

Raul Yzaguirre

Raul Yzaguirre is one of the most widely recognized leaders in the Hispanic community. His involvement in many of the most critical legislative and public policy issues of the last three decades has made him a key national player on behalf of Hispanic Americans. From 1974 to 2004 he served as President and CEO of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the largest national Hispanic constituency-based organization in the U.S. and the leading Hispanic think tank in Washington, DC.



Under his leadership, NCLR emerged as the most influential and respected Hispanic organization in the country. In its review of the influence of Latino advocates in Washington, *Hispanic Business* magazine concluded that NCLR is, “by all accounts the most effective Hispanic organization.”

Today, continuing his lifelong mission to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans, he is Presidential Professor of Practice in Community Development and Civil Rights at Arizona State University where he is helping to establish a center focused on community development, education for practitioners, and academic scholarship.

Mr. Yzaguirre has been honored on many occasions for his work. In 1979, he was the first Hispanic to receive a Rockefeller Public Service Award for Outstanding Public Service from the Trustees of Princeton University. From 1989 to 1990, he served as one of the first Hispanic Fellows of the Institute of Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. In 1993, Mr. Yzaguirre received the Order of the Aztec Eagle, the highest honor given by the government of Mexico to noncitizens. Also that year, he was the recipient of the Hubert H. Humphrey Civil Rights Award from the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. In 1998, he was honored with the Charles Evan Hughes Gold Medal Award for courageous leadership in civic and humanitarian affairs by the National Conference for Community and Justice. Mr. Yzaguirre has also been awarded five honorary degrees, including honorary PhDs from the University of Massachusetts and Arizona State University. He was first listed in *Who's Who in America* in 1980.

Mr. Yzaguirre is a past Chairperson of the Independent Sector, a nonprofit coalition of over 600 corporate, foundation, and voluntary organizations. He serves on the Board of Directors of numerous organizations, including Sears, Roebuck and Co., Educate, Inc., United Way of America, and AARP Services, Inc. (ASI), and is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. He was the first Hispanic to serve on the Executive Committee of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, was Chairperson of President Clinton's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, and served on the Visiting Committee for the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

In a 1992 profile, *Hispanic* magazine described him as being “at the center of the Hispanic leadership stage.” He is a frequent commentator on Latino issues; he has appeared on *NBC Nightly News*, *ABC World News Tonight*, *CBS Evening News*, *The Today Show*, *CNN*, and *National Public Radio* and in *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *The National Journal*.

A lifelong community activist, Mr. Yzaguirre was born in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. He began his civil rights career at the age of 15 when he organized the American G.I. Forum Juniors, an auxiliary of the American G.I. Forum, an Hispanic veterans organization. After graduating from high school, Mr. Yzaguirre served four years in the U.S. Air Force Medical Corps. In 1964, he founded NOMAS, the National Organization for Mexican American Services. A proposal he wrote for NOMAS led to the creation of what is now NCLR. After receiving his B.S. from George Washington University, Mr. Yzaguirre became a program analyst at the Migrant Division of the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). In 1969, Mr. Yzaguirre founded Interstate Research Associates (IRA), the first Mexican American research association, which he built into a multimillion-dollar nonprofit consulting firm.