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Meeting of November 13, 2013 - National Origin Discrimination in Today's Workplace



Thomas A. Saenz, MALDEF President and General Counsel

In 2009, **Thomas A. Saenz** returned to MALDEF as President and General Counsel. Previously, as Counsel to Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Saenz served on the four-person executive team to the mayor, where he provided legal and policy advice on major initiatives. During his four-year tenure with the City of Los Angeles, Saenz helped to lead the legislative effort to change the governance of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), and served for two years as the lead liaison on labor negotiations, with a goal of addressing serious financial challenges in partnership with the City's workers.

Saenz previously practiced civil rights litigation at MALDEF for 12 years, including four years as Vice President of Litigation. He was MALDEF's lead counsel in the successful challenge to California's anti-immigrant Proposition 187, and he led numerous civil rights cases in the areas of immigrants' rights, education, employment, and voting rights. Saenz achieved several victories against ordinances unlawfully restricting the rights of day laborers, served as lead counsel in the 2001 challenge to California's congressional redistricting, and initiated the employment discrimination lawsuit resulting in a \$50 million settlement with Abercrombie and Fitch. He also served as MALDEF's lead counsel in two court challenges to Proposition 227, a California English-only education initiative. Saenz was also the lead drafter of the *amicus brief* on behalf of Latino organizations supporting affirmative action in the Supreme Court case of *Grutter v. Bollinger*.

Saenz currently serves as a member of the Los Angeles County Board of Education, the American Bar Association Commission on Hispanic Legal Rights and Responsibilities, and the U.S. Department of Education's Equity and Excellence Commission. He also serves as steering committee co-chair of the California Civil Rights Coalition and on the boards of the Campaign for College Opportunity, ENCOMPASS, and the Impact Fund. He served on the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations for four years. For eight years, Saenz taught Civil Rights Litigation as an adjunct lecturer at the University of Southern California (USC) Law School.

Saenz has been recognized on numerous occasions for his work. He was selected as one of Hispanic Business Magazine's "100 Most Influential Hispanics" in October 2009. Among many honors, he received the Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior (IME) *Ohtli Award* in 2006 and the 2010 *Corazón Award* from Univision.

Saenz was born and raised in southern California. He graduated summa cum laude from Yale University, and he received his law degree from Yale Law School. Saenz served as a law clerk

to the Honorable Harry L. Hupp of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California
and to the Honorable Stephen Reinhardt of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

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