



## Labor's brutal tradeoff - health care or pensions?

*With Ada Briceño*

### ***This time on Code WACK!***

**Who's the powerhouse behind the Orange County Democratic Party in California?** Why is she raising her voice in support of **Medicare for All** as a union leader **representing more than 30,000 hotel workers** in Southern California and Arizona?

To find out, we spoke with **Ada Briceño, co-president of UNITE HERE Local 11**, who has dedicated her career to uplifting marginalized voices and bridging communities. Besides years of union organizing and political work, she has led many civil rights, immigrant rights, women's rights and environmental efforts. She is a **Democratic National Committee member** and was named one of **Orange County's 100 Most Influential** by the Orange County Register four times since 2014.

# SHOW NOTES

## WE DISCUSS

*Tell us how you came to live in the United States.*

"Well, I had lived under a dictator for some time, and then we had a civil war in my country of Nicaragua and I arrived to the United States on February 14th of 1980 at the age of six years old.

"So I knew what it was like to be prevented from singing revolutionary songs, and I knew how my voice was silenced. So I'm grateful to be in the United States where I can use my voice, and that's kind of been the theme of my career and my life." - **Ada Briceño**

*So how did you get involved in the labor movement?*

"My father worked and made not very much money to sustain a family of five or six ... and I had to go into the workforce very early. So I worked odd-end jobs, and somehow I just got lucky. **I got a union job.**

"I was a front-desk clerk. And I didn't know it was a union job. All I knew is I got my best meal of the day, I was making a couple of dollars more an hour, and I got my first pair of glasses and it really transformed my life. ... having a voice on the job was what was key to me." - **Ada Briceño**

## *Can you tell us about the workers you represent and how they're being affected by our healthcare system?*

"... it affects our members because instead of me focusing ... and them focusing...on fighting for other benefits, they're stuck fighting to keep the benefits that they receive now. So we've got a bigger vision.

"We don't want to have to fight for something that should come normally to every American, right? We want to fight for other things. And folks work until they're 70, 80 years old, they cannot retire. It's not the American way. It should not be this way. Right? And so we want to eliminate that from the bargaining table." - **Ada Briceño**

## Helpful Links

[Unite Here Local 11](#)

[Democratic Party of Orange County](#)

['Sky Fell': Is OC's Old Brand of Conservative Republican Sunsetting?](#),  
*Voice of OC*

[Why unions are good for workers—especially in a crisis like COVID-19](#),  
*Economic Policy Institute*

[Health Insurance Costs Are Squeezing Workers and Employers](#), *Center for American Progress*

# Episode Transcript

*Read the full [episode transcript](#).*

## Biography: Ada Briceño

Ada Briceño has dedicated her career to uplifting marginalized voices and bridging communities.

In addition to union organizing and political work, she has led many civil rights, immigrant rights, women's rights, and environmental efforts.

She was named one of Orange County's "100 Most Influential" by the Orange County Register for 2020, 2019, 2018 and 2014.

Ada Briceño immigrated to the United States at age 6, when her family fled the civil war in Nicaragua.

Today, she serves as Co-President of UNITE HERE Local 11, representing over 32,000 hotel workers in Los Angeles County, Orange County and Arizona.

She is a Democratic National Committee member and Chair of the Democratic Party of Orange County.

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