

National Hispanic Heritage Month

“TODOS SOMOS, SOMOS UNO: WE ARE ALL, WE ARE ONE”

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National Hispanic Heritage Month

National Hispanic Heritage Month (NHHM) is celebrated from September 15th through October 15th. Each year the Department of Defense, along with the rest of the Nation, recognizes the important contributions and rich culture of Hispanic Americans.

National Hispanic Heritage Month coincides with important dates in many communities and encompasses independence days for several Latin American countries. NHHM is the only Department of Defense cultural observances that always spans over multiple months.

Theme

Jennifer Lasko, Human Resources Specialist and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Advisor at the Bureau of Fiscal Service, U.S. Department of the Treasury submitted the winning theme, *“Todos Somos, Somos Uno: We Are All, We Are One.”*

She said, “I thought of this theme in retrospect to how we in the Hispanic community represent so many different things (many cultures, many skin colors, many points of views) and yet we are together as one—one community, one people, one vision.”

Presentation

Diversity is inherent in the Hispanic community, and each person's story should be celebrated.

This presentation highlights Dr. Frank Rubio, Staff Sergeant Ariana Sanchez, and Sergeant José Mendoza López, and illustrates just a few of the momentous achievements by Hispanic Americans.

Dr. Frank Rubio (1 of 2)

Dr. Frank Rubio was a family physician and flight surgeon who served in the 10th Special Forces Group.

Born in California and raised in Florida, Rubio graduated from the U.S. Military Academy and the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences. During his military career he flew over 1,100 hours in a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter, to include in Bosnia and during combat tours in Afghanistan and Iraq.



Dr. Frank Rubio (2 of 2)



In 2017, Rubio reported for duty at NASA after completing two years of training as an astronaut candidate.

On September 21, 2022, Rubio traveled to the International Space Station for an initial 6-month mission.

However, this mission was extended to over a year, which will break the record for the longest mission conducted by a U.S. astronaut.

Staff Sgt. Ariana Sanchez (1 of 2)

Ariana Sanchez was born in Ecuador and moved to New Jersey at age 17. Following high school, she joined the New Jersey National Guard after learning about the military from recruiters. She became a combat engineer and volunteered for Airborne School, motivated to prove herself in a male-dominated career field.

In 2019, Sanchez completed the 28-week Sapper Leader Course, which less than 200 female soldiers have ever completed.

Her skills and achievements provided her the opportunity to become the first female course instructor for the Sapper Leader Course in 2021, inspiring more women to participate.

Staff Sgt. Ariana Sanchez (2 of 2)

[Seeing a female instructor] makes them realize that, although we are different, we are also the same. Then they go back to their unit and encourage their female soldiers to come here by telling them, “If she can do it, you can do it.”

– Staff Sgt. Ariana Sanchez



Sgt. José Mendoza López (1 of 2)



Sgt. José Mendoza López is a Latino Medal of Honor recipient. Sgt. López was orphaned at 8 years old in Mexico before moving to Texas, where he lived with his uncle.

There, he bought a false birth certificate to join the Merchant Marine. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, he joined the Army at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, at age 31.

Sgt. José Mendoza López (2 of 2)

In 1944, López fought the Germans near Krinkelt, Belgium, during the Battle of the Bulge. Protecting his company's flank, he singlehandedly fought through enemy fire and an advancing tank, slaying over 100 enemy fighters. This allowed for a successful withdrawal of Allied forces.

Lopez' gallantry earned him a Purple Heart and Bronze Star, and in 1945 Harry S. Truman presented him with the Medal of Honor. He lived until 2005.



Conclusion

This month the Department of Defense joins the nation in honoring the generations of Hispanic Americans who have influenced and enriched our nation and society.

Todos Somos, Somos Uno: We Are All, We Are One.”



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