

Jennice Fuentes
Chief of Staff, Representative Luis Gutiérrez of Illinois

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Meeting Luis Gutiérrez

Jennice Fuentes remembers introducing herself to newly-elected Congressman Gutiérrez at a conference on Puerto Rico.

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Congressman Luis Vicente Gutiérrez Almeida. He was—I didn't know him. I didn't know of him even. I didn't even know he was Puerto Rican, and at that point I had never even visited Chicago. And I went to a conference on Puerto Rico that fall of ninety—I think class of '93, right? So ninety—that fall of '92. Yes, that fall of '92. And, and I was in the audience like anyone else and, and he went on stage and gave a speech. And he was fiery, and it was contagious, and we were all like, "Woo!" And we were going, "Wow," and I remember going to the guy next to me, who was a reporter named Bob Friedman, I said, "Who is he? Who is that guy?" And Bob, Mr. Friedman went, "Well, he's Puerto Rican, like you. You know?" I was like, "No, what's his name?" "Luis Gutiérrez, from Chicago." I was like, "Well, introduce me." So, you know, I was in my 20s, I was very young, and I went up to him, and I was so excited, and said, "I believe in everything you said. I want to help you with your agenda. I'm unemployed—or I will be in a few weeks—here's my card." And he was standing next to his wife, Soraida, so I give her my card, because I didn't know him, and everyone's going to think something weird about me giving him my card.