

**Councilman Andres Castillo-Quintana:
Inaugural Address for the Town of Bedford**

January 2, 2021

Greetings, Town of Bedford and Happy New Year to all. My name is Andres Castillo Quintana, and I could not be more thrilled to serve as your councilman for these next four years. While I had the pleasure of meeting many of you on the campaign trail, I would like to take a moment to introduce myself to those who are less familiar with my background.

I am not a politician. I am a working class resident of Bedford Hills, a first-generation immigrant, healthcare administrator, and community organizer, and never in my wildest dreams did I believe that the son of a taxi driver and housekeeper would grow up to become the youngest and first Latino council member in the history of our town.

Exactly one year ago, I decided to run for office because of the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the communities that I have been serving throughout my career as a healthcare professional. Recognizing that the pandemic has only exacerbated the inequities that we have experienced and witnessed in New York State, I have made it my mission to create a model of local government that prioritizes the needs and wellbeing of all people, encourages civic engagement, draws power from the growing diversity of our neighborhoods, and in turn, leaves no one behind.

Our town is changing. The latest census data indicates that Hispanic or Latino residents account for approximately 48% of the population in Bedford Hills and nearly 20% of the entire Town of Bedford. The Asian American community is the fastest growing ethnic group in the country. And our aging population suggests that senior citizens will become an increasingly significant portion of our town in the near future.

What this means is that representation matters, especially when it comes to the underserved. It means that positions of power should no longer be dominated by a single demographic. It means that moving Bedford forward will require us to come together to reinvigorate our commitment to welcoming as many different voices to the table as possible.

When my family immigrated to this country, we lived in very tight quarters as we struggled to learn English and pay for rent. Dilapidated sidewalks, struggling businesses, food insecurity and lack of access to healthcare were all too common in the neighborhoods where my classmates and I grew up. It is because of these experiences that I am fully committed to expanding affordable housing for low and middle income families, revitalizing our infrastructure and local businesses in an equitable manner, connecting our residents to high quality health and human services, and protecting our environment for current and future generations.

En el espíritu del pueblo — in the spirit of the people — I look forward to making this vision a reality alongside each and every one of you.

Sí, se puede. It means “Yes, we can.”

Thank you! Gracias!