

**CULTURAL
AWARENESS**

OBSERVANCE



**Hispanic Heritage Month
Information Base**

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15 SEPTEMBER - 15 OCTOBER

Hispanic Heritage Month
People



Severo Ochoa; photo from gop.gov

The term *Hispanic* originates from the Latin word *Hispania*. It was first used by ancient Romans to describe the region of Spain they conquered in the second century B.C.

Radomile, Leon J. *Heritage Hispanic-American Style*. Novato, California: 2003.

Severo Ochoa was born in Luarca, Spain, in 1905. He went to medical school at the University of Madrid and graduated in 1929. He moved to the United States in 1941 and became an American citizen in 1956. Ochoa became the first Hispanic American to win the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1959 for discovering “*the mechanisms in the biological synthesis of ribonucleic acid and deoxyribonucleic acid.*”
http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/medicine/laureates/1959/ochoa-facts.html

Mexican-American César Estrada Chávez (1927–1993) was a prominent union leader and labor organizer. In 1962, he founded the National Farm Workers Association, which later became the United Farm Workers. Using nonviolent methods—such as boycotts, marches, and hunger strikes—Chávez secured raises and improved conditions for farm workers in California, Texas, Arizona, and Florida.

<http://www.history.com/topics/cesar-chavez>

At Stanford University in the 1940s, Dr. Albert Baez, together with Paul Kirkpatrick, developed the first x-ray microscope to observe living cells. His daughter, Joan Baez, became a world famous writer, singer, and human rights activist.

[http://www.hispanicphysicists.org/recognition/bio\(baez\).html](http://www.hispanicphysicists.org/recognition/bio(baez).html)

In 1961, the popular Broadway musical *West Side Story* was made into a feature-length film. The leading role of Anita was given to Rita Moreno, a Puerto Rican-American actress and singer. She later took home an Academy Award for her performance.

<http://www.nndb.com/people/463/000023394/>

In 1987, Gloria E. Anzaldua published her work, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. It became one of the most influential books written by a Latina for 25 years. Her writing reflects the anger and isolation of a life in the margins of culture and collective identity.

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/gloria-e-anzaldua>

According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, roughly 56 percent of all homeless veterans are African American or Hispanic, despite only accounting for 12.8 percent and 15.4 percent of the U.S. population respectively.

<http://www.nchv.org/background.cfm>

Dr. Julian Samora was the first Mexican American in the U.S. to receive a PhD in Sociology and Anthropology. He became a tenured professor at the University of Notre Dame and published reports on the plight of Mexican Americans. In addition, he was the main force behind the creation of the Mexican American Graduate Studies Program at Notre Dame, which trained more than fifty academics and professionals in various subjects before its close when Samora retired in 1985.

Mora, Cristina G. (2014). *Making Hispanics*. The University of Chicago Press; Chicago, Illinois.

On January 18, 2000, after a successful diplomatic career representing Mexico around the globe, Mexico City native Juan José Bremer-Martino became Mexico's Ambassador to the United States.

Radomile, Leon J. *Heritage Hispanic-American Style*. Novato, California: 2003.

The oldest of 12 children, Dr. France Anne Cordova was the youngest person to hold the position of NASA chief scientist. Cordova is the recipient of NASA's Distinguished Service Medal, its highest honor. Dr. Cordova now serves as the 11th president of Purdue University, and the first Hispanic woman to lead the Indiana campus.

<http://www.purdue.edu/president/about/index.html>

César Pelli was born in Argentina in 1922. In 1991, he became the first Hispanic American to be named by the American Institute of Architects as one of the ten most influential living architects. He served as the Dean of the Yale School of Architecture, and some of his more prominent designs around the world include Manhattan's World Financial Center, the renovated Museum of Modern Art, and the US Embassy in Tokyo, Japan.

Radomile, Leon J. *Heritage Hispanic-American Style*. Novato, California: 2003.

Eight Hispanic women have served in Congress, all in the House, and seven of them serve in the 112th Congress. Of these, two are sisters.

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL30261.pdf>

In 1565, Spanish explorer Pedro Menéndez de Avilés founded St. Augustine, Florida, the first permanent European settlement in the continental United States. Castillo de San Marcos, a Spanish fort, was completed in 1672, and it symbolizes the Spanish heritage of St. Augustine and the U.S.

http://www.nps.gov/heritageinitiatives/latino/Hispanic_CivWar.pdf

On May 23, 1943, in Alaska's Aleutian Islands, Private Joseph P. Martinez of Colorado became the first Hispanic-American to receive the Medal of Honor for his actions during World War II. His posthumous award was for the first act of combat heroism on American soil (other than the 15 at Pearl Harbor) since the Indian Campaigns.

<http://www.cmohs.org/medal-history.php>



Ellen Ochoa, a veteran astronaut, became the 11th Director of the Johnson Space Center in 2012. Ochoa is the first Hispanic director and second female director. Ochoa became the first Hispanic woman to go to space when she served on a nine-day mission on the space shuttle Discovery in 1993. She has flown in space four times, spending almost 1,000 hours in orbit.

Photo from spaceflight.nasa.gov.

<http://www.nasa.gov/centers/johnson/about/people/orgs/bios/ochoa.html>

Christina Aguilera was only 18 when her single, “*Genie in a Bottle*,” became the number one hit single in 1999. Aguilera was the first woman of Hispanic heritage to achieve such instant success, selling over eight million copies of her first album and winning a Grammy award.

Radomile, Leon J. *Heritage Hispanic-American Style*. Novato, California: 2003.

Hispanic subgroups also differ in their states, regions, and counties of geographic concentration. Mexicans, Salvadorans, and Guatemalans are largely concentrated in Western states, while Cubans, Colombians, Hondurans, and Peruvians are largely concentrated in the South. The largest numbers of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Ecuadorians are in the Northeast.

http://www.hispanictrending.net/hispanic_facts_and_figures/

Joseph Marion Hernández was the first Hispanic to serve in Congress and the first delegate from the territory of Florida. He was born in St. Augustine, Florida, on August 4, 1793, when it was still a Spanish colony. When the territory of Florida was established in 1822, Hernández transferred his allegiance to the United States and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he served until March 3, 1823.

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/congress/hernandezj.html>

Susana Martinez was born in El Paso, Texas, in 1959. She graduated from the University of Oklahoma College of Law in 1986 then moved to New Mexico, where she became the district attorney in 1997. In 2010, she became the first female governor of New Mexico and the first Hispanic female governor in the United States.

http://www.governor.state.nm.us/Meet_Governor_Martinez.aspx

David G. Farragut is perhaps the best-known Hispanic Civil War hero. He served in the Union Navy and later became the first admiral in the U.S. Navy. Congress created the rank and awarded it to him after his August 5, 1864, victory in the Battle of Mobile Bay.

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/17.3.pdf>

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1952. At the age of seven, she moved to the United States. When she was elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 1982, she became the first Hispanic woman in Florida's State Legislature.

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/congress/roslehtinen.html>

Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca was a Spanish explorer and first arrived in present-day Tampa Bay, Florida in March of 1528. After overstaying their welcome with the local Apalachee Indians, Cabeza de Vaca and the remaining members of the expedition fled across the Gulf of Mexico to what is now Galveston, Texas. For the next eight years, Cabeza de Vaca and the remainder of the expedition survived in the new world. Following the end of the expedition, the explorer returned to Spain to urge improvement of the treatment of Indians. He remained in Seville, Spain until his death in 1557.

http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/a_c/cabezadevaca.htm

After the September 11, 2001, terror attacks, Senior Master Sgt. Ramon Colon-Lopez took the fight to the enemy during four deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom from July 2002 to September 2004. Over the course of 60 combat missions, his actions resulted in the apprehension of 30 high-value targets. He received his first Bronze Star with Valor for courage under fire while supporting the Presidential Security Detail for



Hamid Karzai. During a direct action mission, his helicopter was crippled by anti-aircraft fire originating from the target area. After the crash landing, Colon-Lopez and two SEALs assaulted a fortified position, killed five combatants, and removed the threat to the remainder of the helicopter assault force. His second Bronze Star with Valor was for heroism displayed during that mission.

Photo retrieved from Africom.mil.

<https://www.goefoundation.org/eagles/biographies/c/381/Col%C3%B3n-L%C3%B3pez-Ram%C3%B3n>

Sergeant First Class Modesto Cartagena is the most decorated Hispanic soldier of the Korean War. On April 19, 1951, Cartagena, “...with no regard for his own safety,” as the official record states, left his position and charged directly into devastating enemy fire, single-handedly destroying two enemy emplacements on Hill 206 near Yonch’on, North Korea. After taking out the emplacements, he was knocked to the ground twice by exploding enemy grenades. Nevertheless, he got up and attacked three more times before being wounded. Cartagena received the Distinguished Service Cross—the highest award for valor after the Medal of Honor—for his actions.

<https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2014/09/19/modesto-cartagena-the-most-decorated-hispanic-soldier-of-the-korean-war/>

Major Marisol Chalas knew she wanted to join the military before graduating high school. College seemed an unobtainable goal until a physics teacher convinced her otherwise. She realized she could serve in the military part-time while attending college to pursue engineering. She began her military career as an enlisted soldier in the Army in 1990, where she was among the top enlisted graduates at Fort Rucker Army Aviation School. In 2001, she received her commission as a second lieutenant in the aviation branch from the Georgia Military Institute Officer Candidate School. In 2016, she was named Maritime Person of the Year by the Massachusetts Maritime Academy.

<https://www.maritime.edu/news/major-honor>



Colonel Maritza Sáenz Ryan graduated from the United States Military Academy (USMA) in 1982 as a member of the third class to include women cadets. Due to her outstanding military record and academic achievements, she was selected for the U.S. Army's Funded Legal Education Program, and graduated from Vanderbilt University Law School. In her career, she has served as a Trial Counsel at Fort Sill, a Brigade Legal Counsel for a field artillery brigade of 1,000 soldiers, and in 2006, Ryan became Professor and

Head of the Department of Law at USMA, a position requiring presidential nomination and congressional confirmation.

Photo from army.mil

https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/marketing/women/ryan_bio.authcheckdam.pdf

Hispanic Heritage Month
Events



Photo from defense.gov

Each year, Americans observe Hispanic Heritage Month by celebrating the histories, cultures, and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. The observance began in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson and was expanded by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 to cover a 31-day period starting on September 15 and ending on October 15.

<http://www.hispanicheritagemonth.gov/about/>

September 15th was chosen as the starting point of Hispanic Heritage Month because it is the anniversary of independence for five Latin American countries—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico declared its independence on September 16th, and Chile on September 18th.

<http://www.census.gov>

In the long history of this country, Hispanics have fought bravely for the United States. From the Civil War to the Vietnam War, Hispanics have a reputation of being the first in and the last out. In the Civil War, Major Santos Benavides led his Mexican-American troops in battle months after General Robert E. Lee had surrendered. In the Vietnam War, a Hispanic was the first American to be captured, but conversely, a Hispanic was the last Marine to evacuate Saigon.

Mora, Cristina G. (2014). *Making Hispanics*. The University of Chicago Press; Chicago, Illinois.

In 2014, President Barack Obama corrected a historical act of discrimination when he awarded the Medal of Honor to 24 Hispanic, Jewish, and African-American veterans who were passed over because of their racial or ethnic backgrounds. It was one of the largest Medal of Honor ceremonies in history.

<http://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/valor24/>

Many Hispanics fought on both sides in the U.S. Civil War. They came from all socio-economic levels, from the wealthy who fought to protect their way of life to poor laborers trying to improve their fortunes. By the end of the war, more than 20,000 Hispanics had served.

http://www.nps.gov/heritageinitiatives/latino/Hispanic_CivWar.pdf

The Smithsonian Latino Center works with the Smithsonian museums, research centers, programs, and affiliates to ensure that Latino culture, achievement, and contributions are celebrated and recognized. The center ensures that Latino contributions to the arts, sciences, and humanities are highlighted, understood, and advanced through the development and support of public programs, research, museum collections, and educational opportunities at the Smithsonian Institution.

<http://latino.si.edu/aboutus/>

Hispanics have been consistently underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) employment. Although the Hispanic share of the workforce has increased significantly from 3 percent in 1970 to 15 percent in 2011, Hispanics were 7 percent of the STEM workforce in 2011.

<http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/acs-24.pdf>

The U.S. Navy christened the dry cargo/ammunition ship the USNS Cesar Chavez on May 5, 2012. The ship was named to honor the prominent Mexican-American civil rights activist, who served in the Navy during World War II.

http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=66959

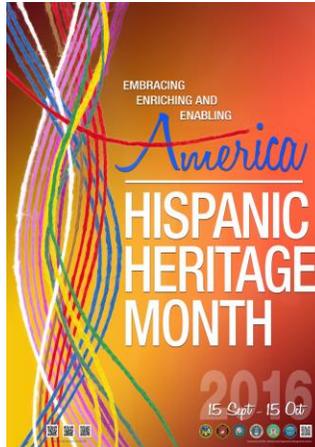
Following the arrival of Columbus in 1492, many explorers rushed to claim the New World for Spain, including mainland North America. By the 1700s, Spain had claimed much of the continent. On July 4, 1776, while the American colonies in the East declared independence from Britain, the Spanish were celebrating the founding of San Francisco.

http://www.nps.gov/heritageinitiatives/latino/Hispanic_CivWar.pdf

In 1903, Mexican and Japanese farm workers in the Oxnard, California, area came together to form the Japanese-Mexican Labor Association (JMLA) to protest low wages. On February 3, 1903, the JMLA workers, 500 of them Japanese and 200 Mexican, went on strike. By March, the union was comprised of 1,200 members, about 90 percent of the entire work force.

<http://hispanicveterans.org/415/>

Hispanic Heritage Month Milestones



The Hispanic population of the United States was 54 million as of July 1, 2013, making people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest minority. Hispanics constituted 17 percent of the nation's total population. Only Mexico has a larger Hispanic population -- roughly 120 million.

<http://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2014/cb14-ff22.html>

The Hispanic population of the United States is projected to grow to 119 million by 2060. According to this projection, the Hispanic population will constitute 31 percent of the nation's population by that date. In 2014, there were 55 million U.S. Hispanics, accounting for 17 percent of the American population.

<http://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2015/cb15-ff18.html>

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Hernandez v. Texas* that Hispanics have equal protection under the 14th Amendment of the Constitution. The victory provided a legal avenue for Hispanic Americans to combat discrimination.

<http://www.civilrights.org/resources/civilrights101/chronology.html>

In 1945, eight years before *Brown v. Board of Education*, Mexican Americans in Orange County, California won a similar victory over California school districts in *Mendez v. Westminster*, in which the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit found that separate Mexican schools were unconstitutional.

<http://www.tolerance.org/activity/tale-two-schools>

In the 1990s, the US Navy guided missile destroyer *Sergeant Alfredo Gonzalez* became the first U.S. Navy ship to be named after a Hispanic service member. Alfredo Gonzalez was a USMC Medal of Honor recipient who was killed in Vietnam on February 4, 1968.

http://www.mcu.usmc.mil/historydivision/Pages/Who%27s%20Who/G-I/Gonzalez_A.aspx

In 1559, Tristan de Luna Arellano led an expedition to present-day Pensacola, Florida. Shortly after the expedition's arrival, a powerful hurricane hit the coast and decimated the entire supply fleet, leaving nearly 1,500 settlers destitute. Luna and the settlers eked out a life in the new world, but were finally forced to abandon the settlement after two years due to lack of resources. The recent discovery of artifacts from this era make Pensacola the site of the first multi-year European settlement in the United States.

<http://www.pnj.com/story/news/2015/12/17/we-found-lunas-colony/77449884/>

Hispanic Heritage Month

Quotes



Photo from lakenheath.af.mil

President Barack Obama said, *"Like so many Americans, Hispanics have overcome great obstacles to persevere and flourish in every sector of our society. With enduring values of faith and family, hard work and sacrifice, Hispanics have preserved the rich heritage of generations past while contributing mightily to the promise of our Nation for their children and grandchildren."*

www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/09/15/presidential-proclamation

When the Japanese-Mexican Labor Association (JMLA) applied to join the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in the early 1900s, the Mexican branch was told it would be accepted if it excluded Chinese and Japanese people from its membership. The Mexican branch's secretary refused, saying, *"We are going to stand by the men who stood by us in the long, hard fight that ended in a victory over the enemy."*

<http://hispanicveterans.org/415/>

President Barack Obama said, "*Our nation's story would not be possible without generations of Hispanics who have shaped and strengthened the fabric of our union. They have enriched every aspect of our national identity with traditions that stretch across centuries and reflect the many ancestries that comprise the Hispanic community. This month, we celebrate this rich heritage and reflect on the invaluable contributions Hispanics have made to America.*"

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/09/14/presidential-proclamation-national-hispanic-heritage-month-2012>

"Every one of us has to make a commitment to social justice. You have to have the courage to get out there and fight for it."

-Dolores Huerta

<http://doloreshuerta.org/>

"Latinos live America's core values of family and hard work. Instead of asking us to change our names and culture and to assimilate, Latinos should be saying, 'You should become more like us.' We espouse an America that lives up to its values. America is the best country in the world—but it cannot become a true world leader unless it embraces all its people."

-Raul Yzaguirre, President Emeritus, National Council of LaRaza

President Barack Obama said, "*The future of America is inextricably linked to the future of our Hispanic community. Our country thrives on the diversity and ingenuity of all our people, and our ability to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world will depend greatly on the success of Hispanics. This month, as we honor their struggles and successes, let us recommit to ensuring our Nation remains a place big enough and bold enough to accommodate the dreams and prosperity of all our people.*"

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/09/15/presidential-proclamation-national-hispanic-heritage-month-2011>
