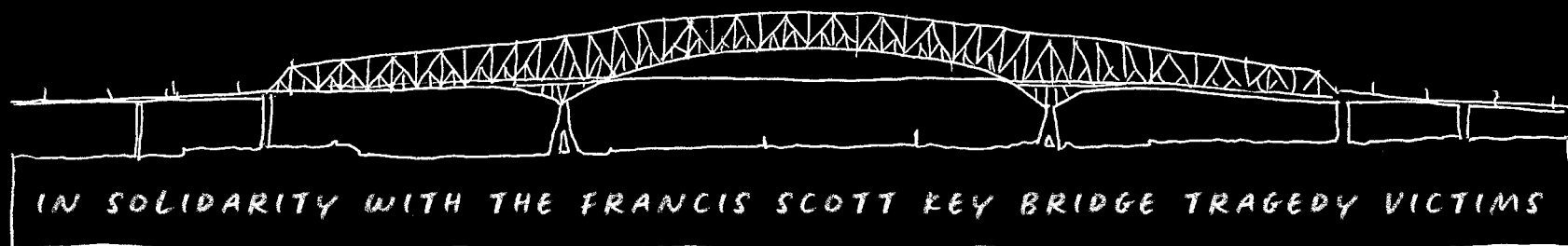


LIVES LOST AND THE UNSEEN WHO STRENGTHEN OUR NATION



ON THE COLLAPSE OF BALTIMORE'S KEY BRIDGE, here are our thoughts: in addition to mourning the loss of life and sending our prayers and love to the families of the victims we lift this painful moment as a reminder that the Latino community is often behind the building and maintenance of our nation's infrastructure and should be celebrated for their contributions and sacrifice.

While some extremists may want to use the Latino community as a political wedge that depicts all Latinos as a burden and criminal element, the tragedy reminds us all of the reality of our community's role and daily sacrifice to keep our nation strong. These men worked in the 9pm to 3am window atop a perilously high bridge to ensure thousands of people are able to get to work each day. Often unseen and ignored, their contribution benefited thousands even as they were overlooked. This is how it often is everywhere around us.

We do not need to look far for other examples of how the Latino community has stepped up in times of urgency and national tragedy. There were countless Latino and Latina workers who worked to rebuild the damaged areas of the Pentagon and the World Trade Center after 9/11. After Hurricane Katrina it was widely reported how many Latino workers showed up to rebuild the city of New Orleans and surrounding area. Time after time when our nation needs people who will show up for the heavy, often dangerous, and tireless infrastructure work across our cities and states it often draws from our Latino community and they deliver.

As we pray for the families who lost their loved ones, let us also take a moment to remind others of what these men represented. They embody the truth of the commitment and contributions of Latinos and immigrants to our nation. We must not allow a false narrative to keep poisoning the reality of the gratitude we should have for these men and women. They show up every day, often in the middle of the night, to make sure our buildings, roads, and bridges are as strong as we need so that we can do our jobs, and so our economy keeps moving and growing.

As we learn more over the coming days about this tragedy and the victims, let us also look around at others like them that continue to work around us, often as we are arriving to work or as we leave. To them we should give our thanks and respect in honor of those whose lives were lost.

Adelante!

WITH DEEPEST SYMPATHY,

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Antonio Tijerino, Hispanic Heritage Foundation
Monica Ramirez, Justice for Migrant Women and The Latinx House

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