



# Sol A. Flores

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## Executive Director

### La Casa Norte

My parents and grandparents came to Chicago from Puerto Rico in the 1950s and 60s. Like so many other immigrant stories in this country, they worked tremendously hard to provide for our family. I was born in Chicago and am the proud daughter of a single mother. She demonstrated what it meant to take responsibility, working so hard—at times, coming home from her full-time job, feeding me dinner and putting me to bed, and going out to a second or third job in order to provide for us. Sometimes that wasn't enough, and I would come home to find we had no electricity or no telephone. I started working when I was 13 years old to help support my family. To put myself through college, I worked 2 jobs and had to take out multiple loans.

My family members have stood and fought for their beliefs in serving and improving the community. They have been teachers, social workers and public servants. My grandparents embodied the meaning of perseverance, bravery and responsibility. They were foster care parents, and over the course of 20 years, they fostered numerous children. In addition to their own six children, they raised four more. For them, being political meant taking care of families. This is what has shaped the values I stand on today, the values of love and justice: love, for the promise of humanity, and justice, for doing what's right and what's just in life.

It's no small coincidence that I grew up wanting to be of service to others, and that is exactly what I have done. Fifteen years ago, using the experience I gained working in the business world, I became the founding Executive Director of La Casa Norte, a nonprofit that has helped thousands of youth and families exit homelessness in the Chicagoland area. I grew my organization from a two-person agency into an 80-plus employee, multi-million-dollar agency that delivers desperately needed housing and social services to homeless families, single parents, victims of domestic violence and abandoned youth. The agency is helping to reshape the provider landscape and community by offering a continuum of innovative programs that increase housing stability through a partnership of rich services.

Under my leadership and vision, La Casa Norte recently began construction on the Foundation Project, a new \$20 million dollar facility on Chicago west side which will include a new healthcare center, nutrition and supportive housing to Chicago's most vulnerable youth and families.

I have advocated and fought to establish funding for youth homelessness at the city, state and federal levels and to make the case that our community needed more services focused specifically on Latino and youth homelessness. I've also served on numerous local housing and public policy nonprofit boards, focused on bringing attention, research and resources to families, young people and the most vulnerable.