

MESSAGE
RAFAEL HERNANDEZ COLON
FORMER GOVERNOR OF PUERTO RICO
FOURTH ANNUAL PUBLIC SERVICE MEDAL
GALA DINNER
FELISA RINCON DE GAUTIER FOUNDATION
SEPTEMBER 24, 1993

Dear Friends:

It is my great pleasure to serve as the Honorary Co-Chairman Emeriti of the 1993 Fourth Annual Public Service Medal Dinner of the Felisa Rincón de Gautier Foundation.

The Felisa Rincón de Gautier Public Service Medal is the highest award given by the Foundation each year to recognize women of outstanding merit and distinction for their contributions to public service as exemplary role models for young women in Puerto Rico today. The Foundation's annual Gala Dinner also provides each of us with a renewed opportunity to reflect upon the substantial contributions of Felisa Rincón de Gautier -- one of the greatest pioneering women of Puerto Rico and one of the most outstanding public servant in the Western Hemisphere.

I am so pleased to join with all of you to congratulate U.S. Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez for her selection as the 1993 recipient of the Felisa Rincón de Gautier Public Service Medal. Congresswoman Velázquez has been an ardent advocate and public servant for the Puerto Rican people in both the United States and on the Island for many years. She has worked tirelessly to expand voter registration and electoral participation among Hispanics in the United States and was a pioneer in creating the New York community program called "Unidos Contra SIDA" (United Against AIDS) to address the growing problems of AIDS in the Puerto Rican community. Congresswoman Velázquez demonstrated her bold leadership as a first-term member of the U.S. House of Representatives in her recent defense of the "936" tax-exemption program for U.S. corporations in Puerto Rico before the U.S. Congress and in the White House. She is a wonderful role model for young women today.

I want to thank each of you for your generous support of the Felisa Rincón Foundation. Your presence here tonight is testimony of the importance of the Foundation's educational and cultural programs -- programs that are working to improve the public administration in Puerto Rico; enhance the role and status of women; and prepare our youth as future public servants and leaders of Puerto Rico. My best wishes.