

**Private & Confidential**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

November 15, 2022

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Gabriela Mantilla

gmantilla@unionsettlement.org

### **Union Settlement Appoints Four Hispanic Women to Key Leadership Roles**

**East Harlem, NY** – Union Settlement ([www.unionsettlement.org](http://www.unionsettlement.org)), East Harlem’s oldest and largest social service provider, today announced significant appointments of four Hispanic women to leadership positions: Nina Piros, Chief Program Officer for Family, Children and Youth, Liliana Velez, Chief of Staff and Strategic Advisor to CEO, Jocelyn Caceres, Director of Manhattan’s first Family Enrichment Center and Michelle Cruz, Director of Economic Development.

With only 4.5% of executives in New York City identifying as Hispanic, Union Settlement is proud to be a leader in elevating and celebrating Hispanic women leadership. As an organization established for and by the East Harlem community, these appointments reflect our neighborhood where 43% of East Harlem residents identify as Hispanic.

“Joining Union Settlement came with a great responsibility to honor the organization’s extraordinary 127-year history, while building for the future,” said **Jennifer Geiling, Union Settlement’s Chief Executive Officer**. “As an anchor institution, we know that to reach new heights and realize expanded opportunities for East Harlem, we must be firmly grounded in our community and stronger than ever. We are thrilled to welcome this accomplished group of women who join our exceptional team in growing Union Settlement’s mission in East Harlem.”

“Union Settlement was a major part of all aspects of my being as an East Harlemit. It was my mother’s place of work. It was where I took my first—and only—ballet and music lessons. It was where I received support with my college application, and even where I met my husband,” said **Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vazquez**. “Today’s announcement of four dynamic and talented Latinas being appointed to leadership-level roles is not only a reflection of Union’s commitment to East Harlem but also to every young girl who will now see herself as a Latina leader. It is gratifying to see their commitment to East Harlem has not waned after all these years. I applaud Jennifer Geiling for her thoughtful leadership in continuing to ensure Union remains an inclusive and equitable community institution.”

“Representation matters, especially when it comes to positions of power. The appointment of several Hispanic women in key roles at Union Settlement is a pivotal step in ensuring that communities of color are able to participate in the shared vision of a just and equitable New York City,” said **Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala**.

Nina Piros joins Union Settlement as Chief Program Officer for Family, Children and Youth to expand access to excellent early childcare and education for East Harlem's families and children, increase educational and social opportunities for our youth and strengthen community-based and informed programming. Having dedicated her career to building family and child-centered early childhood, parenting, and mental health programs at a settlement house, Ms. Piros is deeply committed to investing in whole families and supporting individuals throughout life's journey. Nina has also served in multiple roles with NYC Department of Education, serving as School Psychologists, Executive Director for Family Child Care Support, Senior Executive Director for Policy & Strategy and Team Leader. "As a Latina and an immigrant, I feel connected to the experience of families, children, and youth in East Harlem," remarked **Nina Piros, Chief Program Officer for Families, Children and Youth**, I am excited to serve such a strong, proud, and vibrant community and join an incredible group of dedicated and passionate colleagues at Union Settlement."

In her role as Chief of Staff and Strategic Advisor to the CEO, Velez is responsible for cultivating greater cohesion across the organization's divisions to maximize impact for East Harlem families and Union Settlement participants. Liliana will also focus on strengthening infrastructure to ensure Union Settlement's long-term sustainability and support growth. Ms. Velez has decades serving in nonprofit leadership, with roots that date back to Union Settlement and East Harlem. Reflecting on the significance of these appointments, **Liliana Velez, Chief of Staff and Strategic Advisor to the CEO**, shared, "Union Settlement's support of the advancement of the Hispanic woman in leadership is unique and noteworthy."

Caceres joins Union Settlement as Director of Manhattan's first Family Enrichment Center (FEC), hosted by Union Settlement at Sendero Verde. The Family Enrichment Center is designed by and for East Harlem's community as a warm and welcoming space and will be opening its doors in early 2023. Jocelyn is a Master Leveled Social Worker who has served the last 14 years working with children and families, including roles with a Bronx-based FEC and the New York City Department of Homeless Services. "My community inspired me, and I always knew I wanted to be part of the helping field," shared **Jocelyn Caceres, Director, Family Enrichment Center**. "It's a beautiful thing when you witness the transformation of a family as they heal and repair."

Cruz re-joins Union Settlement to launch the organization's Department for Economic Development. As a former East Harlem business owner, Michelle has a long standing passion for and understanding of local businesses and what is needed for our local economy to grow and thrive. "I am delighted to be joining this group of dynamic Latina women," said **Michelle Cruz, Director, Economic Development**. "I look forward to working collaboratively with them in serving East Harlem to create long-term sustainability of an already vibrant and resilient community." Ms. Cruz's experience in government, serving as Deputy Chief of Staff for New York City Council Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, will inform her work and advocacy on behalf of East Harlem businesses.

## **About Union Settlement**

Union Settlement creates opportunity in East Harlem by offering comprehensive programs that help underserved residents improve their skills and build better lives for themselves and their families. Established in 1895, Union Settlement provides services across nearly thirty East Harlem sites, serving more than 10,000 residents each year. Visit [www.unionsettlement.org](http://www.unionsettlement.org) to learn more about our early childhood education programs, afterschool and summer youth services, college preparation, job readiness, adult education classes, mental health counseling, economic development, senior centers, Meals on Wheels and more.

###