



Information Resources Center  
U.S. Embassy, Bogota D.C., Colombia

# Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15th to October 15 th, 2008



(Born in Los Angeles) America Ferrera is an actress best known for her lead role as Betty Suarez in the television series Ugly Betty

Throughout the years, Americans have witnessed the role that Hispanic-Americans have played in the U.S., contributing to the development of the Nation; they have been remarkably positioned in different areas of interest, such as education, science, medicine, sports, law and Business among others. September 15 to October 15 is the time chosen as **National Hispanic Heritage Month**, to recognize and celebrate the different ways Hispanics make a positive impact on every community in the United States of America.

According to History this month matches with some other important facts related to Hispanic Culture, for example Sept. 15th is the anniversary of independence for some Latin American countries such as Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on Sept. 16th and Sept.18th, respectively. And Columbus Day or Día de la Raza that is on Oct. 12th falls within this 30 day period.

## Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation



“During National Hispanic Heritage Month, we recognize the many Americans of Hispanic descent who have made outstanding contributions to our Nation.

The rich cultural traditions of the Hispanic-American community have made a remarkable impact on American society. The diverse backgrounds of Hispanic Americans and their dedication to family have become an integral part of

Hispanic Heritage Month honors the diverse people of Spanish-speaking backgrounds in the United States. The celebration of Hispanic Heritage began on a national scale in 1968 with Public Law 90-498, which authorized an annual presidential proclamation.

Hispanic Americans contribute to America's cultural diversity in a multitude of ways. Many excel in the arts, and Hispanic names can be found in any survey of prominent U.S. writers, painters, sculptors, actors, singers, filmmakers and fashion designers.

Taken from America.gov

<http://www.america.gov/st/diversity-english/2008/September/20050906114016pssnikwad0.5023157.html?CP.rss=true>

It has been 40 years since the celebration of the Hispanic Heritage began under observation of Ex President **Lyndon Johnson**. It was originally celebrated for a week but later in 1988 it was expanded to a month-long celebration by proclamation of Ex President **Ronald Reagan** approving Public Law 100-402.

Department of State

<http://bogota.usembassy.gov> Email: [infoUSA-colombia@state.gov](mailto:infoUSA-colombia@state.gov)

America. With a deep commitment to faith and a strong desire to live the American dream, these citizens are realizing the full blessings of liberty. Educational opportunities are helping a new generation work toward success, and many Hispanic Americans operate thriving small businesses.

We also honor Hispanic Americans for their strong tradition of service in the Armed Forces. These proud patriots have fought in every war since our founding, and many have earned the Medal of Honor for their courage. Hispanic service men and women have shown their love for the United States by answering the call to serve, and we owe them and their families a tremendous debt of gratitude. Their patriotism and valor have added to the character of our Nation.

National Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity to celebrate the spirit and accomplishments of Hispanic Americans everywhere. To honor those achievements, the Congress, by Public Law 100-402, as amended, has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation designating September 15 through October 15 as "National Hispanic Heritage Month."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 15 through October 15, 2008, as National Hispanic Heritage Month. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twelfth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-third.

GEORGE W. BUSH

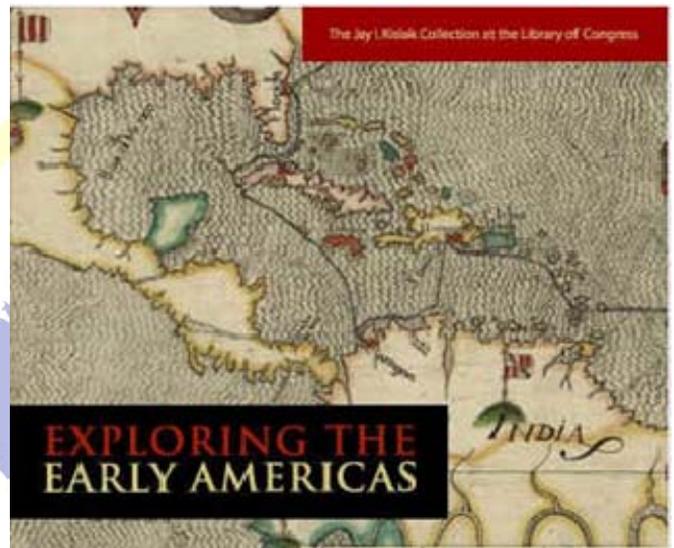
Taken from [America.gov](http://www.america.gov)

<http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/September/20080912165613eaifas8.280581e-02.html>

### ***The word 'Hispanic' does not define a nationality or a race. It describes a culture. So, who is Hispanic?***

The word 'Hispanic' is actually a cultural or ethnic term. There is no single Hispanic nationality. Hispanics come from many races. Hispanic bloodlines include Mayan, Aztec, Spanish, Mexican, and many others. The Hispanic classification draws from more than 20 nations!

The United States Census Bureau classifies Hispanics as Americans who trace their ancestry to Mexico, Puerto Rico,



Cuba, Spain, the Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America, the Dominican Republic and other Spanish cultures, regardless of race. The Bureau excludes people from countries where Spanish is not the primary language spoken--such as Brazil, Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad, Belize and Portugal.

Latinos, Chicanos and Hispanos are among the many groups of Hispanic people living in the United States. The term Hispanic was created by the US Government to bring together a large and varied population. There are Indo-Hispanics and Afro-Hispanics, Cuban-Americans and Mexican-Americans, to name but a few. Some of the recognized group names in use today are:

***Hispanic*** - used by Cubans, Puerto Ricans and other Caribbean people who consider their cultural heritage linked to Spain.

***Latino*** (Latina for women) - used by descendants of Latin America (Mexico, Central America, and South America).

***Chicano*** (Chicana for women) - used by people of Mexican ancestry wishing to distinguish their heritage from those of other Latin American countries. The term Mexican-American is becoming a popular replacement.

***Hispano*** (Hispana for women) - used by the direct descendants of Spanish conquistadors and other Spanish settlers of the US southwest (who did not immigrate from Latin America).

Taken from [www.homeschoollearning.com](http://www.homeschoollearning.com)

## Hispanic Vote

Hispanics, a rapidly growing segment of the U.S. population, could play a deciding role in a close presidential election, and campaigns are making enormous efforts to attract those potential voters and turn them out on Election Day. Hispanics now account for some 9 percent of the U.S. electorate and are the nation's fastest-growing minority group. A U.S. Census Bureau report released August 14 projects their numbers will nearly triple by the year 2050, to about one-third of the population.

Both Obama and McCain spoke in July at the annual convention of the National Council of La Raza, a major Hispanic advocacy group, they emphasized education, health care and housing, along with immigration reform and other border issues.

<http://www.america.gov/st/elections08-english/2008/August/20080819181648rressiehnnad0.1129267.html>

## Schools welcome more Hispanic students

Many U.S. schools already have Spanish-language versions of their Web sites and school bulletin boards, and bilingual front office staff or Spanish-speaking "parent liaisons". Some have developed Spanish-language videos to provide school information. Most schools can conduct meetings with parents in Spanish as well as English or provide devices for simultaneous translation.

The State of Latinos 2008: Defining an Agenda for the Future, highlights the dropout rate among Hispanic students (three times greater than that for white students and twice that for African-American students) and the persistent achievement gap from pre-school to graduate school.

<http://www.america.gov/st/educ-english/2008/September/200809051137441CJsamohT0.2212488.html>

## IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT HISPANIC HERITAGE

### 45.5 million

The estimated Hispanic population of the United States as of July 1, 2007, making people of Hispanic origin the nation's largest ethnic or race minority. Hispanics constituted 15 percent of the nation's total population. There are approximately 3.9 million residents of Puerto Rico.

### About 1

. . . of every two people added to the nation's population between July 1, 2006, and July 1, 2007, was Hispanic. There were 1.4 million Hispanics added to the population during the period.



### 132.8 million

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

### 64%

The percentage of Hispanic-origin people in the United States who are of Mexican background. Another 9 percent are of Puerto Rican background, with 3.4 percent Cuban, 3.1 percent Salvadoran and 2.8 percent Dominican. The remainders are of some other Central American, South American or other Hispanic or Latino origin

Taken from U.S. Census Bureau

<http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/012496.html>>

## LATINOS IN HISTORY

This content resource provides biographies of key *Hispanic* Americans

### Born between 1901 - 1949



### Severo Ochoa

Nobel Prize Winner in Medicine and Physiology Spanish American 1905–1993

Severo Ochoa won the Nobel Prize in 1959 for medicine. He received the prize for his

discovery of the process that would allow humans to create RNA in a test tube — a vital life substance that makes cells work and grow. This knowledge can be useful in understanding many things about the body, like why some cells stay healthy while tumors grow in others.



### María Irene Fornés

Playwright, Cuban American  
Born 1930

María Irene Fornés has written more than 35 plays, many of them about the lives of Latinos and women. She has won six Obie Awards — the highest award for off-Broadway plays

— plus many other honors. She helps young Latinos get started in the theater



### Rita Moreno

Actor, Puerto Rican  
Born 1932

Rita Moreno is one of only two female performers ever to be given all four of entertainment's biggest awards. She has won a Tony, for theater; a

Grammy, for music; an Emmy, for television; and an Oscar for her role in the musical *West Side Story*. (Barbara Streisand is the other.) She has acted in more than 25 movies and has performed for the president of the United States.

### Federico Peña



Former United States Secretary of Transportation, Former Secretary of Energy, Mexican American  
Born 1947

Federico Peña was the highest-ranking Hispanic member of President Bill Clinton's administration. He worked to improve the safety of jets and planes as Secretary of Transportation from 1993–97. Then Peña became Secretary of Energy, from 1997 to 1998. In that position, Peña focused on improving energy research and supporting schools in getting access to the Internet, among other efforts.

### Born 1950 and after



### Gloria Estefan

Singer and Musician, Cuban American  
Born 1957

Gloria Estefan has been loved and admired by people throughout the world not only for her music, but for her bravery in the face of difficulties.

Born in Cuba, Estefan came to Miami, Florida, as a young child when her parents fled the Communist government of Fidel Castro. In the late 1970s, she became a singer with the group Miami Sound Machine. The group became very famous. Estefan won awards for her music and for her work on causes such as campaigning against drugs.



### Ellen Ochoa

Astronaut, Mexican American  
Born 1958

Ellen Ochoa was the first Hispanic woman to become an astronaut. A veteran of two space flights, she first flew in space on the shuttle *Discovery* in 1993. Sally Ride, the first woman astronaut in the U.S., was one of her role models. Ochoa is not only an astronaut but also an inventor, holding three patents. When she is in space, she says that she loves "looking out the window at the Earth."

Taken from: <http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/hispanic/history.htm>

To know more about Hispanic History in the Americas, click on the following links:

[http://amlife.america.gov/amlife/diversity/hispanic\\_heritage.html](http://amlife.america.gov/amlife/diversity/hispanic_heritage.html)

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/hispanic/americas.htm>

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/hispanic/meet.htm>

For other publications on Hispanic History download the e-journal:

### Immigrants Joining the Mainstream (e-journal)

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itsv/0208/ijse/ijse0208.pdf#popup>



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