

President & CEO - CHCI



Esther Aguilera, one of Washington's top strategic thinkers, is President & CEO of CHCI, a position she has held since November 2004. Under her leadership, CHCI continues to aggressively expand national programs and services to Hispanic high school, college, and graduate students—growing the organization's annual budget and national visibility. Propelled by her passion and her steadfast leadership, CHCI revenue has grown by more than 85 percent since 2005.

In October 2012 she was recognized as one of the 50 Most Influential Latino Leaders by HispanicBusiness.com for promoting the advancement of Hispanics in the United States through leadership, community involvement and professional achievements. In March 2012 she was bestowed the Cross of *Isabel la Catolica* by the Ambassador of Spain Jorge Dezcallar. The honor was decreed by Royal Proclamation from King Juan Carlos I of Spain. Aguilera was chosen for her extraordinary character and efforts that have improved relations between Spain and the American Latino community.

In February 2011, she was featured as one of the nation's top 90 female mentoring leaders by Women of Wealth magazine. Aguilera is passionate about education and is a frequent contributor to the national discussion with her most recent op-ed appearing in the 2011 summer edition of Latino magazine.

She has been recognized as one of the 100 most influential Hispanics in Washington, D.C., presented with Hispanic magazine's 2006 Latina Excellence Award in Education, and was featured in Latino Leaders magazine's 2007 women's issue for her positive impact in the community. Just last year, she was awarded the 2010 Alumni Seal Award for Service to the Community from her alma mater, Occidental College in Los Angeles.

Aguilera's unique expertise—derived from extensive senior management experience in corporate, public affairs, policy, legislation, fundraising, and the nonprofit sector—makes her a sought out expert. In January 2011, U.S. Office of Personnel Management Director John Berry appointed Aguilera to its newly created Hispanic Council on Federal Employment to advise him on leading employment practices in the effort to remove barriers to recruitment, hiring, retention, and advancement of Hispanics in the Federal workforce.

Her service also extends to the board of the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility (HACR), the Susan G. Komen Global Race Advisory Committee, the CEO Advisory Board of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), and chairing the Independent Sector's NGen Fellows Selection Committee.

She began her career in Washington, D.C. in 1990 as a policy analyst for the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), a prominent national think tank, with extensive national policy development and research responsibilities. This position led Aguilera to author several major publications.

Next, Aguilera assumed the role of executive director of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), a legislative group on Capitol Hill, whom she worked for from 1993-98. Her responsibilities included legislative and relationship building among congressional, White House, and constituency allies. During her tenure at CHC, she worked closely with the Spanish Embassy to organize the first Congressional delegation of U.S. Hispanic members to Spain.

In October 1998, Aguilera was appointed to serve as senior advisor to Energy Secretary Bill Richardson and executive director of the Department of Energy (DOE) Small Business Office. Under Secretary Richardson, she developed senior policy recommendations leading to the implementation of a nationwide Hispanic outreach program; increased DOE's small business contracting; established long-term partnerships with business leaders; and launched the first DOE small business conference, now an annual event. Prior to joining CHCI, Aguilera served as principal at the Dewey Square Group, a nationally renowned public affairs firm, directing strategic national projects for a variety of Fortune 100 companies, trade associations, and nonprofits.

She has been a featured speaker at numerous national conferences and forums, including Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, NCLR, Latina Style magazine, and many others. In 2009, she was a keynote speaker for the Fundación Euroamerica V Conferencia Internacional de ABC, where she led a discussion on the history of Hispanics in America, U.S. Hispanic demographic trends, the impact of Hispanics in the 2008 U.S. elections, and the alliances between U.S. Hispanics, Spain, and Latin America.

Aguilera holds a B.A. in public policy from Occidental College, Los Angeles. A native of Mexico, her family relocated to Los Angeles in 1972. Overcoming numerous obstacles, today Aguilera has achieved the American dream. She is married and the mother of two wonderful boys, Mackie and Jacob.