
Presidential Documents

Title 3—

Proclamation 7220 of September 14, 1999

The President

National Hispanic Heritage Month, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

During National Hispanic Heritage Month, we reflect on the history of a people who were part of this land long before the birth of the United States. Hispanics were among the earliest European settlers in the New World, and Hispanics as a people—like their many cultures—share a rich history and great diversity. Hispanic Americans have roots in Europe, Africa, and South and Central America and close cultural ties to Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, South America, and Spain. This diversity has brought variety and richness to the mosaic that is America and has strengthened our national character with invaluable perspective, experiences, and values.

Through the years, Hispanic Americans have played an integral role in our Nation's success in science, the arts, business, government, and every other field of endeavor, and their talent, creativity, and achievements continue to energize our national life. For example, Hispanic Americans serve as NASA astronauts, including Dr. Ellen Ochoa, the first Hispanic woman in space. Mario Molina of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology shared a Nobel Prize in chemistry for research that raised awareness of the threat that chlorofluorocarbons pose to the earth's protective ozone layer. Cuban-American writer Oscar Hijuelos earned a Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

The achievements of today's Hispanic Americans build upon a long tradition of contributions by Hispanics in many varied fields. Before Dr. Ochoa and other Hispanic Americans began to explore the frontiers of space, Hernando de Soto and Francisco Vázquez de Coronado ventured into the vast uncharted land of the New World. A thousand years before Mario Molina calculated the effects of human actions on the atmosphere, Mayan priests accurately predicted solar and lunar eclipses. And before Oscar Hijuelos described a Cuban family's emigration to 1940s America, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra gave us the classic adventures of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

Today, people of Hispanic heritage are an increasingly important and growing segment of our Nation's population. Studies show that, in just a few years, Hispanics will form the largest minority group in the United States. In little more than a decade, Hispanic Americans will wield buying power of nearly \$1 trillion per year. And by the middle of the next century, if population trends continue, almost one-fourth of our population will be Spanish-speaking. The success of these citizens is vital to our continued national prosperity, and we must ensure that they are empowered with the tools and opportunities they need to thrive in the next century.

That is why my Administration has worked to widen the circle of economic opportunity, enforce our civil rights laws, invest in health and education, and promote racial reconciliation. We have launched a major initiative to mobilize the resources and expertise of the Federal Government, the private sector, and local communities to end racial and ethnic disparities in health conditions and health care. We established the first-ever Office of Minority Health Research and Alternative Medicine at the National Institutes of Health. We also have sought to expand our Hispanic Education Action Plan with an additional \$480 million for improving educational programs and institutions serving high concentrations of Hispanic students. We cannot seize

the enormous opportunities of the 21st century if a large percentage of our children lack the skills and knowledge they need to reach their full potential.

In honor of the many contributions that Hispanic Americans have made and continue to make to our Nation and our culture, the Congress, by Public Law 100-402, 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, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 15 through October 15, 1999, as National Hispanic Heritage Month. I call upon government officials, educators, and the people of the United States to honor this observance with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs, and I encourage all Americans to rededicate themselves to the pursuit of equality.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

