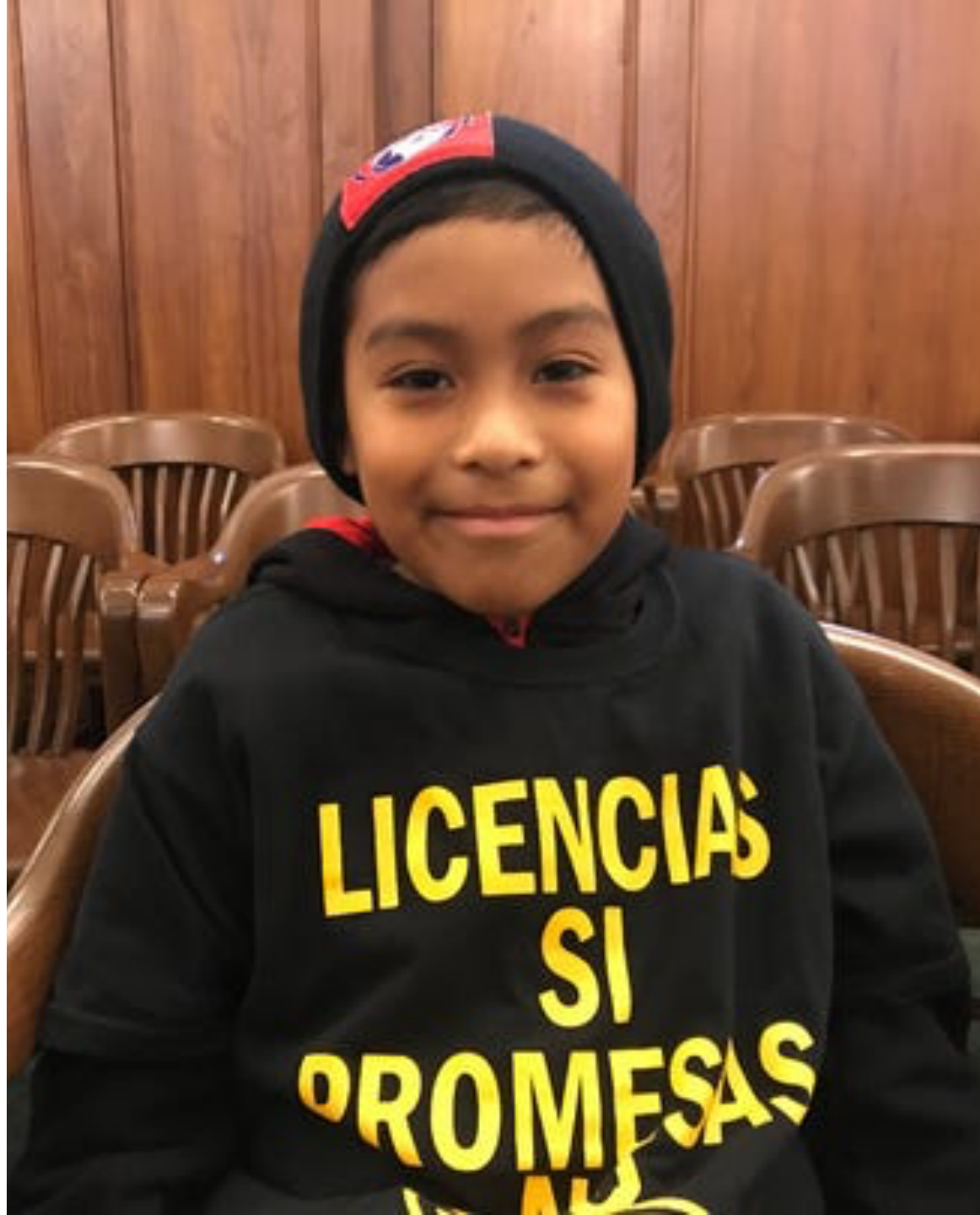


Number One: David, the Soul of the Movement, Cosecha NJ

Remember 9 year-old David testifying in-front of the Judiciary Committee or confronting Speaker Coughlin? I do. And I remember thinking that if that kid has that much courage, I ought to have a little more *cojones* and keep pushing. He was not told what to say as some claimed. He spoke from his heart about his experience seeing his grandfather taken away after a traffic stop. And by doing so, he reminded us that politics always ought to be about making the life of our children better.

I cannot wait to see what young David will become; he has gotten the best lesson in politics anyone can get; people, organized people, can make the impossible become a reality if we just stop being indifferent to the Goliath of injustice around us. Go David!



Number Two: Johanna Calle, Director, NJ Alliance for Immigrant Justice

Leading a coalition of 40+ local groups is hard work, but Johanna made it look easy. She is sharp, strategic and empathetic—qualities that make for a good leader of a coalition of groups with their own individual leaders who all want to feel they have input in the direction of the campaign. As the home of the #LetsDriveNJ campaign, with another 80+ local groups wanting to contribute, Johanna became the glue that kept everyone acting locally to push legislators to commit to a YES vote.

Those hundreds of local actions had to be staffed and tracked so they could be elevated to a state-wide effort to push Coughlin and Quijano and Sweeney to keep their promise. Not an easy task for a young leader who took on a big challenge but masterfully steered the effort to victory. She ought to be called the Master Strategic Campaigner of NJ. All right, I'll give her that title. Besides, now NJAIM is a respected immigrant rights group nationally. We have a lot to do to defend immigrants in the time of Trump, so I am glad Johanna is at the head of this effort in NJ.



Number Three: Erika Nava, Policy Analyst, NJ Policy Perspective

If we all needed substance for our arguments, Erika was ready with data, facts and figures and actual analysis of how much immigrants contribute to NJ's economic growth. She was a quiet but steady presence in the Legislature, in and outside the building, providing analysis to all who wanted to really understand why #DriverLicensesForAll was indeed a good policy all legislators ought to get behind. She understands politics and is able to clearly state that once all the data has been delivered and explained to political leaders, getting it done is ultimately about political will.

Under her leadership, NJPP has become a key think-tank advancing key issues for immigrants and the Latino community. She is one the sharpest Latino policy minds on immigrant integration policy and we need her sharp intellect steering our State forward as we continue the hard task of fighting anti-immigrant rhetoric in New Jersey.



Number Four & Five: Nedia Morsy and Sara Cullinane, Make the Road NJ

These two made the perfect campaign one-two punch; they are both smart and humble enough to know that their message works because they have hundreds of immigrants themselves delivering it. As clearly stated by their mission, Make the Road NJ, organizes working class immigrants to fight for dignity and respect at the grassroots level. With hundreds of local actions, from vigils to Christmas caroling, to actual canvassing in the districts of legislators, they empowered a new generation of immigrants to act on their own behalf and demand acknowledgement of their own existence in every legislative district in NJ. I am still in awe of all the mothers who spoke out, all the young immigrant high-school kids descending on Trenton proudly stating their parents were undocumented and they were ready to fight for them. That level of self-empowerment requires actual investment on people's political awareness. Their impact on this campaign was seismic in that it created a new grassroots army of immigrant youth activists who are ready to keep on demanding true equality for all in New Jersey. As part of the #LetsDriveNJ Campaign they worked up and down the state mobilizing local support in every legislative district. Even if some Democrats legislators didn't give us the vote, it was not because they did not hear from these two or their local grassroots army. Sara's quiet and eloquent presence kept negotiations going with Assemblywoman Annette Quijano and Speaker Coughlin until the finish line, and she masterfully maneuvered strategic discussions with progressive allies without confusing purpose and outcomes. Their work to build working immigrant power has just begun and we are in good hands under their combined leadership.

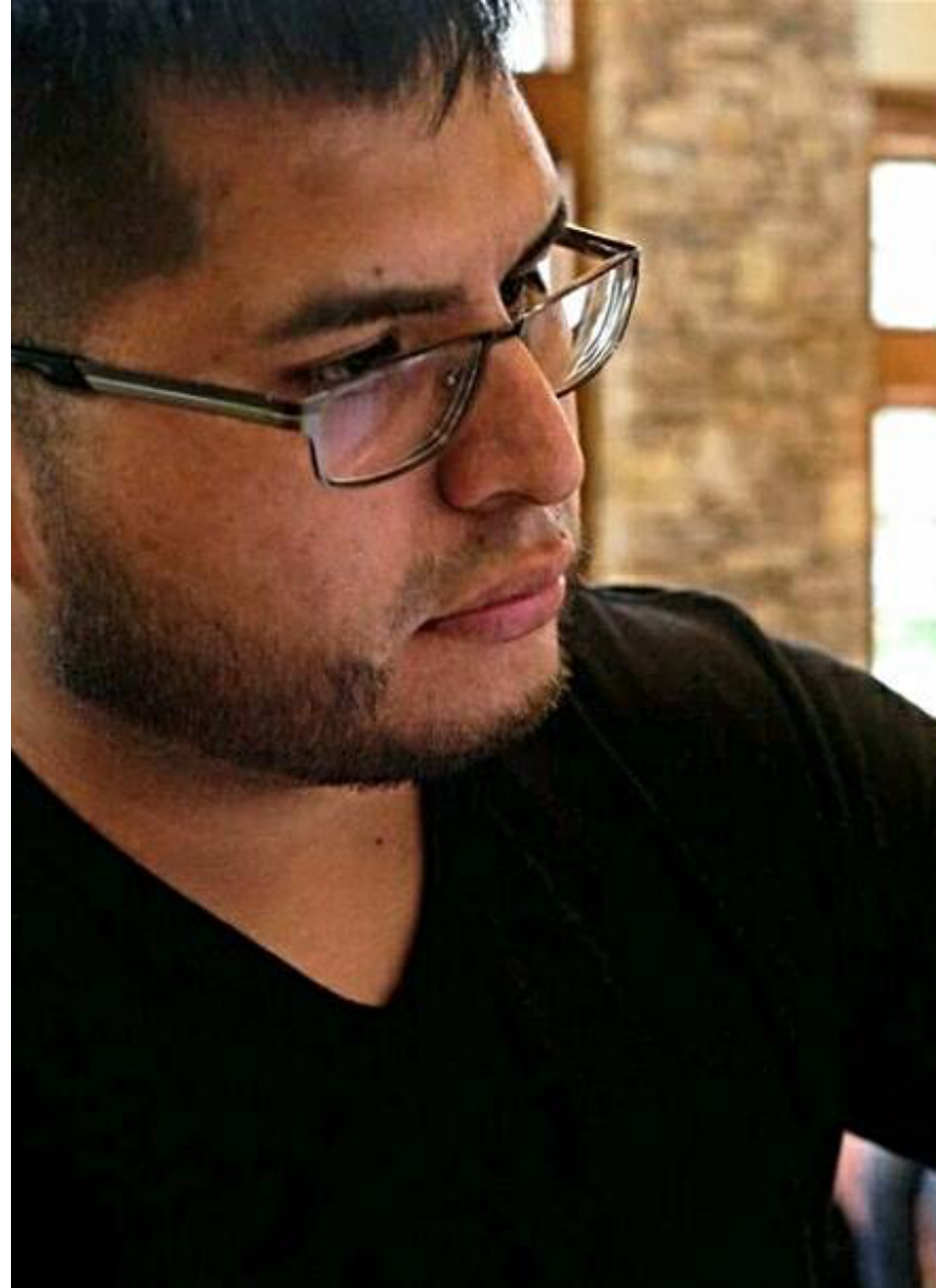


Number Six: Carlos Rojas, Movimiento Cosecha NJ

Grassroots movements are successful when different groups decide to engage in a fight from wherever they are and with whatever resources they possess. As the leader of Cosecha in NJ, Carlos understood that his role was not to negotiate policy with politicians, his role was to change hearts and minds, give undocumented immigrants a stake in the fight, and raise the ante against inaction. Trained in the art of agitation at the Alinsky style, Carlos and his team of Verra Parra and Haydi Torres, knew that in order to have power they had to challenge power. And so they did; they protested Speaker's Coughlin relentlessly, they challenged Assemblywoman Quijano to drive the message home, the grassroots would not accept inaction from the Democratic Party.

CosechaNJ was called "unrestrained, unreasonable" and sometimes "disrespectful" in their maneuvering of actions vs negotiation. Some politicians even tried to isolate them, but many who have pushed the system from inside for a long time knew that we needed a group with Cosecha's chutzpah to keep the pressure up.

Carlos took his in-your-face approach to the national stage confronting Vice-President Biden for his support of deportations. In that moment he became a national crusader for immigrant justice. We are fortunate that Carlos is from NJ and has honed his activism leading our immigrant community into a courageous fight for #DriverLicensesForAll.



Number Seven & Eight: Chris Estevez and Frank Argote-Freyre, Latino Action Network and the LAN Foundation

Chris and Frank are the dynamic duo; both steadily leading the fight for Latino political representation and policy action through the ups and downs of Republican or Democratic electoral dominance. They founded LAN with one key vision, to organize leaders into one statewide organization that could drive far-reaching policy demands that impact the largest amount of people where they needed most, in our schools and our homes. Since its launch in 2009, LAN made approval of Driver Licenses the number one policy priority for Latinos; and they never let it die.

With is intellectual erudite passion for justice, Frank would talk to Governors and candidates for Governors, to legislators and activist. In the ups and downs of NJ politics, he was able to forge an honest relationship with Sen. Sweeney that allowed him to assess real vs electoral shenanigans. At the end if you asked Frank if Sweeney would keep his word, he would say “I believe he wants to, but we still must make him.” That type of trust in personal relationships, but practical knowledge of real-politiks was key in keeping negotiations moving with the Senate and with Sen. Sweeney.

In the meantime, using his labor organizing skills Chris kept LAN's network of leaders engaged statewide—from Atlantic City to Bergen Co, LAN did not relent in reminding Legislators that Latinos will play a role in redistrict in 2020 and we will not forget who was with us when it mattered.

LAN is currently suing the State of NJ for de-facto segregation of Latino children in our public schools. The outcome of that lawsuit will have implications for many generations of Latinos to come. Hence demonstrating that transformational leaders drive policy initiatives not for personal recognition, but for generational transformation.



Number Nine: Wind of the Spirit

Demonstrating that grassroots power can change communities, Wind of the Spirit, led by community organizers Bryan Lozano, Karol Ruiz and Diana Mejia, has indeed changed the face of Morris County. Their members were actively engaged in pushing the progressive ascendance of Morris County political leaders to accept that immigrants have contributed to that ascendance. They drove the message with progressives that Driver Licenses was indeed a progressive issue they should all get behind even in conservative leaning areas of the county. They pushed the issue with LD-25 and LD-26th candidates and in a moment of true solidarity, got candidate Christine Clarke to call this issue a safety issue for all women. That was indeed a transcendent moment when an issue seen as a controversial becomes just a matter of justice for all.





Number Ten: LUPEPAC

I might be bias on this, but I am proud of what we at LUPEPAC have been able to build ; a state-wide political organization electing Latinas to office and advocating for issues impacting Latinas. For the last five years, under the leadership of Noemi Velazquez, Patricia Campos-Medina and now Laura Matos, we made action on Driver Licenses one of our top issue for endorsements and we are proud that the Legislators driving the process were all Latinas connected to our LUPE network. We wrote op-eds, engaged allies, and leveraged our relationships to open-up spaces for our immigrant community to find an audience with a needed legislator or a Mayor. Our contribution all along was to remind legislators that those of us who are in the trenches, electing and investing in Latino political empowerment, saw this issue as critical to advancing road safety and Latina women economic empowerment. We vote. We run for office. And we demand action to protect our families.

In a moment of disappointment, we were not able to get all elected Latinas and women of color to vote yes. But their reckoning with voters will determine if that was the best choice for their districts.

In the meantime, we still celebrate that Latinas are at the table, leading our legislative priorities and negotiating with party leaders. That is indeed a great leap forward.

Thank you to all the supporters of #LetsDriveNJ

The activists under this banner were many and I cannot begin to cover all the names of the organizations who were actively engaged. But to learn who they are, visit the website <https://www.letsdrivenj.org/supporters>

Together, Si Se Pudo!



**LET'S
DRIVE
NJ**