

Latinas in Military History



El Soldado stands on the Capitol grounds, memorializing the military contributions of Latinos. Restoring El Soldado pays tribute to ALL Latino Veterans and Servicemembers. Be a part of El Soldado's legacy that began more than 70 years ago.

Donations of \$25 are encouraged, but any amount is appreciated! Donate today at:

www.el-soldado.org

Mirtha Villarreal-Younger, a California native, is a 22-year U.S. Army Veteran—11 years active duty and 11 years traditional California Army National Guard. A first generation Mexican American, Mirtha knew early on that she wanted to serve in the Armed Forces and enlisted at age 18. She became the first female Officer Candidate School Commander and a Public Information Officer. She served several overseas tours, including a combat tour in Afghanistan. Throughout her military career, she served in several positions such as Director of State Personnel at the California

Military Department (CMD), Deputy Director of State Personnel Programs, State Equal Employment Officer, Deputy Director of Public Affairs, Command Information Officer, and Chief of Community Relations. She always made it her mission to incorporate the Latino Community into her work by highlighting the many accomplishments of Latino/a servicemembers. As a result of her efforts, she received the “Latino Spirit” Award, an award that recognizes statewide, exemplary work to strengthen California’s democracy and advance the representation of Latinos in public service.

On July 31, 2013, Gov. Brown appointed Mirtha as Deputy Secretary for Minority Veterans Affairs at the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet). Her mission was ensuring minority and underrepresented Veterans had knowledge of and access to their earned Veteran benefits. One of Mirtha’s key projects was reenergizing the “El Soldado”/Mexican American Veterans Memorial Beautification and Enhancement project. Her dedication was evident when she stated, “I am very passionate about the work that I am doing with the group, because I firmly believe there should be a dignified monument that pays tribute to those Latino Veterans who have served our country proudly.” Because of her leadership and dedication to El Soldado, construction may be scheduled for later this year, a dream long overdue.

In October 2015, Villarreal-Younger accepted a position with the CMD as their Executive Officer. Although the farewell was bittersweet, CalVet is confident that she will continue to accomplish great things in her new role. **Thank you, Mirtha, for your passion and invaluable work to better serve California’s Veterans!**



Have a Latino-inspired photo or story? We would love to hear from you! Send it our way to minorityveterans@calvet.ca.gov.