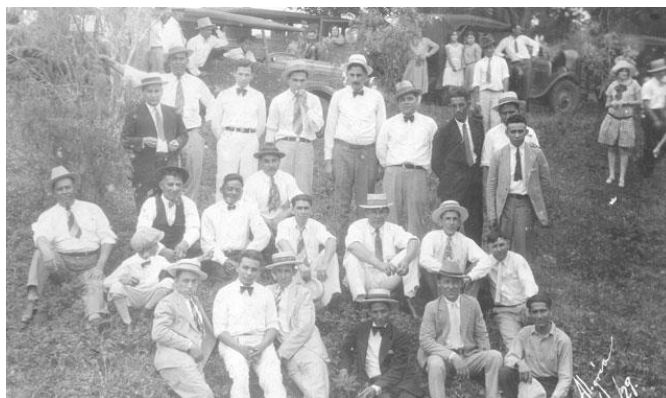


Hispanic Heritage Month What it Truly Means to Us



There are some words that just can't be translated without losing their deeper meaning. It's like making Abuelitas's favorite recipe for caldo and leaving out one of her secret ingredients. The flavor may still be good but some of her special love is missing.



That's the same way with observing Hispanic Heritage Month. The word "heritage", English for herencia, doesn't fully do justice to what that word means to us as Latinos. Herencia is the specialness of our ancestors, their gift to us of everything they lived, believed and treasured --- including our dichos, costumbres and consejos. Our Latino

herencia is on display and celebrated September 15 – October 15 every year in the United States as Hispanic Heritage Month. Often, the focus is on showcasing the contemporary presence of our cultura through festivals, concerts and exhibitions that recognize who and what we are today, a living, vibrant beat in the pulse of our nation, including our beloved Puerto Rico.



Yet, ours is also a heritage steeped in the centuries of the Americas long before explorers from afar “discovered” us. We are the descendants of visionary engineers who designed and constructed amazing pirámides in the Yucatan, the intricate land carvings of Nazca in Peru and the complex aqueducts of Tenochtitlán (modern-day Mexico City). So too, we are the children of the brilliant Mayan astronomer mathematicians whose calendar is described by scientists today as the most synchronized with our universe. And we are the offspring of the gifted artists from the Olmecs, Aztecs and Inca who worked in clay, chalk and finely-crafted gold and silver to leave us enduring creations of their lives and times. Yes, our herencia is so much more than one month alone can honor or highlight.



Today, our proudest heritage is on display year-round for America to witness. It is our collective talents and skills as Latinos in all walks of life --- men and women in construction trades who rise before dawn each day to build our communities, teachers

devoted to exploring and developing the minds of children in school classrooms, chefs and their kitchen staffs creating the most delicious cuisines plus every other job from entrepreneurs to professionals in all the corners of our country and La Bella Isla. This is the Latino herencia --- the gifts from our generations past and others we are yet discovering that are transforming the landscape of the United States into a stronger, more embracing society because of its diversity. Equally important, our herencia requires us to speak out against social injustice and to advocate for those who are unable to defend themselves in the face of oppression.



Our LULAC familia welcomes Hispanic Heritage Month as an opportunity to remind political leaders in the United States of our presence and contributions in a country which is our home too. Together, we can create an even greater legacy for future generations, a nation borne out of the ancient spirit of the Americas, the herencia of a stronger people founded on the principle of respect for each individual man and woman.

¡Que Viva LULAC!