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STUDENTS REFLECT ON HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

by [Kelli Caplan](#) | September 18, 2024

Above: (from left to right) Leah Vazquez Gomez, Alex Delgado, Stephany Lindo Batlle, Zullia Diaz Moll.

Read time: about 2 min

As Hispanic Heritage Month unfolds from Sept.15 to Oct.15, Christopher Newport University is shining the spotlight on students who enrich our campus community with their perspectives, backgrounds and contributions.

Hispanic Heritage Month honors people whose family origins are in Mexico, Spain, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.

The [Latino Student Association](#) kicked off the month with a get together in the multicultural center to celebrate friendship and common culture. Many other events are scheduled on campus over the next several weeks to commemorate the month.

We asked four students to tell us, in their own words, about their culture and what it signifies to them as individuals and as Captains.

What does Hispanic Heritage Month mean to you?:

Stephany Lindo Batlle '25: It is a time where I can openly share my culture and know that others are willing and excited to learn. It brings me the opportunity to share the parts I value most about myself with those around me.

Alex Delgado '25: National Hispanic Heritage Month is a time for Americans to recognize and appreciate Hispanic

culture and its influence on our country. For me, it's a reminder of how proud I am of my background as a Latin American.

Leah Vazquez Gomez '27: The month of September signifies the independence of many Hispanic countries. It gives me a chance to really appreciate all the sacrifices that our families and community have made.

How do you celebrate the month?:

Zullia Diaz Moll '27: I try to watch a good telenovela, which brings back memories of my childhood! Along with trying to spend as much time with my family and talking to my extended family in Puerto Rico y República Dominicana.

Vasquez Gomez: My family and I watch El Grito de Independencia, which is celebrated every Sept.15th. The Mexican president rings a bell at the National Palace in Mexico City at 11 p.m., and then shouts the cry of patriotism. September 16 is the actual day of independence for Mexico.

Delgado: I celebrate being Latino every day. One month is not enough time to fully appreciate what it means to be Hispanic or Latino. I do admire the ways that others celebrate and recognize my culture during this month, so I will say that I do look forward to this time when everyone is celebrating with us. Another way I like to appreciate the month is to take time to observe and embrace other Hispanic culture/traditions. For example, I have friends from Mexico and Honduras and I love learning about how they celebrate their culture.

How do you think we can better recognize and honor Hispanic contributions through the year, not just during the month?:

Lindo: By being open to diversity and Hispanic culture every day! Understanding Hispanics come from dozens of countries with different traditions. Although we share a heritage, we are all extremely different. Recognizing this helps fight harmful stereotypes while learning about our beautiful culture.

Delgado: During special holidays, I would love to celebrate special traditions like I would at home. As a student living away from my family, I lose touch with certain customs. I would love to continue those traditions here with my "CNU family."

What are some misconceptions about Hispanic or Latino culture that you would like to address:

Diaz Moll: The biggest one is that we are all the same and that cannot be any further away from the truth. A lot of Hispanics come from many parts of the world and have varying cultures. We have different foods, words, clothing, etc.

Vazquez Gomez: While festivals and cuisine are important, Hispanic and Latino cultures are also rich in art, literature, philosophical contributions, science, and many others. They have contributed significantly to global cultures and knowledge. Another misconception is immigration status. People assume that all Hispanic/Latinos are undocumented. Many individuals are U.S. citizens and some have been in the United States for many generations.

Are there traditions, foods, or cultural practices that are especially meaningful to you during this month?:

Lindo: Food! The universal language. I love to go out and try new Hispanic restaurants in the area. Giving back to small businesses while eating delicious cuisine from other countries!

Diaz Moll: I try to connect myself with my culture with food. It's how I was brought up. During this month, I love to eat mofongo con camarones, which is very popular in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, or drinking a nice glass of coquito to kick off the colder seasons!