

ARABELLA MARTINEZ

Early experience in social work and the community action program led Arabella to the conviction that economic development, evolving from strong, community-directed institutions, was the most effective path toward economic self-sufficiency and empowerment. Throughout her career, she has been instrumental in helping to create and build such institutions that positively supported the role of minorities and women in the economy and larger society. Her involvement in the civil rights movement of the 1960-70's began in 1964 when she helped found the Unity Council in Oakland in 1964. After receiving her MSW from U.C. Berkeley's School of Social Welfare in 1966 she began her career as a community organizer and institution builder, including transforming the Unity Council into a leading community economic development organization. As part of her work, she became involved in numerous public and non-profit boards, and led a successful coalition effort in 1969 to transform the United Way of the Bay Area.

Her involvement in the civil rights movement of the 1960-70's led to her 1977 appointment by President Jimmy Carter to the position of Assistant Secretary for the Office of Human Development Services, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. She was the first Latina appointed to a cabinet level position in the history of the nation.

For a decade after leaving public service, the goals of economic empowerment and self-sufficiency for women and minorities were further delineated through important consultations and studies for major foundations and corporations. During this period, organizational and resource development assistance was provided to organizations, such as the Women's Initiative for Self-Employment and the Oakland YWCA.

In December 1989, a new challenge was joined to restore the financial vitality of the Unity Council, to reestablish it as one of the largest and most respected community development corporations in the nation. The development of the \$100 million transit-oriented, mixed-use, in-fill development in the heart of the Fruitvale, an inner-city neighborhood in Oakland, has become a national and international model of comprehensive and sustainable neighborhood revitalization.

The Unity Council's community development place-based strategy and its vision of sustainable development, linking land-use, transportation and economic development was adopted by foundations, government agencies, and other localities throughout the nation. Its extensive public/private partnerships and its collaborations with other non-profits contributed to its credibility and reputation with the business community, political leaders, local and national philanthropic supporters, Fruitvale residents and other stakeholders. Over fifteen years, her work generated more than \$200 million in support for the Unity Council, its Transit Village development and open space initiatives.

After retiring from the Unity Council in 2005, Arabella joined the Latino Community Foundation Board of Trustees and in 2014 she became its Interim CEO to help build a Latino philanthropic institution in California. With her second retirement, she rejoined the LCF Board of Trustees as a passionate advocate for the Latino community, its institutions and community-based organizations. In January 2016, she took on another challenge when she was nominated by Mayor Libby Schaaf to the Port of Oakland Commission and confirmed by the Oakland City Council.