

# Commission on Hispanic Affairs



**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:**

- Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month
- Recognizing 2008 Hispanic Contributions
- Honoring Latino Youth

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## Message from the Director

Amazing how fast this year is going and how anxious we must all be for the culmination of this electrifying 2008 presidential election. Undoubtedly a historic political season!

In the midst of this exhilaration the Commission has nevertheless remained attentive to the issues facing Hispanics in Washington State.

Allegations regarding the Everett School District Superintendent's reluctance to work with Latinos and other people of color amid other issues in the surrounding areas impelled the Commission to hold a meeting in Everett. It was imperative for us to bring to light these issues, have an affirmative dialogue with local leaders as well as community members and together attempt to clarify and find workable solutions.

Leaders from Everett and surrounding areas such as Mt. Vernon, Lynnwood, Edmonds, and Monroe were sympathetic and courteous to the comments provided by the Community. They demonstrated a good faith effort in reaching out to the communi-

ties of color and made commitments to work collectively to address institutional racism, cultural competency, provide alternatives to deter our youth from getting involved with gangs, and to advocate for an inclusive community.

The Everett public meeting which was held on August 22<sup>nd</sup> was very successful and fruitful in terms of not only attendee number and diversity, substance, leader participation, facilities and services but also the eagerness of local Latino leaders as well as other leaders to team up to address the many issues facing their communities. It was definitely a notable meeting for the Commission.

I applaud Commissioner Ortiz-Self's efforts and dedication in bringing this meeting to fruition. I would also like to acknowledge and thank our panel presenters for their participation and empathy: Jim Scharf, Everett Chief of Police, Deborah Wright, Administrative Director for Neighborhoods & Community for the City of Everett, Karst Brandsma Everett School District Interim Superintendent, Donnetta Walser, Mayor of Monroe, Carl Bruner,

Mt. Vernon School District Superintendent, Nick Brossoit, Edmonds School District Superintendent, Steve Jensen, Lynnwood Chief of Police, and Don Gough, Mayor of Lynnwood. In addition I would like to thank David Byer, President of Everett Community College for his hospitality, the First Gentleman for delivering a message from the Governor, and to the community members for their attendance and participation.

**In other News:**

Dr. Contreras from University of Washington has begun surveying Latino students and parents as well as teachers and school personnel at selected school districts throughout Washington State as part of the Achievement Gap study.

We are in the final planning stages of a leadership summit which we are co-sponsoring with the Latino Community Fund. The summit will focus on civic engagement and political involvement amongst Latinos. It is our hope that through this endeavor we can formulate goals and objectives that can heighten our level of engagement. I encourage you to participate in this upcoming event; details



## Message from the Director *continued*

of the summit are on page 5 of this Newsletter.

After several months of working in conjunction with The Washington State Latino Owned Business Outreach Committee (WALOBO), a consortium of state agency representatives that work directly with Latino owned businesses, we are at last on the brink of launching a pilot radio program providing joint outreach to monolingual

and bilingual Spanish speaking residents of the state. The objective of the project is to provide Washington Latinos with information regarding the services that are available at no cost through the state agencies.

In closing, as we honor the first admiral in the U.S. Navy, the first woman to fly a motorized aircraft, etc. during Hispanic Heritage, let's not forget to also cele-

brate and honor lesser known, but no less important people, Latinos who work every day to improve our communities throughout Washington State. I urge you to help me celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month by remembering these unsung Hispanic Heroes who work behind the scenes and help make Washington State a great place to live.

*"I urge you to help me celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month by remembering these unsung Hispanic Heroes who work behind the scenes and help make Washington State a great place to live"*

## Celebrating Hispanic Independence Day 2008



## Celebrating Hispanic Heritage 2008

Hispanic Heritage Month honors the diverse people of Spanish-speaking backgrounds in the United States. From September 15 to October 15, a multitude of special programs, events, exhibits and Web sites celebrate the heritage, culture, spirit and extraordinary contributions of Hispanic Americans.

The celebration of Hispanic Heritage began on a national scale in 1968 with Public Law 90-498, which authorized an annual presidential proclamation making the week of September 15 and 16 Hispanic Heritage Week. The designated week was selected to coincide with Independence Day celebrations on September 15 in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua; September 16 in Mexico, and September 18 in Chile.

The 1968 proclamation called on the people of the United States, especially the educational community, to observe the week with appropriate ceremonies and activities. To encourage participation, in his 1974 proclamation President Gerald R. Ford called for schools and human rights organizations to participate more fully in the week. And in 1988 President Ronald Reagan repeated Ford's call for more recognition of Hispanic Americans by approving Public Law 100-402, which expanded the celebration to Hispanic Heritage Month running from September 15 to October 15.

Hispanics are the fastest-growing minority group in the United States, according to the Census Bureau. The Hispanic population is projected to nearly triple, from almost 47 million to 133 million, from 2008 to 2050, and will jump from 15 percent to 30 percent of the population.

Today, more than ever, Hispanic Americans play an integral role in shaping the American experience. They serve as leaders in government, law, business, science, sports, the arts, and many other occupations. The influence of Hispanic culture is reflected in every aspect of American life, from politics to education to music and television.

2008 Hispanic/Latino contributions:

*Latin Jazz*, designed by San Francisco artist Michael Bartalos, is the first commemorative stamp to celebrate that vibrant style of jazz mixed with musical traditions from Africa, Europe and the Americas. It is the most recent in a long line of commemorative stamps issued by the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) honoring the contributions of peo-

ple of Hispanic background to the history and culture of the United States.

The new stamp premiered on September 8 so it would be readily available during Hispanic Heritage Month September 15-October 15.



*Latin Jazz* is the second Hispanic-themed stamp issued in 2008. In April, a series of stamps honoring U.S. journalists included Ruben Salazar, a reporter and columnist for the *Los Angeles Times* who was killed in 1970 while covering an anti-war demonstration in East Los Angeles. "He made an incredible contribution to American journalism in covering the Chicano civil rights movement.



*Mexican-American Olympic Wrestler wins Gold in 2008 Olympics* - Henry Cejudo grew up in a tough neighborhood with tough friends but did an unbelievable job of not being the victim but a winner and representing the United States honorably.

Born after his parents immigrated without papers from Mexico to the United States, Henry had a choice about what kind of life to live, and he chose to wrestle.

His hard work and determination paid off in the Beijing 2008 Olympics.

Henry Cejudo celebrates Winning the Gold in 55-Kilogram freestyle wrestling At the Beijing 2008 Olympics



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“ There are more than 1,100,000 Hispanic veterans of the United States Armed Forces .”

## Celebrating Hispanic Heritage 2008 *continued*

### *Dominican-American Author Junot Diaz Wins Pulitzer Prize for Fiction*

On April 9, 2008, Mr. Diaz’s first novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction - just one month after it won the National Book Critics Circle Award.

Diaz’s new novel follows the trials and tribulations of Dominican-American family members in their native country and in their adopted hometown of Paterson, New Jersey. The novel’s title refers to the Spanish pronunciation of “Oscar Wilde,” the 19th-century Anglo-Irish writer and dandy whose moniker serves as a nickname for Diaz’s teenage narrator, Oscar de Leon.

Born in Santo Domingo (the Dominican Republic’s capital city), Diaz emigrated to the United States at age 6, growing up in a working-class neighborhood in New Jersey. Like his novel’s protagonist, Oscar, he was a self-styled “ghetto nerd” whose love of books -- particularly science fiction -- made him a frequent target of his classmates’ taunts.

In 1992, Diaz earned a bachelor’s degree in English from Rutgers College, financing his education by delivering pool tables, washing dishes, pumping gas and working at a steel mill. He earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, in 1995. Diaz, age 39, now teaches creative writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, dividing his time between Boston and New York. He also is a founding member of the Voices Workshop that organizes summer writing programs for writers of color.



### *Latina Women Expand Political Involvement in the United States*

This year the Elección Latina program attracted about 40 Hispanic women to Rutgers University in New Jersey to learn more about how to campaign for political office or position themselves for a political appointment.

Elección Latina was added five years ago to Ready to Run: Campaign Training for Women, a nonpartisan program offered each year by the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), a unit of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers.

According to Ready to Run program coordinators, minority women who are successful in politics are the greatest inspiration to other minority women considering such an endeavor.



Teresa Ruiz is the first Latina to serve in the New Jersey State Senate (Courtesy Teresa Ruiz & America.gov)

As of August 2, 2008, approximately 11% of the more than 4, 122 United States military fatalities in Iraq have been Hispanic.

There are more than 1,100,000 Hispanic veterans of the United States Armed Forces. Forty-three Hispanic Americans have received the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force which can be bestowed upon an individual servicing in the United States Armed Forces.

Hispanic Americans are dedicated public servants, holding posts at the highest levels of government, including 3 seats in the United States Senate.

## Hispanic Heritage Foundation's 2008 Hispanic Heritage Awards

On Wednesday, July 9, the Hispanic Heritage Foundation (HHF) joined national business and community leaders to honor seven school seniors from across America and an outstanding teacher for their extraordinary leadership in the classroom and community as part of the **2008 National Hispanic Heritage Youth Awards Ceremony**. HHF also presented CSI Miami Star Adam Rodriguez with the *Inspira* Award for serving as a role model to Latino youth in the public eye. Last year's *Inspira* Award recipient and actor Wilmer Valderrama joined the celebration, which was held at the Sprint Headquarters in Overland Park, Kansas.

The 2008 National Youth Awardees were selected from 10,000 applicants and more than 250 regional recipients from across the United States. Each National Youth Awards recipient will receive a total of \$8000 in educational grants, a laptop computer, and a trip to Washington, D.C. where they will be recognized on stage at the star-studded 22nd Annual Hispanic Heritage Awards in Washington, D.C. on October 9, 2008.

The National Hispanic Heritage Youth Award recipients in the seven categories are:

**Academic Excellence:** **Marcus Andres Garcia** of Turlock, California - Turlock Christian School, presented by the Sprint Foundation

**Business:** **Yadira Torres** of San Antonio, Texas - South San West Campus High School, sponsored by the National Society of Hispanic MBA's

**Education:** **Raquel Goya** of Phoenix, Arizona - Pinnacle High School, sponsored by Southwest Airlines

**Engineering and Mathematics:** **Cynthia Reyna** of Houston, Texas - Charles H. Milby High School, sponsored by Exxon Mobile

**Health and Science:** **Grecia Margarita Gonzalez** of La Puente, California - Nogales High School, sponsored by AstraZeneca

**Journalism:** **Albert Matthew Parisi-Esteves** of Rochester, New York - Brighton High School, sponsored by NBC Universal/Telemundo

**Leadership:** **Nicolas Esteban Mendoza** of Alpine, California - Steel Canyon Charter High School, sponsored by Sallie Mae

**Sports:** **Sara Louise Egozi** of Miami, Florida - Dr. Michael M. Krop Senior High School, sponsored by SUBWAY Restaurants

Selection criteria included academic achievement, community

their heritage played in their success.

Through a partnership with the Staples Foundation for Learning, the Hispanic Heritage Teacher Award recognizes teachers for the impact they have had on the lives of Hispanic students. **Sylvia Garza** of Texas City High School in Texas City, Texas was the Regional Teacher Award recipient from the Houston Region and was selected from a pool of 12 regional teachers as the national awardee. Ms. Garza will be honored as the **National Hispanic Heritage Teacher Award** recipient and honored along with the National Youth Awardees.

"The need for role models in the community and classroom is vital to the success of even younger Latinos, not to mention these young leaders will be responsible for moving America forward," said José Antonio Tijerino, president and CEO of the Hispanic Heritage Foundation. "These seven students and teacher are an embodiment of our mission. Our foundation and dedicated sponsors are humbled and inspired by their accomplishments. They are not leaders of the future, but leaders of today."

To read more about the National Hispanic Heritage Youth recipients go to:

[http://hispanicheritage.org/youth\\_hon.php](http://hispanicheritage.org/youth_hon.php)

The Latino Community Fund (LCF)  
in partnership with  
WA State Commission on Hispanic Affairs (CHA)

Invite you to the

**2008 Latino Community Fund Summit**  
Working across sectors (business, academic, government, and non-profit) to strengthen community leadership

Saturday, October 25, 2008  
8:00 am to 2:30 pm

Spirit of Washington Event Center  
233 Burnett Avenue S.  
Renton, WA 98055

Breakfast and Lunch included

To Register: Go to [www.latinocommunityfund.org/summit08/](http://www.latinocommunityfund.org/summit08/)



**State of Washington  
Commission on Hispanic Affairs**

210 11th Avenue SW  
Suite 301A  
P. O. Box 40924  
Olympia, WA 98504-0924  
Phone: 360-725-5661  
Fax: 360-586-9501  
Toll Free: 1-800-443-0294  
E-mail: [hispanic@cha.wa.gov](mailto:hispanic@cha.wa.gov)

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*The Mission of the Commission on Hispanic Affairs is to represent the Hispanic community in state government in order to empower Hispanics to exercise their right to equal opportunity in education, housing, health and economic development. The Commission strives to define issues pertaining to the rights and needs of Hispanics in order to provide recommendations to the Governor, the legislature, and state agencies. The recommendations can have a profound effect on state policies and lead to the improvement and the overall quality of life and future for the Hispanic community in the State of Washington.*

[www.cha.wa.gov](http://www.cha.wa.gov)

**Congratulations to Northwest Communities'  
Education Center/ KDNA**

Northwest Communities' Education Center and Radio KDNA celebrated their open house on Saturday, August 30, 2008. The events included Informational tables, tours, cultural activities, the Pacific Science Center, Yakima Valley/Tri-Cities WSU MESA with exhibits and hands on display for students to learn about Math and Science. The new center is located behind the old building at 121 Sunnyside Avenue, Granger, Washington.

**CHA Staff & Commissioners**

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Uriel Iñiguez, Executive Director  
Alicia Luna, Executive Assistant

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