



2016 Luncheon Honorees



Jess Weiner - Innovator

Jess Weiner is changing cultural messages one brand at a time. From advising on Barbie's latest body evolution to Dove's memorable Real Women campaign, the results of her work behind the scenes have come to light over the years, making significant waves in terms of how we approach women, girls and confidence.

Jess is an acclaimed writer, speaker, author and entrepreneur with over two decades of experience as a thought leader on social and cultural change.

She is the CEO of Talk to Jess, a consulting and strategy firm that acts as a thought partner for companies who seek to change their messaging toward women and girls. In this role, she makes change from the inside out by partnering with brands and businesses to help shift the way we think, see and talk about women and girls.

Jess remains a driving force behind cultural change, serving as Dove's Global Self-Esteem Ambassador for the past decade. She's the author of two best-selling books and her TEDx Talk, "The Confidence Myth," explores the messy, simple, and often overlooked truth about cultivating confidence.

Jess is currently an adjunct professor at USC's Annenberg School of Journalism where she teaches personal branding and entrepreneurship. She's also an affiliated faculty member of USC's Media, Diversity, & Social Change Initiative (MDSCI) headed by Dr. Stacy Smith.

She has been recognized by FORBES magazine as one of the "14 Power Women to Follow" on Twitter and INC. Magazine recently named her in their "21 Thought Leaders Every Entrepreneur Should Follow in 2016" feature. jessweiner.com



Michele Ruiz – Rising Star

Michele Ruiz is a bi-lingual entrepreneur and public speaker whose passions are entrepreneurship, empowerment, and technology.

Her motto is: Empowering Entrepreneurs to Empower Themselves! Through her personal brand "Michele Ruiz ~ My Life as a Latina Entrepreneur" she is focused on educating, inspiring and empowering business owners. She shares her experiences via social media with her tens of thousands of followers by blogging and content messaging as well as public speaking. She also represents Fortune 1000 companies as a brand ambassador wanting to harness the power of her influence.

Michele is also President & CEO of Ruiz Strategies, a communications firm that develops and executes transformational content marketing strategies for world-class companies, large professional services firms, government entities and C-level executives leveraging the power of social media, new media, traditional media and virtual technologies. The company's clients include Fortune 20 corporations in the energy, technology, telecommunications, financial, and automotive sector. Ruiz Strategies is a certified minority-owned (MBE) and woman-owned (WBE) business headquartered in Los Angeles, California with operations in Washington, D.C. and Houston, Texas.

Michele's latest endeavor involves publishing her first book, *Content Marketing for Lawyers*. The book helps attorneys use powerful content marketing and social media strategies that Michele has developed for her Fortune 20 corporations to attract more clients and become a legal thought leader.

Previously, Michele founded SaberHacer.com, a bilingual expert based "how-to" educational broadband site for US Hispanics online. She launched the video on demand site to provide quality information for U.S. Hispanics when she determined there was a void of culturally relevant content for Hispanics. Her mission has always been - do what she can to help people and change lives.

Michele was recently featured as an "Inspiring Latina" by Latina Magazine, the number one Lifestyle and Entertainment Magazine for Latinas in the US. The magazine highlighted her journey from a rough childhood dealing with abuse, racism, and poverty to becoming an Emmy award-winning TV news anchor and later an entrepreneur.

Recently when honored as Business Woman of the Year by another magazine, Latina Style, it was announced that she was being recognized for her exceptional business success and leadership. Additionally, Michele is a recipient of the 2014 Enterprising Woman of the Year honor by the national magazine of the same name.

Considered a thought leader, Michele has been interviewed and quoted by major news organizations including CNN and The New York Times. Michele is a keynote speaker on a variety of topics including Transformational Content and Communication Strategies, New Media and Social Media, Women and Family, Entrepreneurship and Business, Leadership, Marketing to Hispanics, Media & Broadcasting, and Digital Engagement.

Before becoming an entrepreneur, Michele Ruiz enjoyed a long career as an award winning broadcast journalist, beginning her broadcasting career co-anchoring Channel One News. From there, she moved to KTLA in Los Angeles. In 1998, she joined KNBC-TV as a reporter and anchor of the 6:00 pm newscast.

Michele received 16 Emmy nominations during her news broadcasting career, 5 Emmy's, 4 Golden Mikes as well as LA Press Club Awards. Additionally she received numerous commendations for her leadership and service to the community in a variety of roles. Michele is also known for her charity work and has volunteered her time with numerous organizations. She served on the Board of Directors for the non-profit agency Para Los Niños for over a decade. She has also served on the Cal State Fullerton College of Communications' Dean's Advisory Board, and currently focuses on Entrepreneurial Advocacy and Policy

initiatives. Michele is a member of the Executive Advisory Committee for Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP), an advisor to Macy's Executive Leadership as a member of the retailer's Supplier Diversity Advisory Council, and an advisor to the United States Golf Association as part of the USGA's Ambassador's Group focused on diversity and inclusion initiatives in the sport of golf.

You can keep up and connect with Michele not only on her website www.MicheleRuiz.com but on her Facebook Fan Page, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, and LinkedIn.



Hanna Lim - Inspiration

Hanna Lim is the mother of three daughters and the founder and president of Lollaland. Lollaland makes innovative and modern infant/toddler goods that are functional and fun. Prior to creating the Lollacup and launching her business, Hanna received her B.A. from Wellesley College and her M.Ed. from UCLA and worked as a high school chemistry teacher. Shortly after creating the Lollacup (a stylish and innovative straw sippy cup), Hanna pitched the product to investors on the popular show, Shark Tank, and received an investment from

Mark Cuban and Robert Herjavec. She hopes to continue to expand Lollaland into a larger lifestyle brand within the baby industry. In her spare time, Hanna is active in several parenting groups, serves on the board of the Wellesley College Club of Pasadena and as the treasurer for Kidspace Children's Museum's Circle of Friends.



Sally Thomas Cooper - Entrepreneur

Owner / Founder
Lusive Decor
Luxe Light and Home
Thomas Cooper Studio

Designer, artist and serial entrepreneur, Sally Thomas Cooper studied art history, music and design in her native New Zealand, leading to a varied career in art, rock and roll, set dressing and interior and product design. Moving to Los Angeles in 1999 Thomas Cooper quickly developed an impressive celebrity clientele as an interior designer, and founded Lusive Decor, combining a love of luxury materials and artisanal design techniques to create made-to-order, signature lighting fixtures.

Lusive has grown every year to become a leading supplier of custom decorative lighting to the hospitality industry and was named four consecutive years to Inc. Magazine's 500/5000 list of fastest growing US small businesses and to the LA Business Journals fastest growing Los Angeles companies.

In 2015 Thomas Cooper debuted Luxe Light and Home – luxury lighting and home goods represented internationally by design giant Kravet Inc. Sally continues to develop designs, products and artworks under the Thomas Cooper Studio umbrella, out of their 85,000 sq. ft. headquarters in downtown Los Angeles. Energized by the marriage of creative design and commercial production, Sally says, "I am fascinated by the mix of personalities and talents that make up a successful collaboration – satisfying form and function, imagination and inspiration."



Phillip A. Washington – Diversity Champion

Washington comes to Los Angeles at a time when L.A. Metro has several major rail, plus highway projects, under construction – together representing the largest modern public works program in the United States.

In his position as L.A Metro CEO, Washington oversees an agency that transports 1.4 million boarding passengers on an average weekday, riding on a fleet of 2,000 clean-air buses and six rail lines. L.A Metro also is the lead transportation planning and programming agency for Los Angeles County. As such, it is a major construction agency that oversees bus, rail, highway and other mobility-related building projects.

Washington came to Los Angeles from Denver, where he was Assistant General Manager for nearly 10 years, prior to being named CEO in 2009.

In Denver, Washington implemented the FasTracks program, one of the largest voter-approved transit expansion programs in the country. He was responsible for a total agency budget appropriation of \$2.8 billion and managed more than \$5 billion in active transit expansion projects. Under his management, Denver's West Line Rail was completed under budget and eight months earlier than scheduled, and the award-winning Denver Union Station was completed five months ahead of schedule.

Also in Denver, Washington spearheaded implementation of the first-of-its-kind \$2.2 billion transit Public-Private Partnership (P3). His emphasis on measuring and managing agency performance led the agency to a nearly 90 percent on-time bus and rail service and 96 percent ADA on-time performance. In 2012, Washington's emphasis on safety training led to a 40 percent decrease in preventable bus accidents.

Washington has had numerous prestigious assignments and honors. He was appointed by the Mayor of Denver in 2007 to head the Host Transportation Committee for the 2008 Democratic National Convention. In 2009, he was appointed by Governor Bill Ritter to serve on the State of Colorado's Workforce Development Council to help the State create a 21st century workforce. Washington was named 2013-2014 Outstanding Public Transportation Manager of the Year in North America by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). In 2014, he was selected by the editors of Engineering News-Record for special recognition as one of the Top 25 Newsmakers of 2013. He has testified before U.S. Congressional Transportation Subcommittees and was awarded a White House Transportation Innovators Champion of Change award in 2012.

Originally from the south side of Chicago – the Chicago Housing Projects of Altgeld Gardens – Washington is a 24-year active duty veteran of the United States Army where he held the rank of Command Sergeant Major, the highest non-commissioned officer rank an enlisted person can achieve. He is a disabled veteran and retired from active duty being awarded the prestigious Defense Superior Service Medal (DSSM) for exceptional service to his country. He holds a B.A. in Business Administration from Columbia College and an M.A. in Management from Webster University. He is immediate past chair of APTA.



Jane A. Skeeter LEED® AP – Leadership

Jane Skeeter is Founder and CEO of UltraGlas, Inc., the world's leading manufacturer of heat-sculpted glass and many other types of designed architectural glass. Jane established the company in 1987, as an outgrowth of her original art and architectural glass business, Skeeter Studios, which she opened in 1973.

Skeeter Studios thrived primarily as a purveyor of fine custom stained, leaded and etched glass and mirror installations, catering to restaurant and hotel chains as well as an impressive

list of Hollywood notables. But Skeeter's penchant for innovation leads her on a quest to expand her company's offerings and to bring new and exciting glass to the world of architecture.

During her European travels, Jane encountered innovative and talented local artists employing a heat-molding technique to transform ordinary glass into exquisite pieces of functional art. She imagined the enormous potential for this unique process in architectural applications, and upon her return to the U.S., devised a way to produce it on a commercial scale. With the development of specially engineered machinery, Jane introduced an exciting new brand of architectural glass -- and a new company by the same name: UltraGlas, Inc. The product she debuted was richly textured, fire-polished glass that offered privacy without obscuring light or revealing wear, was transformed into safety glass through tempering and/or lamination, and could be created in any style, with almost limitless applications.

To best serve her expanding product line and growing clientele, Jane purchased a 25,000 square foot building to house her new studio/factory and showroom in 2001. In addition to its current resident staff of about 30, UltraGlas has over 200 national dealers as well as representatives in major cities around the world.

Today, UltraGlas is the glass of choice among distinguished architects and designers worldwide, with applications ranging from ceilings to countertops to floors, and almost everything in between. It is among a growing portfolio of innovative new products, including a line of products made from 100% recycled glass, and the newest offering, achieved through an "encapsulation" technique.

Jane credits her lifelong love of architecture and art, as well as her entrepreneurial passion, for her success. Indeed, her artistic talents and drive were evident from the age of ten, when she began designing and sewing her own clothes. By age twelve, she had established a lucrative clothes ironing business. While her glass business was still young, she received her teaching credential and taught college and adult-education classes in creative design, rug making, sewing, clothing design, and stained glass. She also continued her own education and credentialing, earning licenses as a Glazing Contractor, Certified Interior Designer and General Contractor. She is also a graduate of UCLA's MDE program, the NAWBO-LA Peak Leadership Academy, and is a LEED Accredited Professional.

Today, Jane is not only a world-renowned and award-winning architectural glass designer and manufacturer; she is currently serving as Director on the board of the NAWBO-LA Foundation and is the Past President of NAWBO-LA (National Association of Women Business Owners, Los Angeles). In June 2008 she was honored as San Fernando Valley Business Journal's Women in Business CEO of the Year, and was nominated by the Los Angeles Business Journal for their Women Making a Difference Awards in May 2009. In June of 2009, she was awarded the Women in Business Champion of the Year by the Los Angeles District Office of the U.S. Small Business Administration. She is a highly regarded consultant, popular lecturer and community activist, currently sitting on the Advisory Boards of Promerica Bank and Woodbury University School of Business, along with being an active member on the boards of The Valley Economic Alliance, BizFed, VICA, Val*Pac, The Valley Group, The Boys & Girls Club of the West Valley, and the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce.



Madelyn Alfano – Leadership

Madelyn Alfano, one of California's most successful restaurant owners, believes that food is not just a necessity or pleasure, but a lifelong passion. Inspired by her life in a large Italian family, Madelyn blends the finest ingredients, traditions and new ideas with the best aspects of family life to create a unique dining experience at her restaurant, Maria's Italian Kitchen.

After graduating from UCLA, Madelyn worked at her parents' Village Mart in

Brentwood, Calif., with the vision of opening a true sit down "Trattoria" like those found in rural Italy. In 1985, she opened her first Maria's Italian Kitchen in Sherman Oaks, Calif.

With headquarters in Van Nuys, Calif., and more than 400 employees, Maria's Italian Kitchen is among the leading privately owned restaurant chains in the state. Today, there are 10 Maria's Italian Kitchens.

In addition, she is an active professional, serving as a board member of both the Statewide California Restaurant Association and past president of its Los Angeles Chapter. She is past President of the Los Angeles Board of the National Association of Women Business Owners Los Angeles (NAWBO LA) and currently is the foundation chair. In 2002, she was invited to become a member of Young Presidents' Organization. Additionally, she is a panelist and member of the CNBC Small Business Council.

Madelyn has been on the list of Top 50 Women Business Owners in Los Angeles for more than 10 years and in 2004, was chosen as one of the Top 25 Enterprising Women in Los Angeles. In 2007, the L.A. Business Journal named her Business Owner/CEO of the Year at its annual Women Making a Difference Award. In 2011, the California Legislative Women's Caucus named Madelyn Alfano Woman of the Year at the State Capitol and the L.A. Area Chamber of Commerce named her the Women in Business Champion of the Year. UCLA has honored her with Alumnae of the year for Community Service Award in 2011 and Maria's Italian Kitchen was awarded the L.A. Times Readers Choice 2012 Best Italian Restaurant. In 2012, Madelyn received the Women of Inspiration Award from Shane's Inspiration and was chosen as NAWBO LA's Woman Business Owner of the Year.

Madelyn graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1979 with a bachelor's degree in Psychology. She lives in Encino, is married to Dr. Jeffrey Tucker, a successful chiropractor, and has three children, Nicolas, Josh and Danielle.



Betsy Butler - Community Leader

Executive Director of the California Women's Law Center

Betsy Butler has been leading the California Women's Law Center for two years and is proud to be fighting for equality for women and girls throughout the state.

Prior to joining the California Women's Law Center, Ms. Butler served in the California State Assembly from 2010 to 2012, representing the 53rd Assembly District. During her term, Governor Jerry Brown signed fourteen of her bills,

which prioritized veterans, elders, working families, the environment and consumer rights. Committed to those who have served our country, Ms. Butler was honored to be named the 2011 Legislator of the Year by the Vietnam Veterans of America and the 2012 Legislator of the Year by the American Veterans (AMVETS).

Her commitment to justice and equality spans her career and includes time working at the California League of Conservation Voters, the Environmental Defense Fund and the Consumer Attorneys of California. She began her career in public service with Lt. Governor Leo McCarthy and was an appointee of President Bill Clinton in the International Trade Administration at the Department of Commerce in Washington, DC.

Ms. Butler was appointed to the California Commission on Aging in March of 2015 and presently serves on the boards of the Planned Parenthood Advocacy Project Los Angeles, Equality California, the Redondo Beach Veterans Memorial Task Force, the Gay Mens' Chorus of Los Angeles and she is an Advisory Board member of the Soldier's Project as well as Peace Over Violence, a domestic violence education and support organization. Ms. Butler is the former president of the Los Angeles Chapter of the National Women's Political Caucus and a former appointed member of the California Film Commission.

Ms. Butler graduated from San Diego State University and from the Executive Program in Management at UCLA.

Tina Aldatz – Keynote Speaker



Entrepreneur and current CEO of Savvy Travelers designer beauty wipes, made her mark on the world as a self-starting entrepreneur and founder of Foot Petals, the revolutionary line of designer insole cushions for women's high heels. As a child, Tina severely burned her feet after accidentally stepping on buried hot coals at the beach. From her foot injury and her passion for fashion, Tina created Foot Petals to help fill a gap in the market for women's high-heeled foot support. Through her strength and tenacity, Foot

Petals became a successful multi-million dollar company that was recognized by Inc. 500 as one of the "500 fastest growing companies in America." Tina is a true pediatric burn survivor who has taken a horrific tragedy and turned it into her destiny. She has been featured in numerous media articles including Entrepreneur Magazine, Huffington Post, LA Times, CNN and many more, and Forbes Magazine wrote she is an "entrepreneur to watch." In 2015, Comerica Bank's Women's Business Awards, named Tina a "Woman of Entrepreneurship" and she was honored to become the National Latina Business Women Association's (NLBWA) "Business Woman of the Year" in 2011. Most recently, Aldatz has received the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation (MAOF) "2016 Business Woman of the Year" award and has been named "2016 Small Business/ Entrepreneur Women of the Year" for the National Hispanic Business Women Association (NHBWA).

After growing up in a volatile home, Tina overcame life's obstacles by grasping onto opportunity and not letting life's circumstances define her future. In her compelling presentation depicting her American success story, Tina shares how she took a personal tragedy and turned it into her destiny in her Autobiography *From Stilettos To The Stock Exchange: Inside The Life of a Serial Entrepreneur*. In the book, Tina shares her core business values and practices that have led to her success.

Currently, Tina is the CEO of Savvy Travelers, alongside her best friend, Co-Founder and president, Margarita Floris. The Savvy Travelers collection of designer beauty wipes are curated for the sophisticated on-the-go travelista. Savvy Travelers keep ladies fresh and fabulous from head to toe, one swipe at a time, offering products in convenient kits and single-use packets that are disposable, eco-friendly and made in California! No Water? No Problem! SavvyTravelers.com

Tina is also an activist in her community. As a member of the Board of Directors for Hispanic 100 and Chairwoman of its highly regarded Mentor Program, she is dedicated to inspiring others and believes that success comes from within. The goal of the mentor program is to help young, goal orientated Latinos between the ages of 18 and 24 become successful in business and civic engagement through mentored relationships with successful Hispanic professionals. Tina has also volunteered and helped organizations around her community like Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Orange County, Girls Inc., Make A Wish Foundation, Miracle Flights For Kids and in 2011 Foot Petals created an endowment through the Two Ten Foundation, focusing solely on scholarships for Women in the Footwear Industry (WIFI).

Tina is a strong advocate for change with regard to immigration policy in the United States. She is as an Executive Producer for *Frontera*, a very poignant film starring Eva Longoria and Ed Harris that brings to light the controversial and ongoing debate regarding illegal immigration along the U.S. and Mexican border. Tina believes it is crucial to remember what every immigrant is seeking—opportunity.

Tina is driven to inspire women in all walks of life to pursue the American dream. She is a self-made millionaire who strives to motivate and assist women in business to bring their power and passion to reality. TinaAldatz.com



Christine N. Simmons – Emcee

Christine N. Simmons is president and chief operations officer of the two-time WNBA Champion Los Angeles Sparks.

As President & COO, Christine leads all aspects of the team's business operations including ticket and sponsorship sales and service, marketing, game operations, communications, community relations and finance. Named to her current role following the 2014 season, she oversaw the Sparks day-to-day operations during its first season under the ownership group led by Earvin

"Magic" Johnson and Mark R. Walter while also serving as an Executive Vice President with Magic Johnson Enterprises.

With over a decade of leadership experience in creating strategic alliances, leading business development and driving corporate initiatives, Christine has helped shape the business models for many Fortune 500 companies and multi-million dollar corporations.

A proud UCLA graduate, she serves as President-Elect of the Board of the UCLA Alumni Association and in 2012 was named Alumnus of the Year by the UCLA Black Alumni Association.

She is an active member of the Los Angeles community, serving on the Board of Directors for the Jenesse Center, the LA Sports Council, the Positive Coaching Alliance and on the Advisory Committee for Next Play Capital and Better Futures for Thomazeau (a non-profit organization that creates jobs and lends aid to Haiti). Her dedication and passion for giving back has earned her a number of honors including her most recent honor: Los Angeles African American Women's Public Policy Institute's 2015 Women in Action honoree.