

*"It's not very often when good fortune enters a person's life. However, the Latino Leadership Council has enriched my life forever and in ways that I hope can be equally returned or surpassed." – Dr. Reyes Ortega*

Originally from the San Francisco bay area, Dr. Reyes Ortega's extended family comes from the adobe villages of the northern mountains of New Mexico. It is within the valleys of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains where the Ortega family has resided since the early 1600's and, over time, has literally survived under the Spanish, Mexican and American flags. His maternal "Macias" side of the family is from the state of Guanajuato, Mexico. With no more than faith, determination and courage, in 1914, his *abuelos* escaped the uncertainties and danger associated with the Mexican Revolution of 1910 to create a new life in the United States. At great risk, they left the comfort of a Spanish-speaking Catholic home to the unfamiliar world of *el Norte*. Dr. Ortega is honored to say that he is the proud grandson of undocumented workers and remains steadfast with his deep appreciation for the sacrifices that were made before.

Understanding the sacrifices of those before him, created a greater appreciation of opportunity and expanded his understanding of social justice and equity, especially during the affirmative action Chicano Movement years of the 1960s and 1970s. Looking back, those initial years also became a springboard to higher education where he earned his bachelors, masters, and doctorate degrees. Dr. Ortega eventually left the bay area to Placer County to raise his family with his wife Rebecca and their two sons, Reyes Cuautemoc and Mateo Moctezuma, while developing his career at Sierra College and contributing to his community. Before long, his life eventually crossed paths with many equity-minded and incredible people throughout the community. It is not uncommon to hear Dr. Ortega cite the following quote as one of his favorites from Dolores Huerta, a life-long civil rights leader and recipient of the prestigious Presidential Medal of Freedom. "We must use our lives to make the world a better place to live, not just to acquire things. That is what we are put on the earth for."

According to Dr. Ortega, "Dolores Huerta is one of my heroes in life and I have faithfully leaned toward her for inspiration, perseverance, patience and focus. These four principles have given me the greatest opportunity to uphold the value of community service. As such, I am so very fortunate to have served as Board President and to have engaged as a practitioner of community service through the Latino Leadership Council. Clearly, through education, health and youth development, the Latino Leadership Council carries the enormous responsibility of welcoming and introducing *nuestra comunidad Latina* to the complexities and benefits of life in the United States. Of course, this gargantuan task cannot be achieved without the genuine commitment and dedication of an incredible staff and Board of Directors. *Si Se Puede!*"