



Women of DISTINCTION

HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Evelyn Rodriguez

Evelyn Rodriguez was born in Bronx, New York to natives of the island of Puerto Rico. In search of a better quality of life, Ms. Rodriguez's parents moved their family to Brentwood, New York, where Ms. Rodriguez graduated from Brentwood High School and attended Hunter College. She worked in the mortgage field, and shortly after, accepted a position at Good Samaritan Hospital as a medical assistant in the Intensive Care Unit. While working at the hospital, Ms. Rodriguez met Freddy Cuevas, who later became her lifelong partner. Together, they had three beautiful daughters, creating the family they forever desired.

As parents, they knew how important it was to play a role in their children's lives. Despite both working full time jobs, they managed to be involved in their daughters' school events, sports activities and family time.

On September 14, 2016, Ms. Rodriguez's life changed drastically when her daughter, Kayla, and her best friend, Nisa Mickens, were killed at the hands of the notorious gang MS-13. This tragedy transformed Ms. Rodriguez's anguish into a mission of advocacy, devoting her life to seeking justice for her beloved daughter, Kayla.

Driven to ensure that no mother would ever have to experience the loss of their child to brutal gang violence, Ms. Rodriguez scheduled meetings with political leaders, including local Legislator - now New York State Senator Monica Martinez, Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, Congressman Peter King, Community Advocate Barbara Medina and the Brentwood School Board. She wholeheartedly believed in the community working alongside law enforcement to make a difference. She became strongly allied with the Suffolk County Police Department and previous Suffolk County Police Commissioner, Tim Sini, who vowed to bring justice to those responsible for the deaths of Kayla and Nisa.

In 2017, Commissioner Sini won the District Attorney's seat and appointed Ms. Rodriguez to his transition team, where she met with community leaders, organizations, and the Suffolk County Legislature. As she advocated across New York State against gang violence, her voice reached as far as the White House. In January 2018, the President of the United States invited her as his personal guest to the State of the Union Address.

On September 14, 2018, the second year anniversary of Kayla's and Nisa's deaths, Ms. Rodriguez organized a memorial and press conference at Ray Court in Brentwood to continue spreading awareness of gang violence throughout the country.

While at this event, someone informed Ms. Rodriguez that her daughter's memorial shrine was being vandalized. On her way to address the issue, she was fatally struck by a vehicle following a dispute with the driver over the placement of Kayla's memorial.

Evelyn Rodriguez, a national voice against gang violence, will always be remembered as a fearless advocate who brought down MS-13 in her community. Today, hundreds of MS-13 members are behind bars, including those responsible for Kayla's and Nisa's deaths. Ms. Rodriguez's advocacy raised over \$30 million in funding for the Brentwood and Central Islip communities.

We will always honor Ms. Rodriguez for being a Brentwood Warrior.

***Evelyn Rodriguez was selected as a
2019 Woman of Distinction honoree by Senator Phil Boyle.***

