

# Tony Plana

## Former Award-Winning Star of Ugly Betty, Director, and Arts & Education Advocate

Please contact a GDA agent for information.

### Topics

- Activism / Philanthropy / Civic Engagement
- Celebrity
- Education
- Film
- Hispanic/Latino/Chicano/Xicano
- Virtual

### About Tony Plana

As an actor, Cuban-born, Tony Plana, has performed in more than 70 feature films. Current recurring roles include the comedies *One Day at a Time*, *Super Store* as well as the dramas, *The Affair with Anna Paquin*, *Start Up*, *The Punisher* with Jon Bernthal, *Madam Secretary*, *Lethal Weapon*, *Colony*, *Alpha House*, *Elementary*, *The Fosters*, and *The Blacklist*.

Tony Plana also starred as Ignacio Suarez, the widowed father to America Ferrera's *Ugly Betty*, in ABC's landmark, groundbreaking hit series for which he received the 2006 Golden Satellite Award from the International Press Academy, an Imagen Award, and an Alma Award. *Ugly Betty* received the highest ratings and the most critical acclaim of any Latino-based show in the history of television, most notably 11 Emmy nominations and a Golden Globe Award for best comedy.

Previously, he also starred in Showtime's original series, *Resurrection Boulevard*, and was nominated for two *Alma Awards* for best actor. *Resurrection Boulevard* was the first series to be produced, written, directed and starring Latinos and awarded an *Alma Award* for the best television series of 2002.

Other feature film credits include *JFK*, *Nixon*, *Salvador*, *An Officer and a Gentleman*, *Lone Star*, *Three Amigos*, *Born in East L.A.*, *El Norte*, *187*, *Primal Fear*, *Romero*, *One Good Cop*, *Havana*, *The Rookie*, *Silver Strand* and *Picking Up the Pieces*.

Plana has continued to challenge the boundaries of teaching and learning language through an innovative approach called Language in Play (LIP). Working directly with language arts teachers, LIP utilizes the performing arts to impact literacy skills in academically at risk and bi-lingual students. Evolved collaboratively with educators over the last fifteen years, ECT's unique process of 'personalizing' language, through student play writing and play acting based on autobiographical experience, has proven more effective in achieving academic advancement and personal growth than established, traditional methods. It has consistently improved students' reading, writing and speaking skills resulting in higher attendance and lower drop-out rates, increased class participation and homework completion, as well as achieved better test scores, strengthened self-confidence and provided an engaging and meaningful school experience.

In 2005, Tony was honored as *Educator of the Year* by Loyola Marymount University's Department of Education. In 2008 he was awarded Loyola High School's Cahalan Award as a distinguished alumnus and a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Imagen Foundation. In 2009 the HOLA organization honored him with the Raul Julia HOLA Founders Award for excellence. In 2010, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa selected him as worthy of one of the highest honors bestowed by the City of Los Angeles, *The Dream of Los Angeles Award* for his contributions to the media arts and education. He is the proud recipient of the 2013 *ALMA Lifetime Achievement Award* from the National Council of La Raza, the National Association of *Latino Independent Producers' Lifetime Achievement Award* for 2016, and the 2018 *Nosotros Lifetime Impact Golden Eagle Award*.

He is currently an affiliate faculty member of the Center for Equity for English Learners at Loyola Marymount University School of Education.

### Select Keynotes

- **Embracing the Spirit of Diversity - Constant Struggle with Equal Representation**

Speaking to both corporate and campus audiences, diversity speaker Tony Plana recognizes various cultures' contributions to all facets of American life. A Cuban immigrant, Plana shares stories from his youth, stressing the importance of education in his achievements. Celebrating diversity, human values, and tolerance, he emphasizes moving past the civil rights struggles of the 20th century, and embracing the complexity of identity in today's society. Plana's presentation reveals how inclusion changes our perspectives—for the better—and improves our interactions with one another.



There needs to be inclusive in the decision-making process.

- **Follow Your Calling**

Tony came to the United States at the age of eight. His family exiled to the United States. He followed his calling to dedicate to developing his gifts and achieving his success, especially facing great obstacles as Hispanic decent.

Tony stuck to it and little by little prepared himself to compete along the way.

- **The Classroom as Theatre - Exposing Students to Theatre as a Collaborative Language**

For twenty years, as founder and executive artistic director of the East L.A. Classic Theatre, Tony Plana helps improve language arts skills and facilitate language acquisition in the Hispanic community through educational outreach programs (Language in Play) designed for curriculum integration or after school intervention, but his mission to transform education applies to students from all walks of life.

Embracing a holistic way of teaching, Plana promotes using theatre in the classroom to tap into different learning modalities and multiple teaching tools in singing, dancing and acting to augment the capacity of teachers.

Combining his passion for both education and the arts, Plana has developed unique teaching tools that are aligned to California's standards for English language development (ELD), language arts (LA), and visual and performing arts (VAPA) and that have been put into practice, enhancing personal development and achieving improved academic performance across the curriculum.

## Select Articles

- [Actor Tony Plana says, "Show your kids how important education is"](#)

For nearly two decades, Plana has been working hard to create educational programming for schools in underserved middle and high schools in the greater Los Angeles area. His East L.A. Classic Theatre program, which integrates acting within school curriculums have proven successful, because it engages students to become avid learners – it connects them emotionally to the school experience.

- [UTSA Academy for Teacher Excellence, actor Tony Plana teach joys of theater](#)

UTSA Today, July 2015

- [Actor Tony Plana says, "Show your kids how important education is"](#)

Wiser With Age, September 2014

- [Colony adds Ugly Betty, Black Sails stars for season 2](#)

Entertainment Weekly, August 2016