



**Carlos Ojeda Jr.**  
educator/motivator/communicator/poet

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# biographi**C**al information

A belief in the essential goodness of humanity, a belief in change, and his alertness to the needs of the community are what drive **Carlos A. Ojeda Jr.** and have led him to be a successful activist, poet, speaker, educator and entrepreneur. He's been called one of the most **dynamic** speakers under thirty in America today and as a community advocate, he has worked extensively with high school and college aged Latino youths, spreading his message of education, leadership, community activism and entrepreneurship. His compassion, strength and genuineness have inspired the youth, educators, and leaders whose paths he has crossed along his journey as an innovative and masterful communicator.

**“It doesn't matter how long you live, it matters what you do while you live.”**



The remarkable journey of his life began in the streets of Newark, New Jersey and later to Reading, Pennsylvania where his immigrant parents saw opportunities for themselves and for their first generation Puerto Rican children. Growing up proved to be a difficult task, particularly school. Not understanding his social, economical and cultural background, many of his high school teachers told him he would never amount to anything. One teacher once called him, “the greatest piece of garbage he had ever seen.” Yet his drive, **passion** and dreams led him to overcome those obstacles and pursue a career of life learning and educational success, being the first person in his family to graduate from college with honors. His experiences have led him to always remind Latino youth to, “never, ever, ever let anyone tell you who you are or what you will become. That's your destiny to fulfill, no one else's.”

**“Now is the time to transform our children into the leaders of today, not tomorrow.”**

His obsession with living life completely and passionately is only rivaled by his desire to share his message. Because of this he has become a published writer, poet and speaker. His ability to extend the touch of mere spoken words, to **transform** them into powerful thought-provoking, emotionally charged commentaries about life, education and society have been highly praised from print media to public radio after his first speaking engagement as the Keynote speaker at the Pennsylvania Statewide Latino Coalition Conference in 1997.

Like his praises, he continues to represent a model of transformational leadership throughout the community, speaking on issues of **education**, empowerment, and progress.

He lives his life according to the saying, “life is not measured by the breaths that you take, but rather by the moments in life that take your breath away.” And adds to it by proclaiming, “it doesn’t matter how long you live, it matters what you do while you live.” It is his belief that human progress comes through the determined efforts to promote education, social activism and entrepreneurship in our youths. According to him, “every second that you live, every breath that you take, is a second and a breath that you have to turn it all around.” He sees now as the time to transform the youth into **leaders** of today, not tomorrow.

His client list includes: **White House Initiative on Educational Excellence For Hispanic Americans** ▪ United States Army ▪ **United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Foundation** ▪ Minority Interchange, Inc. ▪ **Houston Independent School District** ▪ United States Hispanic Leadership Institute ▪ **Columbia University** ▪ Reading School District ▪ **Philadelphia School District** ▪ Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania ▪ **West Chester University of Pennsylvania** ▪ Kennett Square Consolidated School District ▪ **Allentown School District** ▪ Bethlehem Area School District ▪ **Rowan University** ▪ Pennsylvania Statewide Latino Coalition ▪ **Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education** ▪ Houston Area Community College ▪ **Pottstown Area School District** ▪ Agere Systems ▪ **Hunting Park Community Development Corporation** ▪ ASPIRA, Philadelphia Inc. ▪ **The College Board** ▪ Columbia-Montour Women’s Consortium ▪ **Pennsylvania Association for College Admission Counseling** ▪ Governor’s Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs.

**Carlos Ojeda Jr.** received his bachelor's degree in Business Management with a Minor in Marketing and a Minor in Law from Bloomsburg University, his Master's in Business Administration with a focus in business development, entrepreneurship and organization development from Kutztown University. He is a member of the National Society of Hispanic MBAs. He has served on the Board of Directors for ASPIRA, Inc of Philadelphia, Board of Director for the Pennsylvania Statewide Latino Coalition and Board of Director of Raices, Inc. He is the founder and president of Distinct Communications and Carlos Ojeda Jr.,Inc, yet still finds time to be a devoted husband to his wife, dedicated father to his son and committed to his family and community. More recently he took on the role of Assistant Director of Admissions, Latino School and Community Liaison for Kutztown University of Pennsylvania and helped increase the enrollment of students of color from **4.6% to 16%** in three years and then went on to become the youngest, first and only Latino business professor in the history of the University's College of Business. He currently serves as project coordinator of the Kutztown University AREYTO Project and is the Director of the Latino Business Resource Center.

# **topics, keynotes & workshops**

Carlos Ojeda Jr. has spoken and/or presented at hundreds of businesses, organizations, conferences, colleges, universities, high schools and middle schools on the following topics:

## **Education Topics:**

- College Preparation
- Persistence Beats Resistance
- Importance of Education
- Educational Programming
- College Retention 101
- College Recruitment 101

## **Community Topics:**

- Community Activism
- Leadership & Empowerment
- Cultural Identity and Pride
- Mobilization & Motivation

## **Business Topics:**

- Small Business Development
- Staffing, Training & Development
- Conflict Management
- Powerful Presentations
- Power & Influence
- Time & Stress Management
- Critical Thinking
- Networking to Win
- Cultivating Diversity
- Articulation: Public Speaking

## **Motivation Topics:**

- My Friends Call Me Chu...
- What Anthony Taught Me...
- They Say No, I Say Yes!
- If Not Me, Then Who?

**Other Workshops and Keynotes are available and can be tailored to fulfill your organization's needs.**

# Keynotes:

- United States Hispanic Leadership Institute National Conference
- White House Initiative on Educational Excellence For Hispanics Education Fair
- New Jersey Equal Opportunity Fund Professional Association Conference
- Minority Interchange, Inc. Annual Career Expo/Leadership Conference
- PA Governor's Advisory Commission of Latino Affairs – State Capital Educational Summit
- United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce National Convention
- Houston Independent School District's Latino Leadership Series
- United States Hispanic Leadership Institute Northeast (USHLI), Latino College Student Leadership Conference
- United States Hispanic Center Bizfest: Detroit, Milwaukee, San Antonio, Houston, New York, Kansas City
- Berks County Intermediate Unit Leadership Conference
- Rowan University Minority Youth Empowerment Conference
- State System of Higher Education Latino Youth Convention
- Pennsylvania Statewide Latino Conference
- Reading High School Latino Youth Conference
- Latino Youth Leadership Convention
- Pottstown High School Latino Heritage Celebration
- Hunting Park CDC Project Youth Lead Graduation
- National Student Empowerment Conference

# Workshops:

- Columbia University's Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media
- 40th Annual PACAC Conference "Recruiting Diversity"
- College Board Regional Conference "Recruiting Diversity"
- USHLI Northeast Latino College Student Leadership Conference
- Kennett Square Multiculturalism Conference
- Latino Youth Leadership Convention

# testimonials and omments

## Clients:

**Frank Lopez, President, U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Foundation** “You are a dynamic and vibrant voice and your story is one that certainly not only resonates with students but with adults from all walks of life, particularly those that can expand on their own horizons and opportunities through which to help young people, particular Latinos, move toward success and engage in a productive life that is balanced, a balance between self development and a sincere commitment to real and quantifiable Latino community development.”

**United States Hispanic Leadership Institute** “Carlos Ojeda Jr. is one the most dynamic speakers under 30 in America today.”

**Idalia Fernandez, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Hispanic College Fund**  
WOW! I feel privileged to have witnessed how your story, and your unique way of telling it, changed the minds and the future of several young people in that audience last weekend. You have a beautiful gift of capturing their attention and then really getting into their heads and planting the seed of hope, change and possibility.

**Dr. Arlene Otis, Division Administrator, Berks County Intermediate Unit** “Your presentation was excellent. Truly inspiring and dynamic.”

**Kendrick Mickens, Associate Director of Multicultural Affairs, West Chester University**  
“Your message is thought provoking, inspiring and powerful. Colleges and Universities across the country could benefit from your presentation. Truly motivational!”

**Daniel Jean, Assistant Director of Student Activity, Ramapo College of New Jersey**  
“Never give up. You were great! Outstanding!”

**Dionne Fears, Program Director, Harcum College Upward Bound Program**  
“Excellent! The information shared was great! Students were interested and could relate to the presentation and one of our students began to realize what he needed to do to move forward with his education, and that makes it all worth it! You were truly genuine and inspiring.”

# testimonials and comments

## Educators:

**Rosalee Sabo, Principal, Dieruff Senior High School** “Your presentation was appropriate for all youth in urban education. Our Latino students seldom witness literate role models in their educational lifetime. It was the best experience our students could have had. You were poignant, relevant, and dynamic.”

**Hiram G. Martinez, Associate Director Social Equity and Diversity, Millersville University**

“Truly a dynamic and impressive display of words and emotions that any young student or professional can relate to and be inspired by. Definitively High-Impact!

**Vivian Robledo-Shorey, Middle School Counselor, Broughal Middle School** “Your presentation was well thought out, entertaining and educating. I’ve got 4 words for you: **ON POINT! & ALL THAT!**”

**Denise Arrigo, Teacher, Millville Senior High School**

“I have heard dozens of motivational speakers in my 29 years in education, but you were the most on target for the Hispanic youths in attendance at that conference. I have never seen them so enthusiastic about a speaker. To say that they related to the story of your life is a great understatement. I must say that I related to it myself.”

## Community Leaders:

**Norman Bristol Colon, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Governor’s Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs.** “A message of empowerment, encouragement and motivation that must be heard by young Latinos all across our nation. Simply, the best.”

**Tom McMahon, Mayor, City of Reading** “I hope your message reaches parents and children in the Reading School District. Your message needs to be out there. People need to get involved in the community.”

**Maria Alejandra Socorro, Coordinator of After-school Program and Summer Learning Programs, ACLAMO** “You’re an Inspirer. Being a Latino you are able to make Latinos see themselves reflected in your stories. Sometimes they simply don’t know where or how to start. I wish all Latino students and parents could have the opportunity to listen to you, because you are a model and represent the hope and faith they need to believe in.”

## College Students:

**Natalie Kuzio, Student, Lehigh University** “Your presentation was so impressive. The kids could really relate and got into you like I’ve never seen before. Truly inspirational and amazing!”

**University Student, West Chester University** “Colleges are always in need of motivational speakers. You are it. Great, motivating and captivating.”

**Jessica Colon, President of the Organization for Latino Unity, Ramapo College of New Jersey.** “I think your presentation was effective and inspirational. We were able to relate to you, because your story was so personal. You are charismatic and inspirational.”

**Lisette Cruz, Co-Vice President of the Organization for Latino Unity, Ramapo College of New Jersey.** “It was a very spiritual, positive and motivating experience for me. Wonderful!”

**Tomas Utrera, Lambda Sigma Upsilon, Latino Fraternity Incorporated** “You were great. The speech, the movements, emotions, the personal stories; it was all great. What an impact!”

**University Student, Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania** “Inspiration and change starts within ourselves. You’re a true testament to that. You inspired us with your story of achievement, dedication and change. Great presentation!”

## High School Students:

**From a letter written by Three High School Students** “The students at my school appreciate your presentation. You are an inspiration to those who are having trouble understanding that school makes a big difference in our future. Sometime in the future we will take what you had told us into mind and make our decisions based on it. Even though some of us don’t know it now, you are a role model to us all. We enjoyed your speech on how you were told you were nothing and you became so much. Thank you for your speech and time.”

## Middle School Students:

**From a letter written by a 6<sup>th</sup> grader** “Thanks for coming to my school. We all enjoyed it very much. We enjoyed hearing your story. It inspired us to be what we want to be when we grow up. It showed us that even though we make wrong decisions, we can fix them. I hope that maybe someday you can come to our class and give us another inspiring speech. The thing that I liked most about your speech was how hilarious it was. You showed us how to work hard but also made it fun for us. This was the best assembly that we had so far all year.”

**From a letter written by a Middle School Student** “You are the best speaker we have ever had at our school. You had me laughing, but at the same time I learned a lot. I hope to hear you speak again. Thank you.”

**From a letter written by a Middle School Student** “Your talk really inspired me to stay and study hard in school, to be successful like you. Your parents, well they sounded a lot like mine, they want you to be successful in life. You are a great role model for the community. One day I want to be like you in the near future. I also wanted to thank you for talking and sharing your life with our school.”

# Bridgeton News:

## Hispanics get motivated

Thursday, April 08, 2004

By PETE McCARTHY  
Staff Writer

"Life is not measured by the breaths you take, but rather by the moments in life that take your breath away."

-- Carlos Ojeda Jr.

VINELAND -- Those words were etched in the minds of about 200 Latino high school and college students throughout the county as they took part in the 16th Annual Hispanic Student Leadership Conference at Cumberland County College Wednesday.

Keynote speaker Carlos Ojeda Jr. kept the students laughing as he told his story of being a first generation Latino in a diverse and troubled community.

"It inspires you a lot," said Millville High School junior Charles Gomez. "This is someone who is just like you. It pushes you forward."



Ojeda recalled the advice his father gave him.

"You can stay in school and live or drop out and die," he said.

Teachers said he had two options: Become a beautician or a mechanic.

Neither of those appealed to Ojeda, 28, who is now president of Distinct Communications, a motivational speaking firm in Pennsylvania.

But when he was in high school, Ojeda's teachers never had high expectations.

"I was told I was the greatest piece of garbage," Ojeda recalled.

It was those words that motivated him to go to college, where he graduated with a degree business administration with a minor in marketing and law.

He also has a master's degree from Kutztown University, where he now teaches and spends the rest of his time speaking to groups all over the region.

"Don't ever let anyone tell you who you are or what you're going to become," he said.

Ojeda said he wanted to be different from his friends.

One of them is now on Death Row in Pennsylvania, another is dead and one is dying of AIDS, he told the group.

Students leaving Wednesday's presentation agreed that the words spoken hit home.

"It was really good," said Cumberland Regional High School sophomore Jessica Espinoza. "(These speakers) give us encouragement to go to college. It helps us to do something in life."

Senior admissions counselor at CCC and conference coordinator Lucy Acevedo explained the growth of the conference over the past few years.

At first, it was just for those at CCC, but then they expressed interest in offering such a program to high school students.

"It's to help them succeed in life," Acevedo said. "Every year, we try something different and exciting for them. My hope is that they become positive leaders."

# Conference inspires Hispanic students

By **GISELLE SOTELO**

Staff Writer; gsotelo@thedailyjournal.com

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VINELAND -- Listening to Carlos Ojeda Jr.'s inspirational story can make you believe in the power of sheer determination.

According to Ojeda, those who were supposed to encourage him -- his teachers -- said he would never amount to anything.

But Ojeda, 28, proved them wrong.

Near the end of his speech Wednesday at the 16th annual Hispanic Student Leadership Conference at Cumberland County College, Ojeda rattled off a laundry list of accomplishments, hoping to inspire others.

It worked.

"That Carlos guy, he inspired me to be something," said Jade Andino, 17, a senior at Vineland High School. "You've got to believe in yourself."

That's exactly the reaction event organizer Lucy Acevedo hoped would occur.

The conference was intended to equip students with the primary tool that's necessary for success: motivation.

College students and juniors and seniors in Cumberland County public schools were invited.

About 200 people attended, including Vineland, Millville, Buena Regional and Cumberland Regional students.

They listened to the advice of a handful of speakers -- a welcome novelty for many who don't hear such encouraging messages at home.

Some Hispanic parents lack the educational skills to inspire their children to further their own schooling, said Diana Appel, administrative assistant for enrollment services at CCC.



Staff photo/Charles J. Olson

**Carlos Ojeda Jr., founder and president of Distinct Communications, was the keynote speaker during the Hispanic Student Leadership Conference at CCC.**

"They don't know how to teach kids to aspire to pursue educational goals because they don't have that themselves," she said.

That's when other successful Hispanics -- such as Ojeda -- can be a resource.

Ricardo Reyes, 17, a junior from Vineland High School, first considered the conference an easy way to get out of class. Ultimately, however, he admitted Ojeda's story touched him deeply.

Andino looks to those such as Jennifer Lopez as her role model.

"Being Spanish, people look at you different," she said. "But then you find out there are many strong Latinos and Latinas out there that are inspirational to you."

## BizFest returns to KC

By LYNN FRANEY  
The Kansas City Star



CHRIS OBERHOLTZ | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

The BizFest Youth Entrepreneurship program helps area teens learn business skills. Carlos Ojeda Jr. (right) helped Alva Ruiz develop a tagline for her business Thursday.

A 17-year-old from Latin America who loves competition, William Suarez would have enjoyed watching World Cup soccer matches on TV all day Thursday.

But instead, he sat in a downtown Kansas City office building learning how to be a successful professional. He was one of about 30 teenagers in the BizFest Youth Entrepreneurship program, organized by the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City.

It wasn't the most fun thing Suarez could have done for the day, but it was a smart thing to do for his life, he said.

Some day, when the Shawnee Mission East senior is a doctor and decides to start his own clinic, he'll be able to get the word out about how he can help people.

The students are absorbing business skills — such as writing a resume, understanding marketing and presenting themselves to others — during the free four-day BizFest.

It began Wednesday and will wrap up Saturday with a competition for the best business plan.

The winner receives a scholarship and competes in the national BizFest program in Philadelphia later this year. This is the third year for the Kansas City BizFest, which was held at the Aquila corporate headquarters.

Sinai Bustillo, a Mexican immigrant who will attend Johnson County Community College next fall, worked Thursday on her business plan. She's suggesting a fashion company that would enroll members who pay a monthly fee for access to fancy event clothing.

"I can be a teacher, and when I get my own money, I can work on my business," said Bustillo, 19.

Session trainers came from the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Foundation, which presents BizFest seminars across the country. The program mostly enrolls Hispanic participants, but it's open to anyone. BizFest has three main goals, said Shana Mosher, the foundation's senior director of program operations:

- Instill confidence. "We strive to get the students to believe in themselves," she said.
- Promote education. Too many Hispanic youngsters don't finish high school, Mosher said. The program aims to convince students of the need to stay in school, whether they want to be entrepreneurs or auto mechanics.
- Promote self-direction. "You're in charge of your own direction," Mosher said.

## Professor encourages Latinos

*A daylong program in City Hall is aimed at inspiring the local Latino population to succeed through education and participation in politics, arts and community events.*

**By Holly Herman**

*Reading Eagle*

Carlos Ojeda Jr. told the local Latino community Saturday how he overcame obstacles on the road to success, and he urged parents to push education for their children. "I believe in change," Ojeda said in City Hall during a program called the State of Latinos in Berks County. "Everyone can change. I believe with education, most of the Latino population can change."

The 30-year-old Kutztown University professor of management and business told how he overcame numerous obstacles to get his position. About 100 community members and leaders attended the daylong event aimed at encouraging Latinos to participate in politics, arts and community events. The program featured a variety of speakers and a forum offering information on how to get involved.



Mayor Tom McMahon said he hopes Ojeda's message reaches parents and children in the Reading School District. The mayor said 42 percent of the 82,000 city residents and about 62 percent of the city's 17,400 students are Latino. "We have a dynamic city with a great deal of culture," McMahon said. "This message needs to be out. People need to get involved in the community." Ojeda told the group about how his parents, originally from Puerto Rico, moved from Newark, N.J., to Reading when he was young. Ojeda said that even though he spoke perfect English he was placed in bilingual classes, a decision that bothered and confused him. Eventually he was moved into regular classes, but by high school he was hanging out with the wrong crowd and getting in trouble. Educators suggested his prospects were limited. "My guidance counselor told me I should be a beautician or a mechanic," he said. But Ojeda thought otherwise. He said he earned 1100 out of 1600 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test and went to Bloomsburg University. Ojeda said that at first he didn't take his studies seriously and left college. But then a tragedy hit that made him realize it was important to get an education.

On Aug. 22, 1995, his 19-month old godson Zachary Day dislodged a screen when he was playing with toys on a bed and fell seven stories from an apartment to the pavement in the 700 block of Court Street. Ojeda said he was devastated by the boy's death, but the loss made him determined to go back to school. Ojeda got his bachelor's degree from Bloomsburg and then went for a master's degree at Kutztown. He urged fellow Latinos to get an education.

"Together our voices can be heard and we can make change," he said. "We must not remain silent as crime increases. We need political organization and we need support for change." Guadalupe Rivera, a Berks County representative on Gov. Ed Rendell's Advisory Committee on Latino Affairs, said Latinos are encouraged to take an active role in the community. She said in the last decade many Latinos moved to Reading from Puerto Rico, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Colombia. "We are here with resources and motivation to strengthen the Latino community," Rivera said of Saturday's event.

# Conference promotes college to Hispanic students



By Theresa Gutierrez

The 24th Annual National Latino Leadership Conference put on by the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute promotes education, leadership and unity. It allows high school students throughout Illinois, Indiana and Michigan to learn about education opportunities and to be recruited by universities and colleges. For many, it is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

They were bused in from across the Midwest, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, various Chicago suburbs. Over 3,000 high school students anxious to learn about how to get a college education. Of course, some of them had to be convinced that college is the right way to go.

"All of you will be having an incredible opportunity here today to really make your future dreams a reality," said Ald. Manny Flores, 1st Ward-(D).

The students attended workshops to learn about their options.

"You get a chance to get to know other colleges and new people," said Joel Lechuga, student.

"It really motivated me to continue school and move on to college," said America Paniagua, student.

"I think that it's good for us to learn more about the future," said Melva Douglas, student.

Carlos Ojeda is a professor on the east coast. A high school teacher once called him the greatest piece of garbage he had ever seen. In high school he failed every subject. He turned his life around and overcame many obstacles. Now he motivates young people to get a higher education.

"Don't ever, ever tell anyone tell you who you are or who you will become because it's your destiny to feel, no one else's," said Ojeda.

"It inspired me a lot," said Carlos Rodriguez, student.

The college recruitment fair is one of the largest in the nation, representing over 1,000 colleges and universities across the country who will talk to students about their respective schools, degrees offered, and ways to finance their college education

"I'm more or less seeing other opportunities that I have. I saw other scholarship opportunities that were out there and it's very helpful," said Laura Paramo, student.

"If you want to go to college, what you need to begin doing now, not after you graduate but now while you're in school. Then if you want to apply, how do you apply? Where do you apply? How do you choose a college? And most importantly, how would you finance your public education?" said Juan Andrade, United States Hispanic Leadership Institute.

Andrade went on to say that the number one reason Latinos do not attend college is because they do not have access to the information they need to know how to apply, and the most common reason given for Latinos not completing college was affordability. He hopes that the conference enables students to take control of their circumstances, instead of being controlled by them.

# Effort Works To Boost Number Of Latino

## Conference Brought Students, Recruiters Together



Rafael Romo  
Reporting

"I needed to do something to occupy my time," Carlos Ojeda Jr. said.

He's a man with a mission. He's trying to convince a new generation of Latino students they have what it takes to do the impossible.

"America needs to understand that the success of our country lies on the success of the Latino student population. We're the largest, fastest-growing minority in this country," Ojeda said.

But much more than a 30-minute motivational speech is needed to change a trend that worried many leaders.

"The education of Latinos in America has been described already as a national tragedy. Here in Illinois we're not ready to declare it a state tragedy, but it is at the very least alarming," said the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute's Dr. Juan Andrade.

Only eleven percent of Latinos in this country have a college degree. Experts say this situation must change, and they're trying to start at this conference.

On Thursday, the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute brought together college recruiters and 2,500 Latino students from the greater Chicagoland area.

"Just cause you're Hispanic or a minority, doesn't mean that you can't do something in life," student Ana Villagomez said to CBS 2's Rafael Romo. "Right now, you're Hispanic and you are a reporter, you know? So, you can do whatever you want."

A recent report by the University of Notre Dame says Latino students in Chicago with the greatest educational needs have the least access to resources that could help close the achievement gap.

The report also says many students don't get much needed information on the college application process.