

## Zelenne L. Cárdenas

Zelenne L. Cárdenas (she, her, ella) is the Senior Director of Prevention and Community Initiatives for Social Model Recovery Systems, a human services organization. Her extensive community-based career spans public health, homelessness, and violence prevention with a forte in fostering connections with Latinx and Black populations. Cárdenas has dedicated her life to working on behalf of people who face the most devastating manifestations of poverty in the Skid Row area of downtown Los Angeles where she has worked for 26 years. As a bilingual, civic and social justice advocate, she specializes in bringing together multi-ethnic and multi-sector coalitions, building power among the people most impacted, and collaborating to develop policy and systems changes. Cárdenas has served as a consultant to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and consulted with several counties throughout the State of California. She is a recipient of The California Wellness Foundation's (TCWF) Community Leader Fellowship in support of her violence prevention work. In 2004, Cárdenas was named a Local Hero of the Year by KCET-TV and Union Bank of California during Hispanic Heritage Month and honored with the California Peace Prize for her work in Skid Row by TCWF. In 2007, she was awarded the Mujeres Destacadas/Outstanding Woman award for her leadership by La Opinión, the leading Spanish-language daily newspaper in the U.S. In 2008, Bank of America, through its Neighborhood Excellence initiative, named her a Local Hero for her work in the Skid Row community. Cárdenas is currently a member of the Los Angeles County Ending the HIV Epidemic Steering Committee as well as a Board member of the Los Angeles Poverty Department, an arts/performance organization working with the Skid Row residents. From 2014 to 2018, she also served as a Board member of Housing California, a statewide organization focused on developing policy approaches to preventing and ending homelessness. Cárdenas is a graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles.

### Publications:

Cardenas, Z. (2013). Engaging Homeless Youth in Community-Based Participatory Research A Case Study From Skid Row, Los Angeles. *Health Promotion Practice*.