

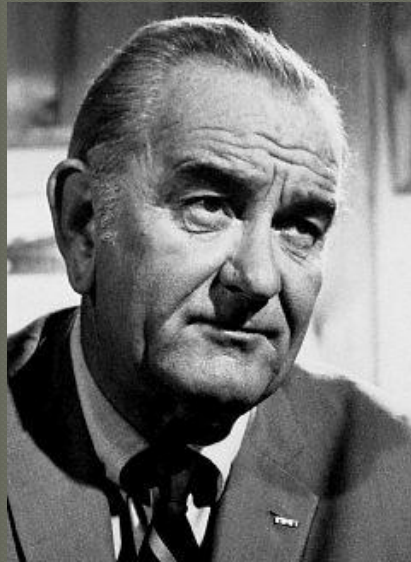
Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15–October 15, 2011

Many Backgrounds, Many
Stories...One American Spirit

Hispanic Heritage Month

In September 1968, Congress authorized President Lyndon B. Johnson to proclaim National Hispanic Heritage Week which was to be observed during the week that included September 15th and 16th.



Courtesy of the White House

Hispanic Heritage Month

In 1988, President Ronald Reagan expanded the observance to become Hispanic Heritage Month beginning on September 15th and ending on October 15th.



Courtesy of the White House

Hispanic Heritage Month

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.

Hispanic Heritage Month

As of April 1, 2010, the estimated Hispanic population of the United States was 50.5 million, making people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest ethnic or race minority.



Hispanics constituted 16.3 percent of the nation's total population.

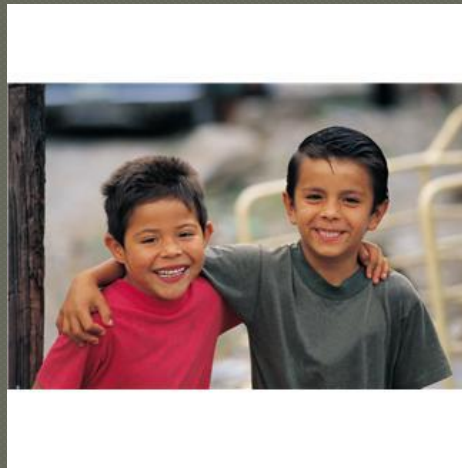
Hispanic Heritage Month

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Hispanics of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban descent remain the nation's three largest Hispanic country-of-origin groups.

However, while the relative position of these groups has remained unchanged since 2000, the next four Hispanic subgroups—Salvadorans, Dominicans, Guatemalans, and Colombians—grew faster during the last decade.

Hispanic Heritage Month

More than one of every two people added to the nation's population between July 1, 2008 and July 1, 2009 was Hispanic.



132.8 million is the projected Hispanic population of the United States by July 1, 2050. According to this projection, Hispanics will constitute 30 percent of the nation's population by that date.

Hispanic Heritage Month

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.



Hispanic Heritage Month

President Barack Obama said in his 2010 Presidential Proclamation honoring National Hispanic Heritage Month,

“...As members of the armed forces, heroic Hispanic men and women have also fought and died to defend the liberties and security of the United States in every war since the American Revolution, many serving before becoming American citizens.”

Hispanic Heritage Month

“This month, we honor Hispanics for enriching the fabric of America, even as we recognize and rededicate ourselves to addressing the challenges to equality and opportunity that many Hispanics still face.

In reflecting on our Nation's rich Hispanic heritage, let us take pride in our unique and vibrant history, and recommit to a shared future of freedom, prosperity, and opportunity for all.”

—President Barack Obama

Hispanic Heritage Month

Sergeant First Class Augustin Ramos Calero



Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Hispanic Heritage Month

Sergeant First Class Augustin Ramos Calero, nicknamed a “One-Man Army” by his comrades, single-handedly killed 11 Germans and captured another 21 in a World War II battle in France.

One of 500,000 Hispanics to serve during World War II, he was wounded five times during the war. He received 22 medals, including a Silver Star and a Purple Heart, making him the most decorated Latino in World War II.

Hispanic Heritage Month

Lieutenant Junior Grade Everett Alvarez, Jr., an A4C Skyhawk pilot was hit by enemy fire during the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and became the first American pilot shot down over North Vietnam and the first Prisoner of War (P.O.W.).



Courtesy of Military Times Hall of Valor

Hispanic Heritage Month

Alvarez was one of the longest-held American prisoners of war in American history.

He was interned in North Vietnam from August 5, 1964 until his release on February 12, 1973.



Courtesy of Military Times Hall of Valor

Hispanic Heritage Month

Everett Alvarez, Jr. returned to his hometown a hero, earning the Silver Star, two Legions of Merit, two Bronze Stars, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and two Purple Hearts.



Hispanic Heritage Month

Corporal Ramona M. Valdez wanted to serve her country and make her immigrant mom proud.



Courtesy of the U.S.M.C.

In the end, Valdez, a Bronx native, was one of six U.S. military personnel—four of them women—killed in Iraq when a suicide bomber struck their convoy near Fallujah.

Hispanic Heritage Month

Corporal Valdez was killed, four days before her 21st birthday. She and fellow servicewomen, Lance Corporal Holly Charette and Navy Petty Officer First Class Regina Clark, were posthumously awarded the Purple Heart.



Hispanic Heritage Month

In Iraq, on November 15, 2004, Mexico City-born Sergeant Rafael Peralta, United States Marine Corps, became a hero.



Courtesy of the U.S.M.C.

The day he was officially recognized as a resident of the U.S., he joined the Marines.

Hispanic Heritage Month

The Marines led an assault in November 2004, in Fallujah and Sergeant Peralta, a scout team leader, was shot multiple times.

Mortally wounded, he dropped to the floor to allow the Marines behind him to return fire. The insurgents threw a grenade into the room. Still conscious, he reached for the grenade and pulled it under his body, killing him, but saving the lives of his fellow Marines.

Hispanic Heritage Month

For undaunted courage and intrepid fighting spirit, Sergeant Rafael Peralta was awarded the second highest American medal—the Navy Cross.



Hispanic Heritage Month

Specialist Juan Sebastian Restrepo, a 20-year-old Columbian-American Army airborne combat medic, died July 22, 2007 in Afghanistan's deadly Korengal Valley of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit using small-arms fire.

Two months later, his platoon built a new outpost where he died and named it OP Restrepo.

In April of 2010, all Americans were pulled out of the Korengal Valley area. Military leaders had concluded that holding posts weren't worth the cost in American lives.

Hispanic Heritage Month

He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Basic Parachutist Badge, and the Combat Medical Badge.



Courtesy of the U. S. Army

Hispanic Heritage Month

Second Lieutenant Emily Perez, a West Point graduate and the military academy's first female minority Cadet Command Sergeant Major, also made history as the first female West Point graduate to be killed in Iraq.

She was killed when a roadside bomb exploded as she led her platoon in a convoy south of Baghdad on September 12, 2006.

Hispanic Heritage Month

Perez, an African American and Latina, received the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and Combat Action badge, among other awards. She posthumously received the NCAA Award of Valor.



Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Hispanic Heritage Month

“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

Bibliography

<http://2010.census.gov/2010census/>

<http://www.womensmemorial.org/Education/WHM08KitUSMC.html>

<http://www.west-point.org/users/usma2005/61938/>

<http://www.borinqueneers.com/node/334>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/09/15/presidential-proclamation-national-hispanic-heritage-month>

<http://militarytimes.com/valor/army-pfc-juan-s-restrepo/2929222>

<http://militarytimes.com/valor/marine-cpl-ramona-m-valdez/943339>

<http://marines.dodlive.mil/2010/09/02/honoring-a-heros-sacrifice-sgt-rafael-peralta/>

<http://militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php>

http://www.trueknowledge.com/q/facts_about__agustin_ramos_calero

<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1540856-1,00.html>

**Prepared by Dawn W. Smith
on behalf of the Defense Equal
Opportunity Management Institute
Patrick Air Force Base, Florida
September 2011**

All photographs are public domain and are from various sources as cited.

The findings in this report are not to be construed as an official DEOMI, U.S. military services, or Department of Defense position, unless designated by other authorized documents.