

Jennice Fuentes
Chief of Staff, Representative Luis Gutiérrez of Illinois

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Congressman Gutiérrez as a Mentor

Jennice Fuentes recalls how Representative Gutiérrez prioritized pay equality and career development.
Interview recorded December 20, 2018

And he, he has two daughters, and he's a husband and a father. I think that Soraida, and Omaira, and Jessica, his family, the women in his family, kind of created this great man for women, who not only pushes you to do your best and mentors you until the end, but protects you and makes you feel that you're important. And I think that as a woman who basically my entire professional life I was with him if you think of it, because I don't think in my two previous incidences I was able to, to, to basically grow fully and be totally in my, in the peak of my abilities as a manager, as a, as a tactician, as a strategist, and he allowed that and celebrated that. And, and, and one of the most important things about Luis Gutiérrez is that he made sure through my entire journey with him that I was treated like a lady but paid like a man. He paid me like a man. I remember the day that he picked up the phone and said, "How much can I pay you?" I was already chief of staff. He said, "How much can I pay you? What's the maximum?" And I said, "I don't know. We're going to find out right away." So I call, I said, "It's that." And he goes, "Do it." And I said, "Really?" He says, "I think it's important that people see, because if that's what other male chief of staff are making in this building why are you not making the same?" I said, "Well, I agree." So there we go. And that's the way also it was for my replacement. He also made sure that that happened and it was a woman who replaced me. So I think that Luis Gutiérrez remained in my legacy as possibly the most important mentor I had. And I think he showed me that you could be strong and still wear pink, which he did.