr. Khalilzad served as Ambassador to Afghanistan from November 2003 until June 2005.

Dr. Khalilzad was born in Afghanistan. He obtained his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the American University of Beirut, Lebanon and earned his doctorate from the University of Chicago. From 1985-1989, he served as the State Department's Special Advisor on Afghanistan to the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. Between 1993 and 1999, Dr. Khalilzad served as the Director of Strategy, Doctrine and Force Structure program for the RAND Corporation's Project Air Force. During his career at RAND, Dr. Khalilzad founded the Center for Middle Eastern Studies.

For his service in Afghanistan, Secretary Rumsfeld awarded Dr. Khalilzad the Defense Department medal for outstanding public service. President Karzai awarded him the King Ghazi Ammanullah Medal, Afghanistan's highest medal. Dr. Khalilzad is also the author of more than 200 books, articles, studies, and reports.



December 14, 2006
Tampa, FL

Dr. Kiran C. Patel
Chairman, Patel Foundation for Global Understanding
Tampa, Florida

Born in Zambia, Africa, Dr. Kiran C. Patel is the son of Asian-Indian parents. After obtaining his diploma from Cambridge University and The University of London, Dr. Patel attended medical school at Gujarat University in India. Dr. Patel completed his residency in Internal Medicine in New Jersey as well as a fellowship with a Cardiology program affiliated with Columbia University. In 1982, Dr. Patel started a physicians' practice ownership and management company. Years later, as a result of his successful work in the industry, Dr. Patel was able to build the WellCare Management Group with revenues of over \$1 billion, serving over 400,000 members, and employing more than 1200 people.

Today, Dr. Patel serves as the Chairman of the Patel Foundation for Global Understanding, a non-profit organization that develops and funds a wide variety of programs in health, education, and arts and culture. The Foundation also supports a yearly U.S. scholarship fund for underprivileged youth and the IMAGINE Project, which teaches philanthropic entrepreneurship to young leaders. CHART/India, another

innovative Foundation project, works aggressively to provide HIV/AIDS treatment, prevention, and education programs throughout India's rural and urban populations. Dr. Patel and his wife have made possible the Charter School at the University of South Florida, as well as the highly celebrated Tampa Bay Performing Arts Conservatory. In 2003, Dr. Patel was appointed by Florida's governor to the University of South Florida Board of Trustees.



December 14, 2006
Tampa, FL

Dr. Renu Khator
Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs at the University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida

Born in India, Dr. Khator received her undergraduate degree in liberal arts from Kanpur University. Dr. Khator came to the United States at the age of eighteen. She earned her master's degree and doctorate from Purdue University in Political Science and Public Administration with particular training in environmental policy. She has published five books, numerous book chapters, and journal articles in leading national and international journals. Her areas of specialization include water policy and the impact of globalization on the environment. Dr. Khator has participated in more than fifty workshops and conferences around the globe in the areas of her professional interests and serves on a number of important boards.

Dr. Khator was appointed to her current position at the University of South Florida in 2003 after serving for three years as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and three years as Director of the Environmental Science and Policy Program. The University of South Florida, established in 1956, is the ninth largest university in the United States. With a budget of over \$1.6 billion, the university offers 200 degree programs to more than 44,000 students on its four campuses. Dr. Khator is the first female Provost of University of South Florida and one of the first Indian Americans to become provost at a comprehensive research university in the country.