

Latino Commission on AIDS Honors Leaders in Public Health, Research, Telehealth, Arts and Culture at Annual Cielo Gala

Event Demonstrated Continuing Commitment to Health Equity and Ending HIV

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, June 8, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Latino Commission on AIDS](#), in partnership with the Hispanic Health Network, celebrated its annual [Cielo Gala](#) on Friday, June 5, 2026, at the iconic Cipriani Wall Street in New York City. Continuing the powerful theme “Designing a World Without AIDS,” and reflecting on “Then. Now. Next.” the event highlighted the ongoing unequal impact of HIV on Latine communities and the need to protect and empower future generations in the fight to end HIV.



(L-R) President of the Latino Commission on AIDS Guillermo Chacón with 2026 Cielo Gala honorees Tristan Schukraft, CEO of MISTR, NextGen Cultural Ambassador Honey Balenciaga, and Mario Pérez, Director, Division of HIV and STD Programs, Los Angeles County

“Forty-five years since the onset of the epidemic, we are reminded that our work is far from finished,” said Guillermo Chacón, President of the Latino Commission on AIDS. “We are so proud to have honored leaders who have shaped a more just and equitable public health landscape and inspired a new generation to carry the torch forward. Our communities deserve nothing less than a future where prevention, care, and compassion reach everyone, without exception.”

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*Guillermo Chacon, President,
Latino Commission on AIDS*

As one of the nation’s leading events celebrating advancements in the fight against HIV and honoring those propelling health equity, the Cielo Gala brings together leaders across health care, government, philanthropy,

entertainment, media and corporate sectors who share a common purpose: to build a world where HIV is no longer a public health threat and all communities have equitable access to prevention, care, support services free of stigma and discrimination.

The 2026 Cielo Gala award recipients, each recognized for extraordinary dedication to improving health outcomes and championing underserved communities, included:

- Dr. Helen Arteaga, Deputy Mayor, Health and Human Services, City of New York, with the Esperanza (Hope) Award for her transformational leadership in community-centered healthcare and her unwavering commitment to advancing health equity for immigrant and Latine communities.
- Gregory A. Millett, MPH, Vice President and Director of Public Policy at amfAR, with the Dennis deLeon Voz de Compromiso (Voice of Commitment) Award for his national leadership in HIV research, policy innovation, and advocacy efforts that illuminate and address racial and ethnic disparities in HIV.
- Mario Pérez, Director of the Division of HIV and STD Programs for Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, with the Compañero (Partner) Award in recognition of his decades-long contributions to HIV prevention, community partnerships, and systems-level improvements that have reshaped public health responses across diverse communities.
- MISTR, with the Pioneer Award, accepted by CEO Tristan Schukraft, for its groundbreaking telehealth model that provides discreet, end-to-end HIV prevention and long-term HIV care.



(L-R) President of the Latino Commission on AIDS Guillermo Chacón with 2026 Esperanza Award honoree NYC Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Helen Arteaga and Brendan G. Carr, CEO, Mount Sinai Health System



NextGen Cultural Ambassador for the Latino Commission on AIDS Honey Balenciaga (center) with ballroom dancers from the House of Juicy Couture who excited guests with their performance at the 2026 Cielo Gala.

- Milagros Medina-Cerdeira, Broadway and Hollywood Make-up Artist, with the Creative Visionary Award, recognizing her power to shape culture through art and elevate Latine visibility in the entertainment industry.

Naming of NextGen Cultural Ambassador Motivates a New Generation

The Latino Commission on also named acclaimed ballroom icon, advocate, and cultural trailblazer Honey Valentín Gonzales, whose stage name is Honey Balenciaga, as the NextGen Cultural Ambassador, spotlighting the importance of intergenerational leadership, cultural visibility, and continued investment in prevention, education, healthcare access, and advocacy.

“In this role, my goal is to help bridge generations through visibility, education, and compassion,” said Honey Balenciaga. “I want to use my platform to encourage more open conversations around prevention, healthcare access, mental health, and self-worth. I want young LGBTQ+ people to know that taking care of themselves is powerful, that asking for support is powerful, and that living authentically is powerful.”

As part of the evening’s program, Honey Balenciaga choreographed and presented a special ballroom performance, celebrating the artistry, resilience, and cultural influence of the ballroom community. Award-winning journalist Maria Hinojosa hosted the evening and the iconic nightlife personality DJ Lina Bradford provided musical beats throughout the night.

For nearly four decades, the Latino Commission on AIDS has worked to address the entrenched inequities that fuel the spread and impact of HIV in Hispanic/Latine communities nationwide. In the face of federal cuts that threaten the healthcare infrastructure that has sustained thousands of people living with HIV, the 2026 Cielo Gala reaffirmed the Commission’s commitment to advancing culturally responsive programs, building leadership pipelines, strengthening community networks, and ensuring that public health systems meet the needs of all communities.

Donations to the Commission are still possible by visiting www.cielolatino.org and directly support year-round initiatives including HIV testing and prevention, community mobilization, organizational capacity-building, Zero campaigns to combat homophobia and transphobia, and national advocacy efforts such as National Latino AIDS Awareness Day (NLAAD).

About the Latino Commission on AIDS

Founded in 1990, the Latino Commission on AIDS is a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing the health challenges to access prevention, care and the impact of HIV, AIDS, Hepatitis and STIs in Hispanic/Latino communities through mobilization, community-building, health education, and direct support. The Commission leads the Hispanic Health Network and is the founder of National Latino AIDS Awareness Day.

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