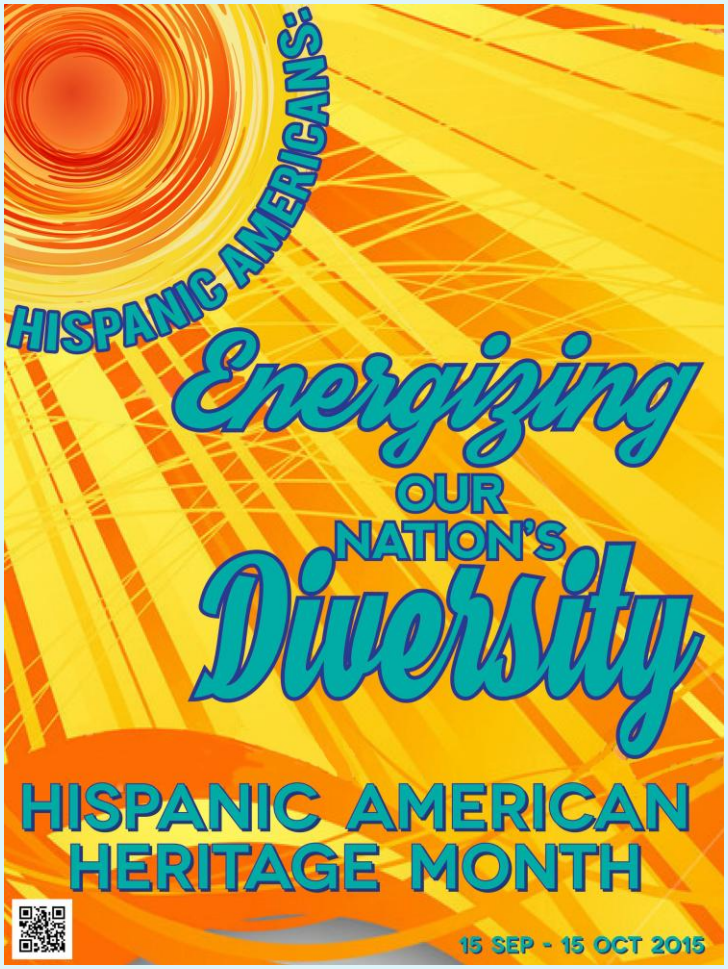
Hispanic Heritage Month
15 Sept – 15 Oct 2015

HISPANIC AMERICANS: ENERGIZING OUR NATION'S DIVERSITY

Hispanic Heritage Month

Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from 15 September - 15 October to celebrate the contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America.

Hispanic Heritage Month



This year's theme, chosen by the National Council of Hispanic Employment Managers is: "Hispanic Americans: Energizing Our Nation's Diversity."

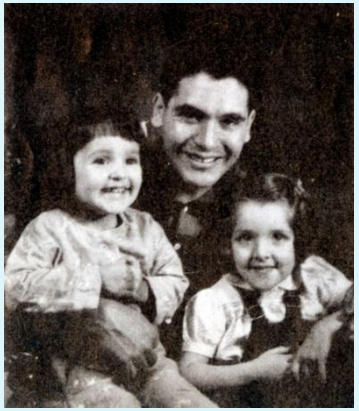
Hispanic Heritage Month

America's diversity has always been one of our nation's greatest strengths. Hispanic Americans have long played an integral role in America's rich culture, proud heritage, and the building of this great nation.

This year's theme invites us to reflect on Hispanic Americans' vitality and meaningful legacy in our Nation's cultural framework.

Hispanic Heritage Month

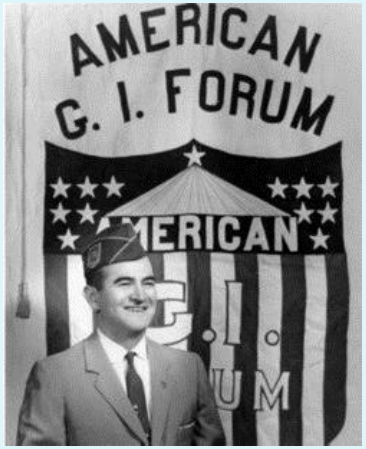
As World War II sets in, many Latinos enlist in the U.S. military—proportionately the largest ethnic group serving in the war.



1940s

Dr. Albert Baez, together with Paul Kirkpatrick, develops the first X-ray microscope to observe living cells. His daughter, Joan Baez, will become a world famous writer, singer, and a human rights activist.

Hispanic Heritage Month



Dr. Héctor P. García, a physician and decorated World War II veteran, founds the American G.I. Forum, an organization created to ensure that Hispanic veterans receive benefits provided under the G.I. Bill of Rights of 1944.

Macario García becomes the first Mexican national to receive a U.S. Congressional Medal of Honor, yet is refused service at the Oasis Café near his home in Texas.

1940s

Hispanic Heritage Month

Physicist Luis Walter Alvarez leaves his post at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to join the Manhattan Project to develop the first atomic bomb. He is responsible for the development of the triggering device used in the first plutonium bomb.

Second Lieutenant Carmen Maria Lozano Dumler, becomes the first Puerto Rican woman to become a United States Army officer.

1940s

Hispanic Heritage Month

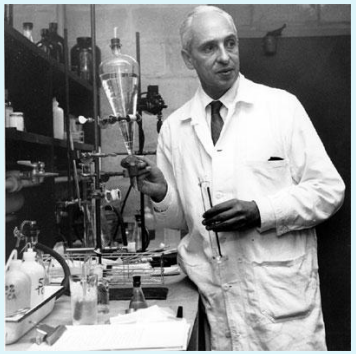
Ritchie Valens becomes the first Hispanic rock star with his hit recording of *Come On, Let's Go.* He also is the first Mexican American rocker to be featured on American Bandstand. Valens is considered the first Latino to successfully cross over into mainstream rock.

Venezuelan shortstop Luis Aparicio becomes the first Hispanic American in U.S. professional baseball to be named Rookie of the Year.

1950s

Hispanic Heritage Month

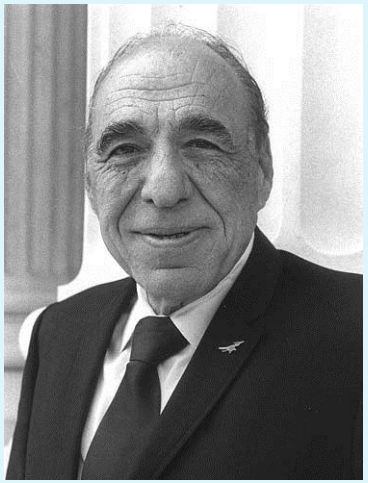
Captain Manuel J. Fernandez Jr., flies 125 combat missions during the Korean War. His 14.5 victories place him among the top U.S. Air Force aces of the two world wars and the Korean War combined.



1950s

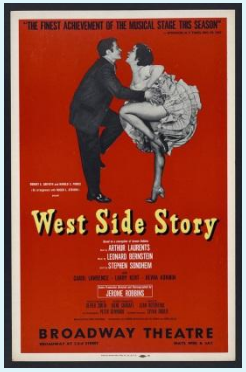
Biochemist Severo Ochoa becomes the first Hispanic to win a Nobel Prize in physiology for the synthesis of ribonucleic acid (RNA). He shares the prize with former student Arthur Kornberg.

Hispanic Heritage Month



Henry B. Gonzalez attracts national attention for holding the longest filibuster (36 hours) in the history of the Texas Legislature. He succeeds in stopping segregation bills aimed at circumventing the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the Brown v. Board of Education case.

The landmark production of West Side Story premieres on Broadway, chronicling the racial tensions of the '40s and '50s.



1950s

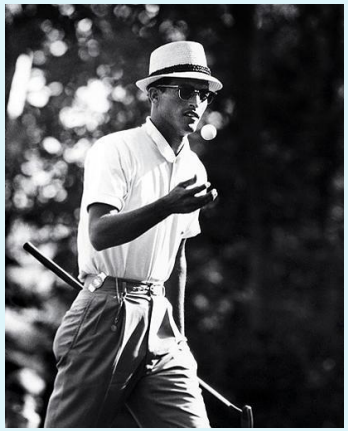
Hispanic Heritage Month

Horacio Rivero Jr. becomes the first Puerto Rican and Hispanic four-star Admiral, and second Hispanic to become a full Admiral in the modern U.S. Navy.

West Side Story is made into a film; the role of Anita goes to Rita Moreno, who takes home an Academy Award for her performance.

1960s

Hispanic Heritage Month

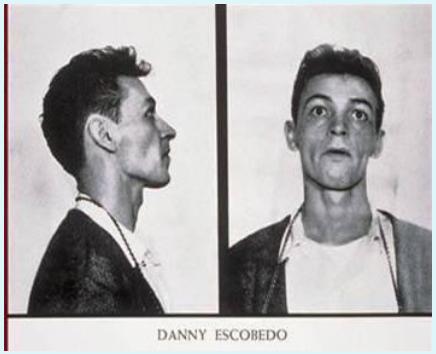


Juan "Chi Chi" Rodriguez, who found his way into golf as a caddy, becomes the first Puerto Rican and first Hispanic golfer to win the Denver Open. He will become one of professional golf's all time greats.

1960s

The first bilingual education program in public schools begins at Coral Way Elementary School in Miami. The experimental program serves as a model for Congress in its 1968 passage of the Bilingual Education Act.

Hispanic Heritage Month



The Supreme Court reverses the conviction of Daniel Escobedo, ruling that the police violated his constitutional rights by refusing his request for a lawyer. This verdict lays the foundation for the Miranda decision requiring police to inform suspects of their rights.

Rose Franco is the first female Puerto Rican Chief Warrant Officer in the U.S. Marine Corps. She is later named Administrative Assistant to Paul Henry Nitze, the Secretary of the Navy.

1960s

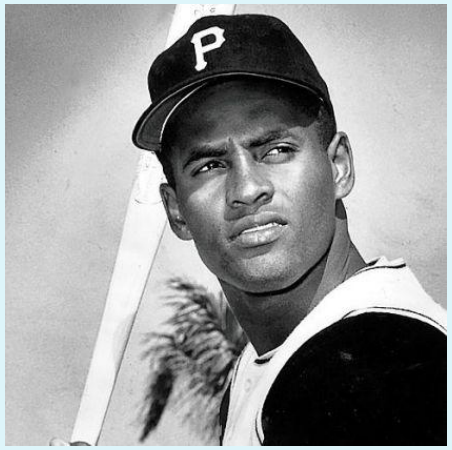
Hispanic Heritage Month

Nancy Lopez becomes the first golfer to win the Rookie of the Year Award, Player of the Year Award, and Vare Trophy in the same season. She will become the first woman to receive the Frances Ouimet Award for lifelong contributions to golf.

1970s

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus is founded to provide Hispanic congressmen and senators the opportunity to strengthen roles of Hispanics at all levels of government.

Hispanic Heritage Month



Roberto Clemente becomes the first Puerto Rican baseball player to be named to the Hall of Fame. He will serve later on fourteen all-star teams, and will become one of sixteen players to have 3,000 hits during his career.

Romana Acosta Bañuelos becomes the nation's 34th treasurer and the first Latina in the position in U.S. history. She is also a founding member of Executive Women in 1970s Government.

Hispanic Heritage Month

Everett Alvarez Jr., a U.S. Navy Commander who endured one of the longest periods (over eight years) as a prisoner of war, is released. He was the first pilot to be downed and detained during the Vietnam War.

Master Sergeant Juan J. Valdez, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the Marine security guard detachment at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon, is the last U.S. serviceman to leave Vietnam.

1970s

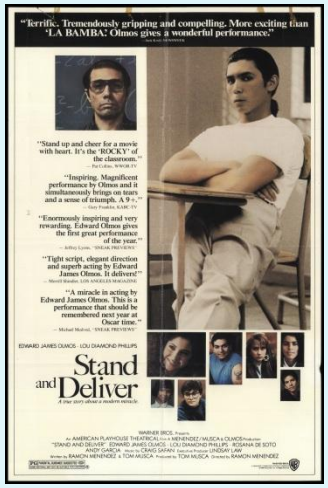
Hispanic Heritage Month

Lieutenant Olga E. Custodio becomes the first Latina to complete U.S. Air Force military pilot training and the first woman T-38 Talon flight instructor. After retiring, she will become the first Latina commercial airline captain.

1980s

Gloria Anzaldua publishes her nonfiction book *Boderlands/La frontera: the New Mestiza*. It becomes one of the most influential books written by a Latina for the next 25 years.

Hispanic Heritage Month



Stand and Deliver is the first Hollywood feature film where the entire film—scripting, producing, financing, directing, and acting—is conducted by Hispanics. The film is the true story of Jamie Escalante, a Bolivian math teacher, in East Los Angeles, who prepares poor, inner city students for college.

1980s

Franklin Chang-Diaz becomes the first Hispanic in space. He speaks in Spanish to TV viewers from the space shuttle *Columbia*.

Hispanic Heritage Month

Army Master Sgt. Roy Benavidez is awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his remarkable feats of valor in the Vietnam War. During the presentation, the president remarked, *"If the story of his heroism were a movie script, you would not believe it."*

Richard E. Cavazos, a Korean War recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross makes military history as he is appointed the U.S. Army's first Hispanic four-star general.

1980s

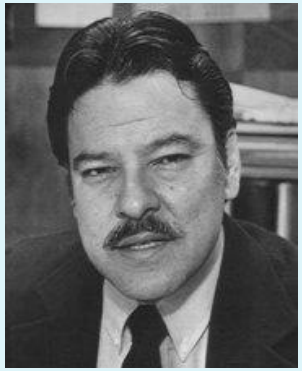
Hispanic Heritage Month

Ellen Ochoa becomes the first female Hispanic astronaut. She will fly on two more NASA Space Shuttle flights, and log over 719 hours in space.

1990s

Antonia Novello becomes the first Hispanic and first female Surgeon General. During her tenure, she concentrated on AIDS prevention, underage smoking, and women's health.

Hispanic Heritage Month



The Presidential Medal of Freedom is posthumously awarded to William "Willie" Velasquez, founder of the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project. His efforts empowered thousands of Hispanics to participate in the electoral process.

1990s

The guided missile destroyer *Sergeant Alfredo Gonzales* is the first U.S. Navy ship to be named for a Hispanic service member (a Medal of Honor recipient who was killed in Vietnam).

Hispanic Heritage Month

Oscar De La Hoya, at the age of 19, wins a gold medal for boxing at the Olympics. He will go on to win ten world titles in six weight classes, and become one of the most popular boxers in the history of the sport.

1990s

Gigi Fernandez becomes the first Puerto Rican professional women's tennis player to rank in the world's top 20 best players. She will go on to win six Grand Slam women's doubles titles and become the first Puerto Rican to win Olympic gold.

Hispanic Heritage Month

Ronald Rabago becomes the first Hispanic to be promoted to Rear Admiral in the U.S. Coast Guard. Additionally, he plays a critical role in initiating science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs for economically disadvantaged high school students.

Sonia Sotomayor becomes the first Hispanic Supreme Court Justice and the third woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

2000s

Hispanic Heritage Month

Alfred Rascon is awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic service in Vietnam at a White House ceremony with the men he had saved looking on.

2000S

Second Lieutenant Emily Perez, a West Point graduate and the military academy's first female minority Cadet Command Sergeant Major, is the first female West Point graduate to be killed in Iraq. She posthumously received the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and Combat Action badge.

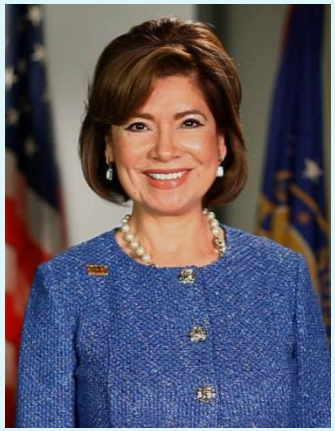
Hispanic Heritage Month

Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis becomes the first Hispanic female Cabinet member. She was also the first woman to receive the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award for her pioneering work on environmental justice issues.

Angela Salinas becomes the first Hispanic woman to hold the rank of Brigadier General. She is also the first woman in Marine Corps history to lead one of its two recruit training facilities.

2000s

Hispanic Heritage Month



Maria Contreras-Sweet is nominated by President Barack Obama to join his Cabinet as head of the Small Business Administration. She becomes the 24th Administrator.

Julie Chávez Rodriguez, granddaughter of César Chávez, becomes Deputy Director of Public Engagement at the White House. In this role, she coordinates the White House's efforts surrounding immigration reform and outreach to the Latino community.

2010s

Hispanic Heritage Month

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

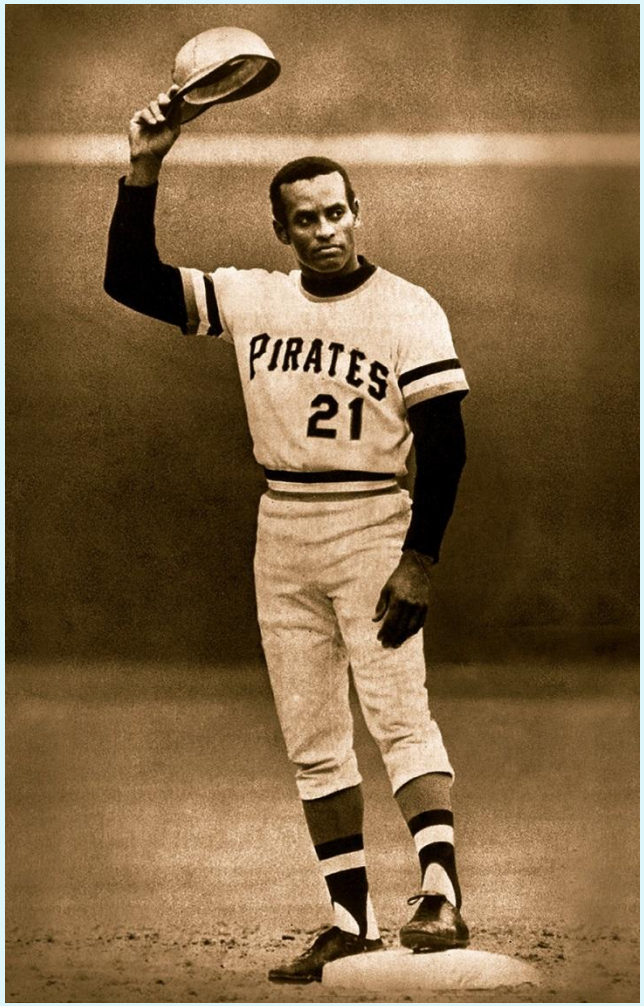
2010s

Hispanic Heritage Month

These individuals—along with many other Hispanic Americans—have energized our nation's diversity.

Hispanic Americans continue to shape our country in a myriad of areas through their strong commitment to family, faith, ingenuity, hard work, and public service.

Hispanic Heritage Month



"Any time you have an opportunity to make a difference in this world and you don't, then you are wasting your time on this earth."

—Roberto Clemente
(1934 - 1972)

Sources

- http://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/HAIC/Hispanic-Americans-in-Congress/
- http://www.pbs.org/latino-americans/en/timeline/
- https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/10/president-obama-names-recipients-presidential-medal-freedom
- http://www.hispanicheritagemonth.gov/about/
- http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0914_hispanic-heritage/
- http://www.hispanicheritagemonth.gov/collections/
- https://www.whitehouse.gov/engage/office
- http://execwomeningov.org/
- http://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/valor24/

Prepared by the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, Patrick Air Force Base, Florida September 2015

Dawn W. Smith

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 the Department of Defense position, unless designated by other authorized documents.