



“Let no one take away our desire to fight. Let’s fight until the last moment of our life.”

We mourn the passing of beloved trans-Latina and immigrant rights activist Lorena Borjas, honored by state and local leaders and known in Queens and throughout NYC as the mother of her community. On March 30, Lorena died of complications from COVID-19.

In 1981 at age 20, Lorena moved from her native Mexico City to Queens, where she shared an apartment with 20 fellow trans-

Latinx immigrants. For decades, Lorena worked as an educator in HIV testing, syringe exchange, and other programs with LGBTQ organizations, including Translatina Network, Latino Commission on AIDS, and Community Healthcare Network. In 2011, she launched the Lorena Borjas Legal Fund to provide bail and advocate for LGBTQ and other immigrants. Most recently, Lorena served as Executive Director of Colectivo Intercultural TRANSgrediendo.

Our Community Leaders Pay Homage to Lorena

“Lorena Borjas was a tireless transgender activist who took advantage of her own experiences as a transgender woman, immigrant, and sex worker to help others. She had a great dream, to build a home where transgender women found refuge and support. Casa Trans Lorena Borjas was her life project. Unfortunately, she could not see her dream materialize. We will continue her legacy to make Casa Trans Lorena Borjas a reality, and provide all the necessary support that the community needs.”

Liaam Winslet, Acting Executive Director
Colectivo Intercultural TRANSgrediendo

“Lorena worked as a tireless, longtime advocate for immigrants, sex workers, and people of transgender experience. She was a great friend to Amida Care and a beautiful and bright light in our world. She was compassion in action, and her powerful life-filled impacts will live on. May she rest in power.”

Doug Wirth, President and CEO, *Amida Care*

Remembering

Lorena Borjas

Compassion in Action (1960-2020)

Our Community Leaders Pay Homage to Lorena

“Lorena was a pillar in our community. Lorena was always an inspiration to many trans-Latinas across the country. Even though her work was centered on helping trans women in New York, her work transcends multiple borders. Lorena’s memory will be immortalized, not just in the trans movement but in multiple movements that she was involved with. I and many others are grateful for Lorena’s existence, and I am certainly honored that I got to work with her, to strategize and transform the trans movement. ¡Gracias, Lorena, por existir!”

Bamby Salcedo
President, *TransLatin@Coalition*

“Lorena Borjas: Advocate, Warrior, Friend, Leader – these words come to mind when I think of her. My relationship with Lorena was not very public, but she and I met many nights to talk about our vision and the work. We were each other’s mentors, but, as I always told her, she was a teacher to me, as well. Lorena was the reason Voces Latinas does outreach to immigrant cisgender Latinas in the bars. To this day, we continue the work, and we will continue doing it in her honor. I will treasure our friendship forever and will never forget her.”

Nathaly Rubio-Torio
Executive Director, *Voces Latinas*

“Lorena Borjas was fierce, magnificent, and inspiring. She fought for the rights of trans-Latina people, sex workers, immigrants, LGBTQ communities, and anyone else who needed her. She was a mother and a mentor. She started conversations by asking ‘How are you?’ and genuinely cared to know. She lives on in us.”

Julian E. Cabezas, LMSW
Assistant Director, Outreach Programs
Amida Care

“Lorena was family for us: a fearless advocate, a mentor, and bigger than life. Lorena reminds us to work to address discrimination, transphobia, stigma, xenophobia, and health disparities. She will be remembered as a pioneer, a sister, a mother, and her support for us in our journey. Lorena, Rest in Power.”

Latino Commission on AIDS

¡Viva Lorena!

“Lorena Borjas has made an incredible contribution to the trans movement of modern times. She has worked with countless communities and has served as a powerful think-tank for many providers in New York. She will also be remembered as a friend, a sister and a mom to many in our community.”

Cristina Herrera
CEO and Founder
TransLatinx Network

“I met Lorena almost 10 years ago, only a year or two after I became a lawyer. Lorena was my colleague, mentor, and friend. She taught me what it really means to be a community lawyer, as well as a lawyer doing movement work. She taught me about accountability and unconditional support and was living proof that there are good people in the world who do things because they are the right things to do, without expecting something in return. Lorena shaped my legal career and who I am as a person. I already miss her so much, and I am so grateful that I knew her.”

Lynly S. Egyes, Legal Director, *Transgender Law Center*

“When asked about memories of Lorena, it is so hard to pick one. She was funny, caring, and always moving. Among so many of her achievements, I have to highlight her ability to create community. Looking back, I have few memories of being alone with Lorena. She was always with a group. She loved having people around her, and people gravitated towards her. A rare magic has left us. It will be difficult for us to fill that empty space, but because of what she created – Community – we will always be together. That’s what she wanted, and that’s what we need!”

Cecilia Gentili, Principal,
TransEquity Consulting

“Without formal training, Lorena used a holistic approach to help Community Healthcare Network develop a comprehensive program that included medical and mental health treatment, housing, hormones, and legal assistance, among other services. As she started working with us, she pulled members of her community into program decisions. Lorena made sure everyone had access to the things they needed and showed us that if there is no funding, we just need to find it. She made everyone feel welcome and always had a kind word or joke, but she always found a way to get her point across. All of us here at CHN, her friends, and I personally, are better for having known her. We all miss her.”

Luis Freddy Molano, MD
Vice President, Infectious Diseases & LGBTQ Programs
Community Healthcare Network

Knowing Lorena Borjas was a blessing. Her heart was always with the undocumented LGBTQ community, especially trans women in Queens. Many had no hope in society and were often victims of physical and systemic violence. She was a mother to many, and her legacy is a strong family who will always remember her.

Daniela P. Simba,
Capacity Building
Assistance Coordinator
Latino Commission on AIDS