Bill Richardson

Public Service

“What inspired me was a speech given by former Senator Hubert Humphrey when I went to Washington, D.C., with my class, and he talked about elections, democracy, relations with Latin America and Africa. And he did it in such a motivating way in the halls of the U.S. Senate that right there I decided that I wanted to go into elected office, that I wanted to make a difference, that I didn't want to become a businessman, a teacher . . .”

American Internationalist

“I see myself first as an American internationalist, enormously proud of my Hispanic heritage. I don't want to be put in the box as just another Hispanic public official. I think it's important that the American people recognize that Hispanics don't just care about civil rights and immigration and affirmative action. They care about jobs and education and entrepreneurship and home ownership and small business, and about mainstream American issues. I am proud to represent my Hispanic constituents, but I also represent Native Americans and Anglos and every other ethnic group . . . I don't try to put myself in the box as just a Latino. I'm an American, proud to be a Latino.”

Global Vision

“Okay, my main message is that we need to think globally. We're international citizens. Those of Hispanic origin have a special responsibility because of their culture to become bridges to Latin America and Mexico and the Caribbean, and engage more internationally. Latinos traditionally do not realize that one of their main assets is their bicultural experience . . . They don't deal with international issues. They don't join the Foreign Service. They don't get in international trade. Because . . . most of the efforts of the young Latino community [go] into traditional American mainstream occupations . . . Take risks, run for office, go overseas to the Foreign Service, become a writer outside of the country. Those assets need to be developed further, but it takes an element of risk on the part of the young, or the Latino.”