Jan. 30, 2018

Transformative Leader Dolores Huerta Visits Notre Dame

Dolores Huerta, one of the most prominent social activists of our time, originator of the phrase “Si Se Puede,” and co-founder the United Farm Workers Association with Cesar Chavez, will be the special guest of the Institute for Latino Studies’ Transformative Latino Leadership Lecture Series at 4:30 p.m. Feb. 13 (Tuesday) in McKenna Hall at the University of Notre Dame. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Huerta is founder and president of the Dolores Huerta Foundation, which works to create networks of healthy, organized communities pursuing social justice through systemic and structural transformation. She was an honorary co-chair of the Women’s March on Washington 2017 and spoke at the Democratic National Convention in 2016. Huerta received the inaugural Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award from President Bill Clinton in 1998 and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama in 2012. She actively travels and speaks to millions of people annually. Within a week in January, she rallied voters at the Fresno Women’s March, met with students in Texas, and spoke at the Into Action Social Justice Festival in Los Angeles.

Huerta spent decades fighting for the rights of farm workers, women’s rights, and the working poor, starting in 1955 when she helped found a chapter of the Community Service Organization, which fought for occupational safety and economic justice for farmworkers. In 1965, on behalf of the United Farm Workers, she led the first national boycott against California grape growers that resulted in a victory for the farm workers. This action signaled the beginning of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, by merging farm worker rights with student, and community activism. Huerta also played a critical role in the enactment of the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act of 1975. She risked life and limb in order to ensure the rights of farm workers—has been arrested in non-violent protests—and in 1988, a San Francisco police officer beat her so badly that she was left with several broken ribs and a ruptured spleen.

The Transformative Latino Leadership Lecture Series brings prominent figures in law, entertainment, business, the Catholic Church and other fields who impart their personal experiences and a vision of effective leadership. Past guests include U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Former San Antonio Mayor & HUD Secretary Julián Castro and Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles.

ILS Director Luis Fraga, the Rev. Donald P. McNeill, C.S.C., Professor of Transformative Latino Leadership and the Joseph and Elizabeth Robbie Professor of Political Science, and acting chair of the Department of Political Science, will moderate a conversation with Dolores Huerta in a fireside chat format in McKenna Auditorium.
In anticipation of her visit, the Institute for Latino Studies is co-sponsoring the screening of the 2017 documentary, “Dolores,” directed by Peter Bratt and produced by musician Carlos Santana, with the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center. The film will be shown at 3 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 3rd and Sunday, Feb. 4th in the Browning Cinema.

The institute is also presenting a photo exhibit, titled “César Chávez and Dolores Huerta: Legacy of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement,” by Los Angeles Times photographer Jose Galvez in McKenna Hall through March 9. For more information visit latinostudies.nd.edu.

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*The Institute for Latino Studies advances understanding of the fastest-growing and youngest population in the United States and the U.S. Catholic Church. ILS strengthens Notre Dame’s mission to prepare transformative leaders in all sectors of society.*