



*First District Honoree*

**Maria Brenes**

*Executive Director  
InnerCity Struggle*

Maria Brenes is the Executive Director of InnerCity Struggle (ICS). Her work with ICS has resulted in a wide range of improvements within Eastside schools, as well as schools throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Under her leadership, she has helped win several breakthrough victories: new schools for the Eastside, a district-wide policy focused on preparing all students for college, increased funds for schools, smaller learning environments in Eastside high schools and an expansion of school-based health services.

Ms. Brenes has organized for educational justice through various campaigns and initiatives. For the past fifteen years, as a leader of ICS, she has spearheaded an expansion of the influence of students and community residents in decision-making about Los Angeles' public schools, mobilizing thousands of Latino parents and students.

She began her activism over twenty years ago as a high school student living along the United States/Mexico border during a time when state legislation was proposed that criminalized immigrant families and youth. This hostile environment resulted in Ms. Brenes and her fellow Latino schoolmates being removed from their schools. Despite the discrimination she faced, she completed her studies and later earned degrees from University of California, Berkeley and Harvard University.

Ms. Brenes has received numerous recognitions and was recognized as a Grassroots Leader to Watch by the Liberty Hill Foundation. She currently serves on the Commission for Children and Families and the Community Advisory Board for the leading Spanish-language publication La Opinion. She is also a proud mom of two young children that attend LAUSD schools.

