



**National Hispanic Heritage Month
Resource Base**

Prepared by
Kathleen Bartlett, Contractor



Table of Contents

Milestones	4
People.....	11
Events.....	20
Quotes	28

Instructions

Choose the items you'd like to include on your document from the Resource Base. You may use all or part of the content for each topic or sub-topic. Copy and paste desired items into the blank templates located on DEOMI's Special Observances tab, under Observance Products. You can also paste facts and images into emails and other social media. Be creative and share your ideas!

Hispanic Heritage Month

Milestones

Milestones in Hispanic American History Early Events

American Hispanic/Latino history is rich, diverse, and long, with immigrants, refugees and Spanish-speaking or Indigenous people living in the United States since long before the nation was established.

America's Hispanic population continues to grow, reaching a record 62.5 million in 2020, or 18.7 percent of the U.S. population, and bringing traditions and culture from Mexico, Spain, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and other Latin American and Iberian nations.

Below is a timeline of notable events in U.S. Hispanic and Latino history.

April 2, 1513: Searching for the "Fountain of Youth," Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon landed along the Florida coast, claiming the territory in the name of the Spanish crown. He returned in 1521 to establish a colony, but his party, attacked by Native Americans, were forced to retreat to Cuba, where he died.

Sept. 8, 1565: Spanish admiral and explorer Pedro Menendez de Aviles landed at what would become St. Augustine, Florida, near the spot Ponce de Leon reached 52 years earlier.

May 1, 1718: Spanish priest Father Antonio Olivares founded the Mission San Antonio de Valero, better known as The Alamo, the first mission in San Antonio, Texas. Formed to convert Native Americans to Christianity, it became a fort and site of rebellion in 1835.

Sept. 30, 1822: Joseph Marion Hernandez became the first Hispanic member of Congress, serving during the 17th Congress until March 3, 1823. A prominent plantation owner born in St. Augustine, Spanish Florida, Hernandez fought first for Spain to stop U.S. encroachment into the state, but later for the United States, eventually running unopposed and serving as Florida's first territorial delegate. He later served in the U.S. military during the Second Seminole War and was mayor of St. Augustine in 1848.



Figure 1 Joseph M. Hernandez, the first Hispanic member of Congress. Photo credit: Library of Congress.

[Hispanic History Milestones: Timeline - HISTORY](#)



Figure 2 In a total of "13 days of glory at the Alamo," all of the defenders were killed, including William Travis, Davy Crockett, and Jim Bowie, and those who surrendered were executed. Santa Anna burned their corpses. Photo credit: <https://myemail.constantcontact.com/-Remember-the-Alamo-.html?soid=1108762609255&aid=Qc9hXO4azHw>

Milestones in Hispanic American History Wars and Immigration

March 6, 1836: After 13 days of siege, Mexico President and General Antonio Lopez Santa Anna, with 1,000-plus Mexican soldiers, stormed The Alamo, killing most of the Texan soldiers inside, even those who had surrendered. "Remember the Alamo!" became a battle cry for the Texas militia, which eventually won independence from Spain. In 1845, Texas was annexed by the United States.

1846-1848: The Mexican-American War erupted after a dispute over border control following America's annexation of Texas. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the war, setting a border at the Rio Grande River between Texas and Mexico, and giving America control of California, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, a majority of Colorado and Arizona, and part of Oklahoma, Wyoming, and Kansas.

April 21, 1898: The U.S. declared war against Spain, with major campaigns fought in Cuba and the Philippines. The Spanish-American War, which ended December 10, 1898, with the Treaty of Paris, marked the end of Spain's colonial power, with the country granting Cuba independence and ceding Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines to the United States. Hawaii was also annexed during the war.

1910-1917: The long and violent Mexican Revolution caused a surge of Mexicans to cross the U.S. border, with El Paso, Texas, serving as "Mexican Ellis Island," according to the Library of Congress. The U.S. census found the number of Mexican immigrants had tripled in population between 1910 and 1930, from 200,000 to 600,000.

March 2, 1917: President Wilson signed the Jones-Shafroth Act, which granted U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans and created a bicameral legislature in the island territory. With the United States about to enter World War I, this action gave America a vital stronghold and allowed Puerto Ricans to join the U.S. Army. Eventually, 20,000 Puerto Ricans were drafted to serve during the conflict, many charged with guarding the important Panama Canal.

[Hispanic History Milestones: Timeline - HISTORY](#)

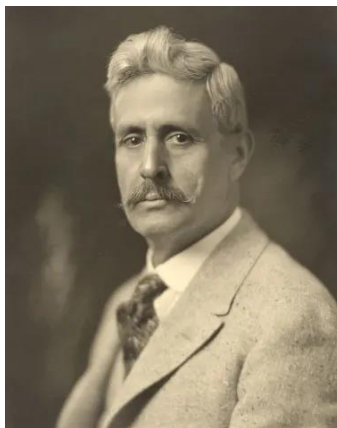


Figure 3 Octaviano Ambrosio Larrazolo, who served in the U.S. Senate 1928-29. Photo credit: Library of Congress.

Milestones in Hispanic American History Contributions

Dec. 7, 1928: Octaviano Ambrosio Larrazolo of New Mexico was sworn in as the country's first Hispanic senator. The Republican attorney, born in Mexico, immigrated to the United States when he was a boy. He served one term as governor for New Mexico and later was elected twice to the state House of Representatives before running for the U.S. Senate. In January, he fell gravely ill and returned to New Mexico where he died April 7, 1930.

Dec. 7, 1941: Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, drawing the U.S. into World War II. The war presented Latinos with new opportunities as well as new challenges. Because Latinos did not serve in segregated units, as African Americans did, their WWII history is sometimes overlooked. More than 500,000 Mexican Americans served in the American military during the conflict, with 13 Medals of Honor awarded to Latinos. The 158th Regimental Combat Team, largely composed of Latino and Native American soldiers who fought in the Philippines and New Guinea, was called “the greatest fighting combat team ever deployed in battle” by Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

Aug. 4, 1942: The U.S. and Mexico signed the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement, called the Bracero Program, America's biggest guest-worker program. The program was created to avoid labor shortages during the war and would last more than two decades until 1964. The controversial program allowed manual workers (braceros) from Mexico to work in the United States short-term, mostly in agriculture, with basic protections, such as a minimum wage, insurance, and free housing, but those standards were often ignored by employers.

When the war ended, Mexican Americans were no longer willing to accept second-class citizenship, limited educational and occupational opportunities, or segregation. The nature of fighting a war against fascism led to a different political outlook for Mexican Americans. Because they had fought tyranny abroad, they were unwilling to accept it at home. The cohesiveness of military service honed their aptitudes for community involvement and citizenship and inspired Mexican Americans to join civil rights organizations.

[Hispanic History Milestones: Timeline - HISTORY](#)

[Learning from the War: Mexican Americans and Their Fight for Equality after World War II | The National WWII Museum | New Orleans \(nationalww2museum.org\)](#)

Milestones in Hispanic American History Social Conflict

June 3, 1943: The Zoot Suit Riots were a series of violent clashes during which mobs of U.S. servicemen, off-duty police officers, and civilians brawled with young Latinos and other minorities in Los Angeles. The June 1943 riots took their name from the baggy suits (consisting of long coats with wide, ankle-pegged pants) worn by many minority youths during that era, but the violence was more about racial tension than fashion.

As the zoot suit became popular among young men in Black, Mexican American, and other minority communities, the clothes garnered a somewhat racist reputation. Latino youths in California known as “pachucos”—often wearing flashy zoot suits, porkpie hats, and dangling watch chains—were increasingly viewed by affluent whites as menacing street thugs, gang members, and rebellious juvenile delinquents. Local media fanned the flames of racism and moral outrage.

In the summer of 1943, tensions ran high between zoot-suiters and the large contingent of white sailors, soldiers, and Marines stationed in and around Los Angeles. Mexican Americans were serving in the military in high numbers, but many servicemen viewed the zoot-suit wearers as World War II draft dodgers (though many were in fact too young to serve in the military).

On May 31, a clash between uniformed servicemen and Mexican American youths resulted in the beating of a U.S. sailor. Partly in retaliation, on the evening of June 3, about 50 sailors from the local U.S. Naval Reserve Armory marched through downtown Los Angeles carrying clubs and other crude weapons, attacking anyone seen wearing a zoot suit or other racially identified clothing.

The Zoot Suit Riots lasted for ten days, targeting young Mexican Americans dressed in the popular suits. Latino youth were dragged from diners, cafes, bars, and movie theaters and attacked. The youth fought back, leaving both Mexicans and Servicemen hospitalized.



*Figure 4 Service members and civilians on the street with weapons during the Zoot Suit riots in Los Angeles.
Photo credit: <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/zoot-suit-riots>*

[Zoot Suit Riots: Causes, Facts & Photos - HISTORY - HISTORY](#)
[Hispanic History Milestones: Timeline - HISTORY](#)

Milestones in Hispanic American History Desegregation

Unlike the segregation of African Americans in the “Jim Crow” South, segregation of Mexican Americans in California wasn’t dictated by law. But starting in the 1920s, when waves of Mexican laborers arrived to work the Southern California citrus groves, California communities began to enforce their own de facto segregation.

Restaurants posted signs in their doors reading, “No dogs or Mexicans.” At movie theaters, Mexican Americans had to sit in the balcony, not the lower level. Public swimming pools had “Mexican Mondays” after which the pool was drained and cleaned.

The same de facto segregation existed in California public schools. By 1940, more than 80 percent of Mexican American students in California went to so-called “Mexican” schools, even though no California law mandated such a separation.

At the time, segregated schools were supposed to abide by the “separate but equal” clause established in 1896 by Plessy v. Ferguson. But just as in the segregated South, the “Mexican” schools in California were in terrible condition compared to the “American” schools. Instead of receiving specialized instruction to improve their language and academic skills, Mexican American students were trained to become field workers and house cleaners.

The Mexican schools started two weeks late every fall so that children could join their parents in the walnut harvest. During the citrus harvest, school would run from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. so that students could still work in the orchards.

The Mexican and American schools were often side by side, separated only by a field or an electrified fence. The Mexican American kids held recess in an empty, dirt-floored lot in plain sight of the sparkling playground at the American school.

April 14, 1947: The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals made a landmark ruling prohibiting segregation in California public schools in *Mendez v. Westminster School District*. In the case, the family of Sylvia Mendez, then nine, and others sued four school districts for being denied entrance to Westminster Elementary School because they were Mexican. The ruling set a precedent for the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court case seven years later.



Figure 5 The Mendez family. Photo credit: Mendez family

[The Mendez Family Fought School Segregation 8 Years Before Brown v. Board of Ed - HISTORY](#)

[Hispanic History Milestones: Timeline - HISTORY](#)

Milestones in Hispanic American History Civil Rights

May 3, 1954: In *Hernandez v. State of Texas*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Mexican Americans have equal protection under the law. This important civil rights case centered around Pete Hernandez, a farm worker indicted for murder by an all-Anglo grand jury in Jackson County, Texas. His attorneys argued discrimination, including the fact that no person of Mexican ancestry had served as juror in the county in 25 years, citing the 14th Amendment. The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously agreed, holding that the amendment protects those beyond "white" or "negro," also covering those of Mexican ancestry.

June 9, 1954: President Dwight D. Eisenhower instituted "Operation Wetback," a controversial mass deportation using a racial slur, in which the government rounded up more than 1 million people. Blaming illegal immigrants for low wages, the raids started in California and Arizona, and, according to a publication in the U.S. House of Representatives archives, disrupted agriculture. Funding ran out after a few months, bringing the operation to an end.

July 2, 1964: The landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 became law, signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, which outlawed discrimination based on race, sex, religion, color, or national origin. First proposed by President John F. Kennedy, it survived strong opposition from southern members of Congress and was then signed into law by Johnson, Kennedy's successor. The act also created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to enforce federal job discrimination laws. One immediate effect of the act was an end to segregated facilities requiring Black Americans and Mexican Americans to use only designated areas.

Oct. 3, 1965: President Johnson signed the landmark Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, better known as the Hart-Celler Act, into law, an immigration reform bill that ended a quota system established in 1924 based on country of origin (70 percent of immigrants were to go to Northern Europeans). The act gave priority to highly skilled immigrants and those with family already living in America. In subsequent years, Congress expanded the act and passed additional civil rights legislation such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

[Civil Rights Act of 1964 - Definition, Summary & Significance - HISTORY](#)

[Hispanic History Milestones: Timeline - HISTORY](#)



Figure 6 Photo of U.S. President, Lyndon B. Johnson signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
Photo credit: <https://apps.hhs.texas.gov/training/cbt/SNAP-Ed/3-civil-rights.html>

Milestones in Hispanic American History Fighting for Progress

March 17, 1966: Cesar Chavez, general director of the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), led 75 Latino and Filipino farm workers on an historic 340-mile march from Delano, California to the state capitol in Sacramento. Drawing attention to the demands of grape growers, the march, held at the onset of a strike that would last five years, lasted 25 days, and upon arrival in Sacramento on Easter Sunday, the group was met by a crowd of 10,000. Later that summer, the NFWA merged with the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee to form the United Farm Workers (UFW) union that affiliates with the AFL-CIO.



Figure 7 UFW president César Chávez, his mother Juana Estrada Chávez, and the Rev. Jesse Jackson at the Mass during which Chávez ended his 36-day Fast for Life, in 1988. Jackson, in solidarity, embarked on his own three-day fast on that day. Photo credit: <https://www.arp.org/politics-society/history/info-03-2011/cesar-chavez-photo-gallery.html>

April 16, 1973: The Dade County Commission unanimously passed a resolution from Miami's mayor making Spanish the city's second official language and creating a department of bilingual and bicultural affairs. In 1974, the Florida city was home to 350,000 Cubans who had been fleeing the country under Fidel Castro's regime for more than 15 years. On **November 8, 1973**, Maurice A. Ferré was elected Miami's first Hispanic mayor, also becoming the first Puerto Rican to lead a major U.S. mainland city.

Aug. 6, 1975: President Gerald Ford extended the Voting Rights Act of 1965, with the amended Section 203 mandating that bilingual ballots be provided in certain areas.

Nov. 6, 1986: President Ronald Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act into law, granting 2.7 million long-term immigrants permanent legal status. It also increased border security and made it illegal for employers to knowingly hire unauthorized workers.

Sept. 21, 1988: Dr. Lauro Cavazos, a Texan, was sworn in by Vice President George H.W. Bush as secretary of education, the first Hispanic to serve in a presidential cabinet.

Aug. 29, 1989: Cuban immigrant Ileana Ros-Lehtinen became the first Hispanic woman elected to Congress, later becoming the first woman to chair the House Foreign Affairs Committee. For over 30 years (15 terms) the Republican from Miami served in the Florida House and Senate before representing the state's 110th District.

[Hispanic History Milestones: Timeline - HISTORY](#)

Hispanic Heritage Month

People

Hispanic American Firsts First Hispanic Secretary of Transportation/Energy Federico Pena

Federico Pena, who previously served as Denver's first Hispanic mayor, was confirmed by the Senate as U.S. secretary of transportation on Jan. 22, 1993, under the nomination of President Bill Clinton, making him the first Hispanic to hold the position. He also spent two years as the first Hispanic secretary of energy under Clinton, immediately followed in that role by another Hispanic, former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson.

First Latino-American Inducted into National Baseball Hall of Fame Roberto Clemente

Puerto Rican right-fielder **Roberto Clemente** was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame on March 20, 1973, 11 weeks after he was killed in a small plane crash while traveling from Puerto Rico to Nicaragua to assist in earthquake relief efforts. The owner of four National League batting titles, he received 12 straight Golden Glove Awards, was the 1966 National League MVP, and, in 1971, at age 37, led his Pittsburgh Pirates to a World Series victory, earning the MVP title. Voted into the hall in a special election, he was the first Latin-American baseball player admitted.



Figure 8 Photo of a bronze sculpture of Roberto Clemente at PNC Park in Pittsburgh, PA, located on Federal Street near Roberto Clemente Bridge. The black granite pedestal with an outline of a baseball diamond contains soil from Puerto Rico, Forbes Field, and Three Rivers Stadium under first, second, and third bases. Photo credit: Public domain.

[Hispanic History Milestones: Timeline - HISTORY](#)

Hispanic American Firsts

First Hispanic Supreme Court Justice

Justice Sonia Sotomayor

On Aug. 8, 2009, **Sonia Sotomayor** was sworn in by Chief Justice John Roberts as the first Hispanic Supreme Court justice. Sotomayor was born in the South Bronx area of New York City, on June 25, 1954. Her parents, Juan and Celina Baez Sotomayor, were of Puerto Rican descent and had moved to New York City to raise their children. Her mother was a nurse and her father was a tool-and-die worker.

When her husband died in 1963, Celina worked hard to raise her children as a single parent. She placed what Sotomayor would later call an "almost fanatical emphasis" on education, pushing the children to become fluent in English and making huge sacrifices to purchase a set of encyclopedias for school. Sotomayor graduated from Cardinal Spellman High School in the Bronx in 1972 and entered the Ivy League, attending Princeton University. She also became highly involved with the Puerto Rican groups on campus, including Acción Puertorriqueña and the Third World Center. The groups, she said, provided her "with an anchor I needed to ground myself in that new and different world."

Sotomayor graduated summa cum laude from Princeton in 1976, where she was awarded the Pyne Prize, the highest academic award given to Princeton undergraduates. That same year, Sotomayor entered Yale Law School; she was an editor for the *Yale Law Journal*. She received her J.D. in 1979, passed the bar in 1980, and began work as an assistant district attorney in Manhattan.

In 1984, Sotomayor entered private practice, quickly making partner. She also served on the board of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, the New York City Campaign Finance Board, and the State of New York Mortgage Agency. Sotomayor's pro bono work at these agencies led to her appointment (by President George H.W. Bush) as U.S. District Court judge for the Southern District of New York City. When she joined the court, she was its youngest judge.

On her 43rd birthday, June 25, 1997, she was nominated for the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals by President Bill Clinton. She was confirmed by the Senate that October. In addition to her work in the Court of Appeals, Sotomayor also began teaching law as an adjunct professor at New York University in 1998 and at Columbia Law School in 1999. She has received honorary law degrees from Herbert H. Lehman College, Princeton University, and Brooklyn Law School. She has also served on the Board of Trustees at Princeton.

On May 26, 2009, President Barack Obama announced his nomination of Sotomayor for Supreme Court justice. The nomination was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in August 2009 by a vote of 68 to 31, making Sotomayor the first Latina Supreme Court justice in U.S. history.

<https://www.biography.com/law-figure/sonia-sotomayor>

[Hispanic History Milestones: Timeline - HISTORY](#)



Figure 9 Sonia Sotomayor in SCOTUS robe from August 21, 2009. (Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States.)
Photo credit: Steve Petteway/Public domain

Hispanic American Firsts First Latino Astronaut Franklin Chang-Díaz

One of **Franklin Chang-Díaz's** earliest memories is of lying inside a very large cardboard box with his friends and cousins and pretending to count down and blast off into space. Chang-Díaz, who was born in Costa Rica and whose father was of Chinese descent, grew up during the Cold War and was fascinated by space exploration. To pursue his dream, he headed to the United States in his teens, eventually earning a Ph.D. in plasma physics from MIT and applying to NASA's Space Program, where he became the first Hispanic astronaut in 1981. In his 25-year career at NASA, Chang-Díaz equaled the record of seven space shuttle flights, helped build the International Space Station, and logged more than 1,601 hours in space, including 19 hours and 31 minutes in three spacewalks. Upon retiring from NASA in 2005, Chang-Díaz, who envisions a day when humanity will live and travel throughout the solar system, founded the Ad Astra Rocket Company, where he is developing a plasma rocket engine that claims 10 times the performance of a chemical rocket while using one-tenth the amount of fuel.



Figure 10 Photo of Franklin Chang-Díaz, astronaut. Photo credit: Maya Lopez <https://www.aarp.org/home-family/friends-family/info-2022/hispanic-american-achievements.html>

[10 Hispanic American Trailblazers and Their Firsts \(aarp.org\)](https://www.aarp.org/home-family/friends-family/info-2022/hispanic-american-achievements.html)

Hispanic American Firsts First Hispanic and First Woman U.S. Surgeon General Antonia Novello

A childhood spent combating a congenital disease left **Antonia Novello** determined to become a doctor and help children and families who, like hers, could not afford the medical care they needed. Eventually, that path would lead her to join the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps. As a congressional fellow, Novello, born Antonia Coello in Fajardo, Puerto Rico, helped draft federal legislation to establish the national registry for organ matching, as well as the health warnings added to cigarette packages.

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush appointed her the United States' 14th surgeon general, the nation's top health official, making her the first woman and the first Hispanic to hold that position. During her tenure, from 1990 to 1993, Novello continued to focus on the health of women, children, and minorities, launching initiatives to combat underage drinking and smoking as well as domestic violence, and to prevent the neonatal transmission of AIDS.

In 2014, Novello retired from her position at the Florida Hospital for Children in Orlando, but she remains active, most recently meeting with all living former U.S. Surgeon Generals at the White House in 2021 to discuss expanding COVID-19 vaccine access and information to communities of color.



Figure 11 Dr. Antonia Novello in uniform speaking at the podium at the American Medical Association. Photo credit: Chrystyna Czajkowsky <https://www.aarp.org/home-family/friends-family/info-2022/hispanic-american-achievements.html>

First Major League Pitcher to Win Rookie of the Year and Cy Young Awards Fernando Valenzuela

In 1981, U.S. baseball fans would be introduced to one of the game's great pitchers, whose prowess ignited "Fernandomania" from the moment he first stepped onto the mound at Dodger Stadium. Twenty-year-old Mexican pitcher **Fernando Valenzuela** went on to win the National League Rookie of the Year Award and the Cy Young Award, the first pitcher in major league history to win both during the same season.

Nicknamed El Toro ("the bull"), Valenzuela went on to help the Los Angeles Dodgers clinch the 1981 World Series against the New York Yankees and to best all National League pitchers to win the 1981 Silver Slugger Award. That was just the beginning. Fabulous Fernando would continue to confound batters with his signature screwball pitch throughout a 17-year career in the majors.

[10 Hispanic American Trailblazers and Their Firsts \(aarp.org\)](https://www.aarp.org/home-family/friends-family/info-2022/hispanic-american-achievements.html)

Hispanic American Firsts
First Latino to Win the Pulitzer Prize for Drama
Nilo Cruz

Before Lin-Manuel Miranda, before *Hamilton*, there was **Nilo Cruz**, and there was *Anna in the Tropics*, the first play by a Latino to win the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 2003. The play, which at the time had not been staged in New York, won on the strength of its script alone.

Set in 1929 in Ybor City, Florida, where many Cuban immigrants had settled to work in the growing cigar industry, the play is built on the tradition of the lector at the cigar factories who, while workers hand-rolled each cigar, would read to them, anything from news to novels to nonfiction. In *Anna in the Tropics*, the lector reads Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, with unintended consequences for the cigar-rolling workers. *Anna in the Tropics* was also honored with two nominations at the 2004 Tony Awards, in the category of Best Play and Best Featured Actress in a Play (Daphne Rubin-Vega).

Cruz is author of more than 13 plays and four translations. He studied theater first at Miami-Dade Community College and later in New York City under fellow Cuban María Irene Fornés. Fornés recommended Cruz to Paula Vogel, who was then teaching at Brown University, where Cruz received his M.F.A. in 1994. Cruz served as playwright-in-residence at the New Theatre in Coral Gables, Florida, where he wrote *Anna in the Tropics*, which received the Pulitzer and Steinberg prizes in 2003. Its Broadway premiere in 2004 starred Jimmy Smitts in the lead role.

In addition to his Pulitzer, Cruz, a Cuban American, has won many other prestigious awards, including the PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater Award for a distinguished American playwright in mid-career. His work often reflects Cuban, Latin American, Spanish, and U.S. Latino themes.

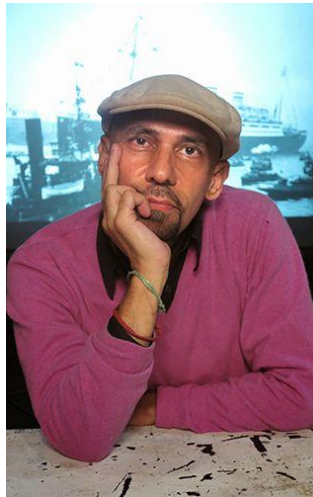


Figure 12 Photo of Nilo Cruz. Photo credit: <https://www.prlog.org/12278983-sissys-voice-is-joined-by-pulitzer-prize-playwright-nilo-cruz-and-the-cast-of-sotto-voce-live.html>

[Sissy's voice is joined by Pulitzer Prize playwright Nilo Cruz and the cast of Sotto Voce LIVE! -- Jonathan Slaff | PRLog](https://www.prlog.org/12278983-sissys-voice-is-joined-by-pulitzer-prize-playwright-nilo-cruz-and-the-cast-of-sotto-voce-live.html)

[10 Hispanic American Trailblazers and Their Firsts \(aarp.org\)](http://aarp.org)

Hispanic American Firsts
First Latina Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps
Angela Salinas

When **Angela Salinas** took over as CEO of the Girl Scouts of Southwest Texas in 2015, she was uniquely qualified to serve as a role model for girls and young women, inspiring them to be leaders and serve their country and communities. Not only was the Texas native of Mexican ancestry once a Girl Scout herself, but in 2006 she became the first Hispanic female brigadier general in the U.S. Marine Corps, before being promoted to major general in 2010.

Angela Salinas was born on December 6, 1953, in Alice, Texas; she is a descendant of one of the first civilian settlers in Texas. Salinas holds a Bachelor’s degree in History from Dominican University of California and a Master’s degree from the Naval War College.

Salinas enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on May 1974 at Parris Island. In 1977, Salinas was selected for the Enlisted Commissioning Program, and in December 1977 she was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. In 1986, Salinas assumed command of Headquarters and Service Company, 1st Maintenance Battalion until 1987, when she became the deputy G-1, 1st Force Service Support Group, both at Camp Pendleton. In 1988, she was transferred to serve as the executive officer for Recruiting Station Charleston, and, in June 1989, Major General Salinas assumed command of Recruiting Station Charleston, the first woman in the Marine Corps to command a recruiting station. In June 1992, she served as a Combat Service Support Ground Monitor for the Manpower Management and Officer Assignments at Headquarters Marine Corps in Washington, D.C., where she was responsible for the assignments of over 1,000 senior officers.

In 1993, Salinas became Deputy, Special Assistant for General/Flag Officer Matters, Office of the Director, Joint Staff at the Pentagon. In 1996, she assumed command of the 4th Recruit Training Battalion at Parris Island. In 1999, she served as the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-5, for III Marine Expeditionary Force, Okinawa, Japan. In May 2001, she assumed command of the 12th Marine Corps District, the first woman to serve as a Recruiting District Commanding Officer. From 2004 to 2006, Salinas served as Chief of Staff, Marine Corps Recruiting Command at Quantico.

On August 2, 2006, Salinas was promoted to the rank of brigadier general. On August 4, 2006, she assumed command of Marine Corps Recruit Depot/Western Recruiting Region in San Diego. She transferred to direct the manpower management, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, at Marine Corps Base Quantico in August 2009. In March 2010, she was selected for promotion to Major General and promoted on May 12.

When Salinas retired in 2013 after a 39-year career in the military, she was the highest-ranking woman in the USMC. “Serving in the Marines ignited in me a passion for wanting to do something greater than myself. And that was the foundation for the next 39 years of my life,” she told PBS. As of August 2022, Salinas is also a member of the Veterans Justice Commission, an initiative by the Council on Criminal Justice to examine why so many military veterans end up in the criminal justice system.

[10 Hispanic American Trailblazers and Their Firsts \(aarp.org\)](https://aarp.org)

[Angela Salinas, Major General, U.S. Marine Corps - Foundation for Women Warriors](#)



Figure 13 Photo of Angela Salinas in uniform. Photo credit: Zuma Press, Inc/Alamy Stock Photo [10 Hispanic American Trailblazers and Their Firsts \(aarp.org\)](#)

Hispanic American Firsts First Hispanic Poets Laureate of the United States Juan Felipe Herrera and Ada Limón

As the son of migrant farmworkers in California, **Juan Felipe Herrera** had a childhood that was nomadic, restless, and kaleidoscopic, all words that have also been used to describe his body of work as a poet, novelist, author of books for young adults and children, nonfiction writer, and performance artist.

But there was one constant in his early life: his mother's voice, reciting poetry in Spanish and singing songs from the Mexican Revolution. Her voice, he said, inspired his own. In 2015, Herrera's stature in Chicano and American literature led the Library of Congress to name him the nation's 21st poet laureate, making him the first Latino to hold that position and the first whose body of work blends English and Spanish.



Figure 14 Photo of Juan Felipe Herrera at the podium. Photo credit: Letras Latinas <https://labloga.blogspot.com/2015/06/juan-felipe-herrera-week-continues-on.html>

Seven years later, in 2022, **Ada Limón** became the first Latina to be named poet laureate. Born in Sonoma, California, and of Mexican ancestry, Limón is the author of six critically acclaimed poetry collections. As the 24th poet laureate of the United States, she has said that she'd "like to explore how poetry can reconnect us to the natural world and help us to repair our relationship to the planet."

[10 Hispanic American Trailblazers and Their Firsts \(aarp.org\)](#)

Hispanic American Firsts
First Hispanic/Afro-Latina Actresses to Win Awards
Rita Moreno and Ariana DeBose

In 1962, Puerto Rican actress **Rita Moreno** made history when she became the first Hispanic woman to win an Academy Award for best actress in a supporting role for her portrayal of Anita in *West Side Story*.

Sixty years later, history was made yet again when another Latina, **Ariana DeBose**, who is also of Puerto Rican ancestry, was awarded the Oscar for playing the same character in Steven Spielberg’s 2021 remake.

Adding to the list of firsts, DeBose also became the first Afro-Latina and LGBTQ woman of color to win the Academy Award for best supporting actress. Thanking “the divine inspiration that is Rita Moreno” in her acceptance speech, DeBose also referred to their shared character: “Now I see why Anita says, ‘I want to be in America’; because even in this weary world that we live in, dreams do come true.”

First Latina Driver to Compete in a
NASCAR National Series in the United States
Milka Duno

Introduced to auto racing at the age of 24 in her native Venezuela, **Milka Duno** soon started competing professionally; today Milka Duno is one of the most successful female race car drivers in the world.

Besides becoming the first Latina driver to compete in a NASCAR national series in 2014, Duno is also the first Latina driver to compete in multiple U.S. racing series, including the Indianapolis 500 and the IndyCar, ARCA, Rolex, and American Le Mans series. Milka has competed in more types of race cars than any other current female driver and she has eight major motorsport wins to her credit. When Milka won the Rolex Series Miami Grand Prix, she became the first woman in history to win a major international race in the United States.

A former model, Duno is a qualified naval engineer with four master’s degrees. In 2004, she created the Milka Way program to inspire children to achieve academic excellence.



Figure 15 Photo of Milka Duno in racing gear at the NASCAR Nationwide Series race at Kansas Speedway. Photo credit: <https://www.milkaduno.com/en/2014-photo-gallery/nascar-nationwide-series-race-at-kansas-speedway>

[10 Hispanic American Trailblazers and Their Firsts \(aarp.org\)](https://www.aarp.org)
[About \(milkaduno.com\)](https://www.milkaduno.com)

Hispanic American Firsts
First U.S. Journalist to Anchor Both English- and Spanish-Language
Newscasts on Two Broadcast Networks
José Díaz-Balart

When journalist **José Díaz-Balart** started hosting his own weekday morning show, “José Díaz-Balart Reports,” in English on MSNBC on September 27, 2021, it was just the latest step in a career that has the versatile anchor moving deftly between English- and Spanish-language newscasts at NBC, Telemundo, and CBS.

Díaz-Balart first made history at CBS in 1996, when he became the first Cuban American to host a network news program in English. In 2016, the bilingual anchor, winner of four national Emmys, an Alfred I. DuPont–Columbia University Award, and a George Foster Peabody Award, again made history when he took over NBC Nightly News Saturday while continuing to anchor Noticias Telemundo, making him the first U.S. journalist to anchor both English- and Spanish-language newscasts on two broadcast networks simultaneously.

Now, as host of José Díaz-Balart Reports and NBC Nightly News Saturday, he continues special news coverage for Telemundo, and on Peacock, Díaz-Balart is the only anchor to host national news programs on both cable and broadcast television in both English and Spanish.

[10 Hispanic American Trailblazers and Their Firsts \(aarp.org\)](https://www.aarp.org/life-essentials/10-hispanic-american-trailblazers-and-their-firsts/)

Record-breaking Tony Nominations, Other Awards
Lin-Manuel Miranda

Lin-Manuel Miranda is an award-winning songwriter, actor, director, and producer. He is the creator and original star of Broadway’s Tony-winning musicals, *Hamilton* (book, music, and lyrics) and *In the Heights*. For *Hamilton*, Miranda was awarded the 2016 Pulitzer Prize in Drama and earned a record-breaking 16 Tony Nominations, winning 11 Tony Awards, including two personally for Miranda for Book and Musical Score. The Original Broadway Cast Recording of *Hamilton* won the 2016 Grammy for Best Musical Theater Album. Both Miranda and *Hamilton* won the 2016 Drama League Awards for Distinguished Performance and Outstanding Production of a Musical, respectively.

For its sold-out Off-Broadway run at The Public Theater, *Hamilton* received a record-breaking ten Lortel Awards, three Outer Critic Circle Awards, eight Drama Desk Awards, the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best New Musical, and an OBIE for Best New American Play. Miranda is a recipient of the 2015 MacArthur Foundation Award, the National Arts Club Medal of Honor, the ASCAP Foundation's Richard Rodgers New Horizons Award, and the Portrait of a Nation Prize. He has received stars on both the Puerto Rico Walk of Fame and the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Three of Lin-Manuel’s grandparents were Puerto Rican, and his maternal grandfather was of Mexican descent. Miranda and his family are active supporters of initiatives that increase the representation of people of color throughout the arts and government, ensure access to women’s reproductive health, and promote resilience in Puerto Rico.

[Microsoft Word - LMM BIO Updated AUG 2022.docx \(linmanuel.com\)](#)

[Lin-Manuel Miranda - Ethnicity of Celebs | EthniCelebs.com](https://www.ethnicityofcelebs.com/lin-manuel-miranda/)

Hispanic Heritage Month

Events

Mexican Americans and World War II

World War II gave Latinos new opportunities and presented them with new challenges. Because Latinos did not serve in segregated units, as African Americans did, their WWII history is sometimes overlooked. During the war, Mexican Americans served in the military and worked on the Home Front to support their country.



Figure 16 Uncle Sam urges Spanish speakers to support the war. Translated it says, "We need your help." Spanish speaking Uncle Sam frequently appeared in Spanish-language newspapers, war bond drives, and Mexican-American organization newsletters. Photo credit: Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona.

In September 1945, **Macario García** returned to Sugar Land, Texas after serving as a sergeant in the U.S. Army during World War II. The month before, President Harry Truman presented García with the Medal of Honor for his actions on November 27, 1944, near Grosshau, Germany. García singlehandedly attacked German machine-gun emplacements that were hindering his company's advance. Although wounded during the attack, García crawled to the machine-gun nests, destroyed them, and captured four German soldiers. Only after his company advanced did García agree to medical treatment.

He became a hero in his hometown. In fact, the local chapter of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) organized a party in his honor at the nearby Richmond City Hall. On the way to the celebration García entered the Oasis Café when, as the story goes, the waitress told García that they did not serve Mexicans. García commented that "If he was good enough to fight in the war, he was good enough for a cup of coffee." A fight broke out, and the owner and a patron beat García with a baseball bat. Police arrived and arrested García. His case was well publicized, and LULAC and the Comité Patriótico Mexicano (Mexican Patriotic Committee) raised funds for his legal defense. The case was repeatedly postponed, and the charges were finally dropped in 1946.

Garcías's experiences highlight the many ways that Mexican Americans experienced World War II and the immediate post-war period.

[Learning from the War: Mexican Americans and Their Fight for Equality after World War II](#)
[| The National WWII Museum | New Orleans \(nationalww2museum.org\)](#)

Mexican American Civil Rights Pre- and Post-WWII **Alianza Hispano-Americana (Alianza)**

An estimated 400,000 Mexican Americans served in the U.S. armed forces during WWII and compared to other ethnic and racial groups in the United States, Mexican Americans served in disproportionately high numbers in frontline combat positions. But, depending on their geographical location, they often experienced discrimination—even when they were awarded the highest honor their country could bestow upon them.

In the mid-twentieth century, most Mexican Americans lived in the southwestern United States: a multicultural, multiethnic, and multiracial region that stretched from Texas to southern California. Just as state and local governments segregated Black Americans in public spaces (including schools), White city leaders segregated people of Mexican descent in the Southwest. Segregation of Mexican Americans, however, differed from the de jure (legal) segregation that Black Americans faced. Most often, segregation of Mexican Americans depended on class, skin color, and language (de facto segregation).

When the war ended, Mexican Americans were no longer willing to accept second-class citizenship, limited educational and occupational opportunities, or segregation. Because they had fought tyranny abroad, they were unwilling to accept it at home. The cohesiveness of military service and Home Front associations honed their previous aptitudes for community involvement and citizenship and inspired Mexican Americans to join civil rights organizations upon their return. The integration of Mexican Americans in the military and Home Front associations carried into post-war demands for equality.

One of the most influential Mexican American civil rights organizations to flourish in the post-war period was **Alianza Hispano-Americana (Alianza)**. Founded in Tucson, Arizona, in 1894, Alianza originally served as a mutual-benefit society that provided life insurance to its members and the Mexican American community. But with U.S. entry into World War II, members turned their focus to highlighting Mexican American contributions to the war effort. Their newsletter, Alianza Alliance, often contained articles highlighting local Mexican Americans joining the service and holding war bond rallies and blood drives.

By 1947, Alianza owned over \$700,000 in war bonds. Throughout World War II, they capitalized on Mexican American patriotism, on the Home Front and in the military, and used their influence to become leaders within their community. Alianza became one of the most important Mexican American organizations in the Southwest.

After the war, their membership grew exponentially, with veterans and their families swelling the ranks. By the end of the war, Alianza had approximately 12,000 members with over 370 lodges across the Southwest. With the expanded membership, Alianza began creating specific programs for their members, hoping to improve Mexican Americans' lives and ensure equal rights.

Alianza used their pillar program and their new membership to challenge segregation in Arizona and eventually throughout the greater Southwest. After the war, veterans across the Southwest founded and joined other civil rights organizations to demand the end of segregation and discrimination.

[Learning from the War: Mexican Americans and Their Fight for Equality after World War II](#)
[| The National WWII Museum | New Orleans \(nationalww2museum.org\)](#)

First Medal of Honor Awarded to a Hispanic American in World War II Joseph Martinez

Joseph Martinez was born in Taos, New Mexico in 1920, the youngest child of José Manuel Martínez and María Eduvigen Romo. After being drafted into the U.S. Army in August 1942, Martinez shipped off to Camp Roberts, California for basic training.



Figure 17 Photo of Joseph. P. Martínez. Photo credit: U.S. Army.

Martinez was assigned to Company K, 32d Infantry, 7th Infantry Division, part of the force that landed at Attu in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. The Japanese had invaded the Aleutians in June 1942, the first time American soil had been invaded by a foreign power since the War of 1812. Martinez, with Company K, landed at Holtz Bay on May 11 and began the long and bitter struggle to wrest the craggy ridges from the Japanese. This fighting was up-close and brutal as the Japanese defended the narrow passes from foxholes manned with machine guns, and their riflemen had the advantage of possessing the high ground.



Figure 18 Chichagof Harbor, Attu, 1937, with surrounding ridges. Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, B-50397.

An attempt on one of the crucial passes called “Fish Hook” was made on May 24, but was repulsed as the Americans suffered heavy casualties. After recuperating, and with the assistance of massive artillery bombardments, they made another attempt on May 26. While initially making quick progress up the ridge, stiffening resistance soon blocked their advance.

At a lethal point, Martinez was pinned down with his men. Martinez charged, clearing out foxhole after foxhole, picking up an M1 Garand once he ran out of his own ammunition. This heroic action allowed the unit to make it through the pass and get to their objective, but Martinez was not done. The indefatigable BAR gunner replenished his ammo, climbed atop a small 15-foot cliff, and started pouring fire down on the Japanese in a trench.

[Private Joseph Pantillion Martinez's Medal of Honor | The National WWII Museum | New Orleans \(nationalww2museum.org\)](#)

(Continues on next page.)

First Medal of Honor awarded to a Hispanic American in World War II Joseph Martinez (continued)

Exposed to enemy fire from below, Martinez unloaded magazine after magazine into the Japanese. Then one sole shot rang out and struck Martinez in the head. Though his men attempted to recover him, they realized that the treacherous journey back down the pass would kill him, especially while the unit was under fire from Japanese bullets and grenades.

Martinez succumbed to his head wound and died on May 26, 1943. The next morning, men of “K” Company found that the Japanese who had not been killed had pulled out, giving the Americans the day.

Martinez was buried with full military honors in his childhood home of Ault, Colorado, where his family had moved shortly after he was born. The military posthumously honored Martinez by naming a transport ship and military installation after him. Several municipalities erected statues and renamed streets in his honor as well.



Figure 19 Statue of Joseph P. Martinez in Denver, Colorado. Photo credit: René & Peter van der Krogt.

[Private Joseph Pantillion Martinez's Medal of Honor | The National WWII Museum | New Orleans \(nationalww2museum.org\)](http://nationalww2museum.org)

Patriots from the Barrio U.S. Army's All Mexican American Combat Unit

Dave Gutierrez is the author of *Patriots from The Barrio*, the true WWII story of the men who served in the U.S. Army's all Mexican American Combat unit. An original Texas National Guard Unit out of El Paso, Texas, Company E was federalized in November of 1940 and moved to Camp Bowie in Brownwood, Texas. The 141st Regiment is the oldest fighting unit in the state of Texas and traces its roots back to the Texas Revolution. The all-Mexican American combat unit was one of the more unique units of World War II. Deployed to North Africa in April of 1943, Company E also spearheaded the Allied landing at Salerno, Italy, in September of 1943, and fought at Mt. Rotondo, San Pietro, the Rapido River, Cassino, Anzio, Velletri, and Rome.

[Patriots from the Barrio with Author Dave Gutierrez | The National WWII Museum | New Orleans \(nationalww2museum.org\)](http://nationalww2museum.org)

History of National Hispanic Heritage Month

National Hispanic Heritage Month, which officially began as Hispanic Heritage Week in 1968, always starts on Sept. 15. Why in the middle of the month? Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua all celebrate their Independence Day Sept. 15; Mexico's is on Sept. 16; Chile's is Sept. 18; and Belize Independence Day is Sept. 21. The month stretches into October to include Día de la Raza, Oct. 12, which celebrates the melding of Hispanic races (raza) and culture.

National Hispanic Heritage Month is an annual celebration of the history and culture of the U.S. Latinx and Hispanic communities. The event, which runs from September 15 to October 15, commemorates how those communities have contributed to American society at large.

The term Hispanic or Latino (or the more recent term Latinx) refers to a person's culture or origin—regardless of race. On the 2020 Census form, people were counted as Hispanic or Latino or Spanish if they could identify as having Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or “another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin.”

National Hispanic Heritage Month actually began as a commemorative week when it was first introduced in June of 1968 by California Congressman **George E. Brown**. The push to recognize the contributions of the Latinx community had gained momentum throughout the 1960s when the civil rights movement was at its peak, and there was a growing awareness of the United States' multicultural identities.

Brown, who represented East Los Angeles and a large portion of the San Gabriel Valley—both heavily populated by members of the Hispanic and Latinx communities—wanted to recognize the role played by those communities throughout American history.

On September 17, 1968, Congress passed Public Law 90-48, officially authorizing and requesting the president to issue annual proclamations declaring September 15 and 16 to mark the beginning of National Hispanic Heritage Week and called upon the “people of the United States, especially the educational community, to observe such week with appropriate ceremonies and activities.” President Lyndon B. Johnson issued the first Hispanic Heritage Week presidential proclamation the same day.

In 1987 **U.S. Representative Esteban E. Torres** of California proposed the expanding the observance to cover its current 31-day period. Torres wanted more time so that the nation could “properly observe and coordinate events and activities to celebrate Hispanic culture and achievement.”

In 1988, **Senator Paul Simon (D-Illinois)**, submitted a similar bill that successfully passed Congress and was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan on August 17, 1988. On September 14, 1989, President George H.W. Bush (who had been a sponsor of the original Hispanic Heritage Week resolution while serving in the House in 1968) became the first president to declare the 31-day period from September 15 to October 15 as National Hispanic Heritage Month.

Hispanic Heritage Month 2022 will last from Thursday, September 15, 2022, through Saturday, October 15, 2022.

[Hispanic Heritage Month - Origins & Facts - HISTORY](#)

Poet and Journalist José Martí Spent his Short Life Fighting for Cuban independence

Sometimes called the Apostle of the Cuban Revolution, **José Martí** was born in Havana in 1853. He showed a talent for writing and revolutionary politics at an early age. The famous patriotic song "Guantanamera" is adapted from his poetry collection *Versos Sencillos* (1891) and gained greater popularity in 1963 when it was recorded by folk singer Pete Seeger. First exiled from Cuba in 1871, Martí spent much of his life abroad. In 1895, he returned to Cuba to fight for its independence and died on the battlefield.

José Martí spent four years in New York City, where he wrote for both English- and Spanish-language newspapers, developing ideas that would influence his thinking about the often-tense relationship between the U.S. and Latin America. Martí was one of Latin America's greatest intellectuals, earning him a statue in front of Central Park in Manhattan.



Figure 20 Photo of Jose Marti statue in Central Park, Manhattan. Photo credit: 123RF.com

José Martí was born to poor Spanish immigrant parents in Havana, Cuba, on January 28, 1853. Demonstrating natural artistic abilities from an early age, he originally pursued studies in painting before turning his energies to writing. By the time he was 16, his poetry and other work were appearing in print.

At the same time, Martí was forming his political consciousness as well. He was passionate about the growing revolutionary efforts to liberate Cuba from Spain, known as the Ten Years' War, and soon devoted his skills as a writer to advance the cause. In 1869 Martí created the newspaper *La Patria Libre*, in which he published several significant poems, including the dramatic "Abdala," describing the liberation of an imaginary country.

Tackling a variety of subjects, Martí was as skilled at social and political commentary as he was at literary criticism. He wrote well-received essays about such poets as Walt Whitman, and he shared his impressions of the United States as a correspondent. In one of his most famous essays, "Our America" (1881), he called for Latin American countries to unite. He also suggested that these countries learn from the United States, but establish governments based on their own cultures and needs. In addition to writing, Martí worked as a diplomat for several Latin American nations, serving as a consul for Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina.

[José Martí - Journalist, Poet - Biography](#)

Hispanic American Contributions: Los Angeles

Los Angeles, America's second largest city and the West Coast's biggest economic powerhouse, was originally settled by indigenous tribes, including the Chumash and Tongva hunter gatherers, by 8000 B.C. Portuguese sailor Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo was the first European to explore the region in 1542, but it wasn't until 1769 that Gaspar de Portolá established a Spanish outpost in the Los Angeles area.

The outpost grew larger in 1781, when a group of 44 settlers, comprised of Spaniards, Afro-Latinos, indigenous people, and mestizos, set out from colonial-era northern Mexico and traveled into California to establish a farming village on the banks of the Rio Porciúncula. The Spanish governor named the settlement El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles de Porciúncula, or "The Town of Our Lady the Queen of the Angels of Porciúncula."

Spanish missions were soon established in the area, including Mission San Fernando, named for Ferdinand III of Spain, and Mission San Gabriel Arcángel, founded by Junipero Serra. In 1821, Mexico declared its independence from Spain, and all of California fell under Mexican control.

But in 1846, the Mexican American War broke out, and two years later California was annexed by the United States. The timing was fortuitous, as rich deposits of gold were discovered in the Sacramento Valley in 1848, igniting the Gold Rush. The hordes of '49ers flocking to California depended on beef and other foods from ranches and farms in the Los Angeles area.

In 1881, after years of America's "manifest destiny" expansion, the Southern Pacific Railroad completed a track into Los Angeles, linking the city with the rest of the United States. This sparked a flurry of land speculation, and civic boosters were soon tempting winter-weary Easterners with promises of lush orange groves and boundless sunshine.

But oranges and people need water, and L.A. looked to the Owens Valley, some 200 miles away, to slake its thirst. After years of backroom deals, bribery, and other shenanigans, superintendent William Mulholland opened the Los Angeles Aqueduct in 1913 with the words, "There it is. Take it." Today, Californians still struggle with water-supply issues.

California has steadily grown, and as of the 2020 Census, of the 3.8 million people who live in Los Angeles, 1.8 million are of Latino origin, representing 47% of the total. Last year, Latinos became the largest ethnic group in the state of California, overtaking non-Hispanic Whites.

Latinos constantly deal with the misperception that they are somehow more foreign than the other immigrant-descended people who live here. In fact, about two-thirds of U.S. Hispanics were born in this country. Latinos are as American as everyone else.

[Los Angeles: A History - HISTORY](#)

[18 Major Moments In Hispanic History That All Americans Need To Know | HuffPost Voices](#)

[Latinos in the United States: The 10 Cities With the Most Hispanics | HCN \(hcnmedia.com\)](#)

Puerto Rico and U.S. Citizenship

Perhaps not for the most altruistic of reasons, the United States extended both citizenship and, shortly after, military conscription to Puerto Rico in 1917, as World War I raged on in Europe. Puerto Ricans are as American as anyone born in the 50 states.

[18 Major Moments In Hispanic History That All Americans Need To Know | HuffPost Voices](#)



Figure 21 The Capitol of Puerto Rico (Capitolio de Puerto Rico) in San Juan. Photo credit: <https://www.istockphoto.com/photos/puerto-rico>

NAFTA Signed in 1994

Mexico, the United States, and Canada signed a free trade agreement in 1994 that reduced trade barriers between the three countries. Though money was allowed to cross borders more freely, people were not. Millions of Mexican farm workers lost their jobs as cheap U.S. imports put Mexican farms out of business. Many of those migrants eventually wound up in the United States.

Many Americans think that Latinos leave their countries of origin in order to pursue the American dream. In fact, economic policies that dry up Latin American jobs drive illegal immigration more than the intangible lure of a foreign lifestyle.

[18 Major Moments In Hispanic History That All Americans Need To Know | HuffPost Voices](#)

Latinos in the U.S. According to the 2020 Census

According to the United States Census Bureau and the 2020 Census, of the more than 333 million inhabitants of this country, over 62 million are of Latino origin, 18.6% of the total population. Latinos in the United States are one of the fastest growing groups. Between 2010 and 2020, the country's Hispanic population grew by 23%.

Of all Hispanics in the US, 61.5% are originally from Mexico, followed by smaller percentages from Puerto Rico, Cuba, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic.

Guatemala, Colombia and Honduras combine for a notable percentage of US Hispanics, with a population of one million+ in 2019.

The 10 states in the United States with the largest Hispanic populations are California, Texas, Florida, New York, Arizona, Illinois, New Jersey, Colorado, Georgia, and New Mexico.

[Latinos in the United States: The 10 Cities With the Most Hispanics | HCN \(hcnmedia.com\)](#)

Hispanic Heritage Month

Quotes

Quotes: Hispanic American Creators, Activists, and Other Famous Figures

“You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore.”

Cesar Chavez

"The Latina in me is an ember that blazes forever."

Sonia Sotomayer

“If we could light up the room with pain, we’d be such a glorious fire.”

Ada Limon, "Bright Dead Things"

“At the end of the day, we can endure much more than we think we can.”

Frida Kahlo

“You have to remember the value of your individuality — that you have something special and different to offer that nobody else can.”

Jennifer Lopez

“You are perfectly cast in your life. I can’t imagine anyone but you in the role. Go play.”

Lin-Manuel Miranda

“I’ve put up with too much, too long, and now I’m just too intelligent, too powerful, too beautiful, too sure of who I am finally to deserve anything less.”

Sandra Cisneros

“It is not true that people stop pursuing dreams because they grow old; they grow old because they stop pursuing dreams.”

Gabriel García Márquez

[30 Best Hispanic Heritage Month Quotes From Famous Icons \(today.com\)](https://www.today.com/30-best-hispanic-heritage-month-quotes-from-famous-icons-rcna111111)

Quotes: Hispanic American Creators, Activists, and Other Famous Figures

“When Latinx kids don’t see themselves represented on stage or film or television or newspapers or history textbooks, what they’re told is, ‘You don’t matter. But when they see themselves represented, then they are told ... ‘You are important. You are authors. You are scientists. You are explorers. You are special. You are leaders. You are respected. You are the reason we are here.’”

John Leguizamo

“If you have a chance to accomplish something that will make things better for people coming behind you, and you don’t do that, you are wasting your time on this Earth.”

Roberto Clemente

“I tell students that the opportunities I had were a result of having a good educational background. Education is what allows you to stand out.”

Ellen Ochoa

"My weapon has always been language, and I’ve always used it, but it has changed. Instead of shaping the words like knives now, I think they’re flowers or bridges."

Sandra Cisneros

“No particular race is the enemy. Ignorance is the enemy.”

George Lopez

“My mother gave me one piece of advice that stuck with me. She said, ‘Don’t forget where you came from.’”

Eva Longoria

“I believe that fortitude is key. More than anything, be consistent. Go at it. Go at it. Go at it. When you succeed, don’t forget the responsibility of making somebody else succeed with you.”

Antonia Novello

“You cannot reap what you have not sown. How are we going to reap love in our community, if we only sow hate?”

Saint Óscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez

[30 Best Hispanic Heritage Month Quotes From Famous Icons \(today.com\)](https://www.today.com/30-best-hispanic-heritage-month-quotes-from-famous-icons)