



Biography

SONIA GUTIÉRREZ
President Emeritus and Founder
Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School

Ms. Gutiérrez, currently the President Emeritus & Founder of the Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School, has spent over 43 years as a principal, counselor, advocate, and organizer to more than 70,000 adult immigrant students.

Ms. Gutiérrez began her career in the District of Columbia Public Schools in May 1972 as a counselor of the Program for English Instruction to Latin Americans (PEILA). There she began her mission: to provide holistic education to adult immigrants with little formal education in their native countries, enabling them to succeed by addressing their social and academic needs.

In October 1972, Ms. Gutiérrez became the Director of PEILA and transformed the small, under-funded English as a Second Language (ESL) program into a comprehensive adult education program. In 1974, the Office of Right-to-Read of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare designated it as one of the best literacy programs in the nation. As PEILA outgrew its facility, Ms. Gutierrez commenced a two-year effort to secure a school building for the program. In 1978 she was successful in relocating the program to the old Gordon Junior High School in Georgetown; PEILA then merged with the old Americanization School with an initial enrollment of 800.

In 1992, Ms. Gutierrez requested that the city council rename the school after Carlos Rosario who founded PEILA. Subsequently, it grew to provide 4,500 students per year with crucial language, cultural, vocational and job skills with a waiting list of 2,000. The school became a national model. Delegations from other states and even other nations frequently visited the center to review its operations and curriculum, seeking to replicate the program.

1996, the District of Columbia faced a financial crisis that brought about the elimination of all DC Public Schools adult education programs including the Carlos Rosario Adult Education Center. Ms. Gutierrez vowed to rebuild the school for the benefit of her students

and her community. From August 1996 to March 1997, Ms. Gutierrez worked out of the basement of her home and raised \$100,000 dollars from local foundations to reopen the school as the non-profit Carlos Rosario International Career Center. The new school opened its doors in April 1997 with Ms. Gutierrez as Executive Director & Founder. Recognizing the tremendous need for additional classes, Ms. Gutierrez actively sought for Public Charter School funding. She succeeded and in 1998 the school became the first Adult Public Charter School in the nation.

From 1997 to 2003, the school expanded from one small site to six different sites around the community.

After an extensive Capital Campaign Ms. Gutiérrez was able to secure and renovate an \$18 million dollar facility and brought the six different sites together in the state of the art building located at 1100 Harvard Street N.W. Today with an additional brand new campus in Ward 5, the non-profit Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School provides more than 2500 students with English as a Second Language, GED in Spanish and English, courses in different areas of technology, citizenship classes, culinary arts, nurse aide, family literacy and Spanish classes. Ms. Gutiérrez continues to train a new generation of Rosario faculty and staff to ensure that Carlos Rosario School provides its model of excellence for years to come. In 2005 the school received full accreditation from the Middle State School Association and in 2006 also received an award from the DC Mayor as one of the 10 best Charter Schools in the city. The school was re-accredited for another seven-year term in 2012 and the Charter was renewed for 15 additional years in the summer of 2013.

In 2012 Ms. Gutiérrez secured a grant to purchase a property in northeast to build a Workforce Development Campus. In 2013 the new Sonia Gutiérrez Campus opened in Ward 5 with three main academies: Culinary Arts, Nurse Aide and IT. At the present time there are 500 students being served at the Sonia Gutierrez Campus.

Ms. Gutiérrez has many accomplishments as a community organizer and leader and has received many awards for her work and commitment to her community. In May of 2013 she received the In Her Honor Award for Women who have made outstanding contributions in service to the not only to the Hispanic but African American communities in DC from the Community Arts Collective. In March of this year, FOCUS, the Friends of Choice in Urban Schools honored her for her work as a pioneer in the Charter School movement. In late 2014 the DC Commission of Human Rights bestowed her with the Cornelius R. "Neil" Alexander Humanitarian Award. The Hispanic Bar Association of Washington, DC awarded her with Hugh A. Johnson Memorial Award for her contributions to the DC Hispanic Community. For excellence in the field of adult education she received the Administrator of the Year Award from the Commission of Adult Basic Education (COABE) in 2013.

On June 5th of this year in front of the Campus that bears her name the Mayor, Muriel Bowser and the City Council of Washington, DC named the 500 Block of V Street NE, as the *Sonia Gutiérrez Campus Way*. Ms. Gutierrez is the only Latino in the District of Columbia to have an honorary street with her name.

In October of 2015, Ms. Gutiérrez received the American Dream Medallion in Education from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) in recognition of her accomplishments, leadership, and services to the Latino community. This is one of the highest honors awarded

by the CHCI. It will be presented to Ms. Gutiérrez at the CHCI's 38th Annual Gala Awards. Also in October of 2015, the Caucus Salvadoreño Empresarial honored her for her continuous work with the Salvadoran Community.

In April of 2016 Ms. Gutierrez was honored by FOCUS—Friends of Choice in Urban Schools into the Charter School Hall of Fame.