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SPEAKERS

Speaker 4, Paola Rodriguez, Robin Hiller, Pablo Manriquez, Christopher Conover, Bill Miller, Molly McKasson, Speaker 5, Melanie Stansbury, Tom Murrey, Ruben Reyes, Adelita Grijalva, Speaker 3



00:00

Following is an azpm original production.



Christopher Conover 00:09

Welcome to The Buzz. I'm Christopher Conover this week the life and legacy of the late Congressman Raul Grijalva. Long time southern Arizona Congressman Raul Grijalva died earlier this month at the age of 77 Grijalva, a Democrat, was a towering figure in Arizona politics, known for his steadfast advocacy for immigration, environment and tribal concerns in Congress, known to not shy away. Grijalva was arrested twice as a congressman, first in 2013 at an immigration rights rally at the US Capitol, and again in 2017 outside Trump Tower in New York, protesting the cancelation of protections for DACA recipients, but his legacy extends far beyond Washington, DC. Grijalvas political journey began in 1972 with an unsuccessful campaign for the Tucson Unified School District Board. But that didn't stop him. After mellowing his hard left stance and stepping away from the rasa UNITA party, he would eventually win a TUSD seat, then get elected to the Pima County Board of Supervisors. The halls of Congress were next, where he dominated progressive spaces for more than two decades. On Wednesday, close to 1000 mourners filled Tucson St Augustine cathedral to lay to rest the late congressman. Notable Speakers included former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Congresswoman Alexandria, Ocasio Cortez, and former Interior Secretary Deb Haaland. But one speaker took the opportunity to remind everyone who Grijalva was outside of Congress,



Ruben Reyes 02:03

being in a car where Raoul was an experience. Ruben Reyes



C Christopher Conover 02:06

was grijalvas District Director for more than two decades. He recalled a special moment the two had driving down Interstate, eight windows down, cigarette ashes flying back in the car and playing air guitar to Bob Marley's Three Little Birds, Grijalva would scream

R Ruben Reyes 02:25

through the wind and say, Don't worry about a thing. Everything's gonna be all right. And then he looked at me and says, Tell me the truth, Ruben, if you could sing like that, would you be working for me? I will eventually make my way back to Somerton the middle of the night, and somewhere along Gila Bend, I will roll down that window and let that crazy midnight desert air make a wreck out of my life one more time, and I will play this time on Spotify. Bob Marley and I know that I will not be alone when I start hearing those lyrics. Don't worry about a thing, because every little thing going to be all right.

C Christopher Conover 03:13

Tucsonans later gathered at the El casino ballroom on the city's south side to honor the Congressman's memory. Friends, family and community members shared stories of his unwavering commitment and deep rooted connection to the people he served, many like former Tucson city council woman Molly mccasson, remembered his political antics, where he would stir up trouble. It

M Molly McKasson 03:39

was good trouble. We spoke at an event against the Gulf War, and we both got pamphleted as communists afterwards. The next week, all over downtown, and it never stopped. Raoul, he took it to the height he was not afraid to do what he felt and just hard was right, while

C Christopher Conover 04:03

others reminisced about the many reasons they continuously campaigned for him, like Bill Miller, who volunteered for eight campaigns.

B Bill Miller 04:11


The thing about Robbie Hama was he was a rare animal that you could get behind completely and not be afraid that he was hiding something, or that he was compromised, or that he was taking dirty money or doing Dirty Deeds. He was puro. Puro. He was the real deal, and

C Christopher Conover 04:32

that was a shared sentiment from politicians to neighbors. Many like New Mexico reopresentative Melanie Stansberrv. believed that Griialva

 Melanie Stansbury 04:42

was totally unique as a member of Congress, and that he never lost his roots as a member of his community, as a part of La gente, somebody who was in the fight and the good fight for justice and equality, the

 Christopher Conover 04:58

loud sound of great. Favorite music and a collective understanding to celebrate not mourn, rang across the El casino ballroom as everyone explained to our Paola Rodriguez what it meant to be, in the words of Grijalva, all about the love.

 Paola Rodriguez 05:14

So what does all about the love mean to you?


 05:16

 Robin Hiller 05:16


I know this isn't going to make sense, but it means keep on working, keep on fighting, because it's not over.

 Molly McKasson 05:24

We are really all one people that love between us, whether we acknowledge it or not. Is there, and you know, we try to try to play to it and try, try to bring it forth.

 Tom Murrey 05:37

All about the love means that you look beyond the petty BS that too many of our politicians are into, and instead, you look into the hearts and souls of people in need, and you Lift them up

 Christopher Conover 06:00

as stories laughter and tears were shared, it became clear that Raul Grijalva was more than a politician. He was a voice for the voiceless, a champion for social justice and a beloved son of Tucson who will be deeply missed among those who have shared memories of Congressman Grijalva since his death, is Pablo Manriquez, an immigration reporter whose work has appeared

in Texas Monthly Vanity Fair and The New Republic. He's currently the editor of the online news publication migrant insider, where he published a piece entitled Raul Grijalva, the dishwasher congressman. In it, he shares how Grijalva moved differently from other politicians. He joins us now. Paola, welcome. Thank you. Thank you so much for having me. So we heard a little bit from the podcast of you explaining how Congressman Grijalva was a little bit different. He learned your name. He learned the names of others. He talked with you. You're in DC, and have been in DC on and off for years. Why is that so different? Well, it

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Speaker 3 07:07

was different because I met Raul when I first started out in DC. Nobody knew my name. You know, I was just trying to get by, and the first jobs that became available to me were in the service industry. So it was sort of like a humbling moment for me to a degree. I had graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a political science degree, and yet there I was washing dishes. But the place where I was washing dishes is known as an establishment bar, and in Washington, what that means is that it's a bar that has sort of the institution of Washington kind of flows through it. And in Tuneln, in particular, it's a place where everything has always been off the record. If you go into tune in with your press pass on, for example, the bartender will literally, physically take it and put it into your shirt. This was where we Raul Grijalva used to hold court. This was 2010 so you're talking people like Anthony Weiner coming in, James einhof, from Oklahoma. And they would come, they would have burgers, they would have taco night. You know, it was always interesting to me, starting out, how much these lawmakers who we would see on C span, up on the up on the TV, how much do they tip? We would kind of take note of that and sort of see like, who tips more, Democrats or Republicans? And we would be running these kind of experiments with our over educated selves behind the bar. And what was interesting to me at the time was that Congressman Grillo was the only one who actually knew us by name to everyone else, we were just the position that we worked waiter, a bartender, a dishwasher, whatever, because the restaurant itself, the help in the back was pretty much all Spanish speaking, Latinos. And Raul grillvo was obviously fluent in Spanish. He had this relationship with us that other lawmakers didn't have. But even the lawmakers that did that were also fluent in Spanish, didn't actually take the time out to learn our names, kind of like know our national origin. He knew that I was Paola. I was from Chile. He knew us by name, and he wasn't the kind of guy to judge us for going out to have a cigarette or, like, sneak a Grand Marnier or something like that, you know, behind everyone's back. We gravitated to him for that reason. He was somebody who saw us as more than the position that we worked so as I left the service industry and became a fashionable white collar professional here in the beltway, my name obviously didn't change. And to Raul Grijalva, the person that I was, didn't change. Either, it didn't really matter if I was wearing an apron covered in grease and suds or if I was fully suited up, you know, in in the latest Brooks Brothers to him, it was just, you know, the guy who used to work at tune in, you know, have a cigarette with him on the patio and things like that. What

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Christopher Conover 09:49

is it? Because we have, in the days since Congressman gray Hall was passed, we've seen a lot of articles written, a lot of things said now that the. Funeral has passed about Congressman Grijalva, but yours was different. You You talked more about the congressman. Well, actually,

you didn't talk about the Congressman as much you talked about Raul. Why did you decide to write that piece versus the piece that talked about all of his legislative accomplishments on the local and the Federal stage.

P

Pablo Manriquez 10:25

I wrote the piece that I knew to be real about the relationship that I had with him, the relationship that I had with him as a lawmaker, didn't really begin in earnest until I was a reporter on the hill, starting in 2021 my editor was a Puerto Rican, is Puerto Rican, and to Him, the latest proclivities, and you know a bill about the Puerto Rican status, for example, this whether it's a state, whether it's a sovereign national territory, and so on. These are debates that Puerto Ricans have been having for over a century, and they're incredibly emotional. But Raoul riovo was forced to know the inner workings of these proclivities so that he could broker conversations and negotiations between Puerto Ricans like AOC and Nitya Velazquez and Darren Soto and some of these other congressmen that would come along the way. One of the things I realized in covering Puerto Rico from 2021 until about 2023 is just how far back institutionally his knowledge went of both movements within Puerto Rico and the priorities on the island. You know, it's an island where it can be reasonably said that no you ask 10 people worth of status of Puerto Rico should be in the world, and you get 10 answers. While Raoul riova knew all 10 of those answers, he was always taking the job very seriously, but he wasn't necessarily taking himself seriously, which is one of the things I think, really distinguished in between. Not only did he pay to have a mind and an eye for the details, like my name, the various ways the committee procedures and things like that that move legislation forward. I remember there were a lot of hearings like markups and some of these things, especially the Natural Resources subcommittee. One day it might be like water rights on reservations. The next day it might be NEPA plantations in the tropical islands. And he understood the proclivities of all these cultures and all these industries, and he knew him on a level that he wasn't flashy about. He didn't make knowing more than you about a topic central to his identity, and make it central to his relationship that he had with you, which is the kind of power move that you start to expect and you start to see a lot from people the longer they stay in this town. But he didn't throw in your face that he had that institutional knowledge. He wanted to know more. Where are you at today, and how does it impact how things can move forward, not how he can leverage maybe something stupid you said, maybe something that like incoherent, that you might have said starting out to make you forever a stupid and incoherent person. He was very, very thick skinned in a place where people are very thin skinned, where people do hold a grudge. Congressman grillba never seemed to take anything too personally seriously, yes, but not personally.

C

Christopher Conover 13:07

Well, thanks for joining us for a few minutes and giving us the Washington look. Thank you for giving us a couple of minutes of that view. Thank you

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Speaker 3 13:17

so much for having me. It's an honor to be able to share about Congressman Grijalva.

C Christopher Conover 13:20

That was Pablo Manriquez, editor of immigrant Insider. You're listening to The Buzz. After the break, we get a more personal look at Raul Grijalva. Stay with us

S Speaker 4 13:34

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C Christopher Conover 13:58

Welcome back to The Buzz. I'm Christopher Conover. We're looking at the legacy of the late Congressman Raul Grijalva. This week, while many southern Arizonans knew Grijalva as their elected official, for a smaller group, he was family. Adelita is one of his three daughters. We have heard so much in recent weeks about the legacy of Congressman Raul Grijalva. You have a different view. That's Dad. I do. What's the legacy of dad? You

A Adelita Grijalva 14:31

know, he raised three girls to be opinionated, ambitious, caring, thoughtful, and he has five grandkids that he also imparted that too, a huge desire to like you just have to continue to learn. And he, because he was so humble in so many different spaces, he taught us from early on that you say, Thank. You all the time. So I'll give you an example. We're at a restaurant, and my we were little, I think I was maybe four, and my little sister was three, and she was ripping a napkin and just kind of throwing it on the floor. And he stopped her, and he said, Do you see that woman right there? Like, yeah. Do you see her cleaning up everything. Yes, well, you're making more of a mess for her. Is that okay? No, it's like, well, then get out and go pick it up and don't do it again. And that's sort of the kind of thing that he did all the time, like always thinking about what was happening for other people. And I think a lot of that came from the fact that, you know, he worked like carica dishwasher, my Tata worked incredibly hard both my non and thought that had a fifth grade education or below. And he always said that education is so important, but it is not the measure of a person's intelligence, because your nana. And thought are smarter than anyone I've ever met. So that was always important where, like, he wanted us to get an education. My nana pushed education so hard, but that it wasn't the measure of a person's intelligence.

C Christopher Conover 16:13

I've been here in Tucson 20 years, so lots of interactions with him. And one of the things when we've had new reporters come in, I've always had to warn them, when you call the congressman's office and talk to Ruben or somebody in DC to try and set up an interview, a little while later, the phone will ring and there will be this voice on the other end that says, hey,

it's Raoul. And it will take a minute to realize that, oh, that's the congressman and not someone else that you can't remember calling. Was he that approachable in for lack of a better term, real life, the the non Congress side of life,

A

Adelita Grijalva 16:56

all the time we anytime we'd go to a restaurant, someone would come up. Oh, hi, mihita, and I need your help. Like, okay, what do you need? Here's call. Here's the number. You call this number and you tell them, I told you to call. He talked to everyone all the time, but so did my mom. So we were often like, can we leave? We finished eating an hour ago. Can we leave this restaurant? He would, on a regular basis, just sit outside, and I'd look out there, and there was some neighbor out there just coming to like, hey, Raul, how are you? And sit down and talk. And he would have really meaningful conversations with anybody that was interesting. And for him, it was more like, help me understand what's going on, or, let's talk about, you know, this sport. He knew a ton about pickleball, because he had a conversation for an hour and a half about someone who loved pickleball. He's like, he came back to me, said, You ever tried pickleball? I was like, No, looks. It sounds interesting. You should try. So it just, is it really? He just was a sponge on learning. And, you know, he knew a lot of different music. He knew varied artists and authors and genres of you pick it. He had, like, favorite movies of every genre. I mean, I think people would be surprised that Friday was one of his favorite movies. He would laugh so hard he knew he knew a lot about Madonna and R and B 80s, R and B and Elvis, because one of the three of us was interested. And so he's like, all right, let me, let me listen and see he never made us feel like we were silly for liking what we liked. It was always, well, tell me about it. Let me listen to it. Let me hear it. My he would sit for hours on end with my kids about like my son is really into drafting stories, and, you know, wants to be a filmmaker and wants to be an actor, and he was never dismissive of that. And you would think that, given all of the things that he knows, that he would say things like, Well, I don't know about that. He's like, the arts are really important, and if you know that's what you want to do, that's okay. But I want you to always have, like, something to fall back on, so you need to get your degree. I'm told you can do whatever you want to do while you're there. I don't care what you what kind of classes you take. I just want you to have one. You know, my daughter's into mariachi, and he I don't remember growing up with mariachi, but as soon as my daughter Adelina was into mariachi, he was full on in remembering all of the stories about different margachi artists and so he was just very approachable. He'd just sit there and kind of like, listen for hours to his grandkids. I don't know. A lot of thought does that would do that? It

C

Christopher Conover 19:54

sounds like your dad raised three. I. Independent thinking on your own women and five grandchildren, his own influence on them in the same way, do what you want, but do it well, correct

A

Adelita Grijalva 20:10

and work hard. No one is going to give you anything, and you don't deserve to be given anything. If you have to work for it, then you'll appreciate it. And I worked from the time I was 16 years old and would walk to the high school that my kids go to and the middle school that

my youngest goes to. And I want them to understand that it is in these environments where you meet people from a lot of different backgrounds and a lot of different interests that it helps you grow as a person. And he, in an interview, he talked about Sunnyside High School, and he said, you know, it wasn't a bad school. I got a good education, but you come out of there with a strength you can't buy and you won't get if you're I'm handing you like a silver spoon. So he never, he always encouraged us to have our kids in public school, and we were always in public schools, so our his grandkids are in public school, and it's important. I remember

C Christopher Conover 21:10

when I first moved to Tucson and was working here at azpm, and we were headed out for a shoot, and we came down University and turned left on Fourth Avenue, and my videographer said, Oh, that's our congressman. And he was sitting out in front of epic cafe, oddly, in front of the part of the mural with the elephant bowing down. I don't know if that was on purpose. I mean, the elephant bowed down to him, but he was just sitting there. And it became one of those things when you drove by. Oh yeah, there's Congressman Grijalva sitting there having a cup of coffee, hanging out, just like everybody else in Tucson, reading

A Adelita Grijalva 21:49

the paper. He read, what, four papers before most people got up in the morning. I mean, he just he knew a lot about a lot. He worked really hard all the time, and then would read like a whole novel from DC. It would only last one round trip because he just that bag that he carried around all the time, schlepping and having staff schlep most of the time. Had two or three really thick novels and a lot of paperwork.

C Christopher Conover 22:18

You're talking about the travel, and we won't ask your age, because that would be rude. But you know, he was in office for in Congress for over two decades, and before that, Pima County Board of Supervisors and TUSD, those are busy jobs. What was it like growing up with someone who, especially once he got to Congress, traveling back and forth and doing all of that well,

A Adelita Grijalva 22:47

he would always prioritize getting together with us as soon as we he got into town. And my mom was really good at like, Oh no, we're having dinner with the kids. Like, okay, I don't care how tired you are. And you know it was funny, because in DC, he didn't drive. You get an Uber someone picks you up. And here my mom would say, Oh no, you're driving, and you're gonna get out and pump gas. He didn't. He didn't get a lot of coddling from any of us, and especially not my mom, because, like, you need to, you can't forget how to do these things, just because you don't do them in DC, he, he would try to come down at least every other weekend and get quality time with all of us. And my kids would, you know, clamor to spend the night at Yaya Tatas house, because Tatas home and he would bring them just tons of goodies, like junk food and toys, and would always walk around with a little bit of cash for every kid. He just He loved his job

C Christopher Conover 23:48

was to spoil. Oh, oh, for sure, his girls, maybe not, but no,

A Adelita Grijalva 23:52

we didn't get that part. But he also had some really tough conversations with with, especially my kids, you know, when they were not doing as well in school or something, I would run and tattle, because I remember that was a very effective tool that they used against me. They would tell my Nana thought that if I was doing some, you know, she got a B on this, you know, paper, and it would motivate me. And so I thought it was important for them to be able to, you explained to thought that what's going on? They're like, No,

C Christopher Conover 24:23

I know my grandfather was very influential, and all the kids, I mean, we are all definitely adults now, well, at least age wise, and we still talk about the lessons we learned from our grandfather. So yeah, those are lifelong lessons. Is there a favorite Raul Grijalva story that really gives the essence of who he was, who maybe we as Tucsonans didn't know

A Adelita Grijalva 24:54

each of my kids. They're every single one of them, and I can say that for my sisters. Kids too. They the first curse words they ever learned were from Tata. He would just say them and not think about it. And so you'd have these little tiny people like saying things that I'm like, we're in public. You can't say that S word out here. Why? And then, you know, little kids, as soon as they know that you're not supposed to, it's great. Um, me and my daughter. She was three, I think we went to DC, and it was the first time that she was able to walk onto the floor, and I could go with her, because she was too little, and there were going to be votes. And so she's sitting there, and she would watch my mom would always have my dad on so like, if it was in a committee, or it's like, there's Tata, there's Tata. And so my daughter was fascinated with Nancy Pelosi. Just loved her. She would come out in the red jacket, and just loved her. So it was a time when my dad and, you know, Speaker Pelosi at the time, were not seeing eye to eye on a specific issue, and my daughter was standing up on one of the pews and looked out and said, It's Nancy Pelosi. She had a cute little accent, nice Nancy Pelosi. And I was like, Dad, you gotta she wants to go meet Nancy Pelosi. He's like, Okay, fine. You could see her little leg, like, flapping because he's walking at a normal pace, and she, like, has these little legs. And he says, Speaker Pelosi, this is my, you know, my granddaughter would like to meet you. So she turns around, assuming there'll be someone like eye level, and it's like this little person. And so I think that endeared, you know, Speaker Pelosi to my dad. And I think that, you know, she would write little cards to the grandkids. When my dad found out that my daughter was a big fan of AOC, he got her to write a little note that my daughter still has framed. And I just think he thought about them all the time. When we my daughter and I first, we just met representative Ocasio Cortez in person, and he looked, she looked at she looked at my daughter, and said, Oh my gosh, you're the one that is in the group. And she said, I'm sorry,

because you sing, and my dad had shown her because she would, he would show me videos of you all the time. You're so talented. Oh my gosh. My daughter was like, what surreal moment. But it just sort of highlighted that he always was thinking of all of us, those

C Christopher Conover 27:23

lessons from grandparents that we remember. Was it a difficult lesson for you as a parent when he was arrested, both at the Capitol and then again at Trump Tower, or was that dumb? We

A Adelita Grijalva 27:38

were so proud. I was so proud of him, and they were too. They were worried. They were like, is he in the back somewhere? And I'm like, I think we sort of planned this. I just was letting them know, but they were very worried. And so I said, when this happened? Because he'd called us and told us it was gonna happen. I said, when it happens? Right after you need to call as soon as you're able to to let the kids know you're okay, because, you know, my one son was praying, and the others were super worried, and they were just upset. But I was so proud as a daughter. It's like I there's so many moments that I'm proud of, and that is one of the top ones,

C Christopher Conover 28:11

that was Congressman Raul grijalvas daughter, Adelita, and that's the buzz for this week. You can find all our episodes online@azpm.org and subscribe to our show wherever you get your podcasts, just search for the buzz Arizona. We're also on the NPR app. Paola Rodriguez is our producer, with production help from Zach Ziegler, Our music is by enter the haggis. I'm Christopher Conover, thanks for listening.

S Speaker 5 28:51

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