ABA Diversity and Inclusion Center invites you to:
Celebrate Hispanic/Latino/a/x Heritage Month
Honoring Activists and Legal Trailblazers
What is Hispanic/Latino/a/x Heritage Month?

National Hispanic/Latino/a/x Heritage Month had its origins in 1968 when Congress authorized and requested the President to issue an annual proclamation designating the week which included September 15 and 16 as National Hispanic Heritage Week. By directing that this week should include September 15 and 16, the law celebrated Hispanic/Latino/a/x Americans and the anniversaries of independence for the Latin American countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua as well as Mexico’s independence on September 16.

Between 1969 and 1988 Presidents Nixon, Ford, Carter and Reagan issued a series of annual proclamations that designated a week in September including September 15 and 16 as National Hispanic Heritage Week. These proclamations celebrated the contributions to the U.S. of men and women of Hispanic origin as well as recalling the work of the early Spanish explorers and settlers.

*from Library of Congress*
Sonia Sotomayor is the first Latina Supreme Court Justice. She was appointed in 2009. After graduating law school, Sotomayor entered private practice, where she specialized in intellectual property litigation. While climbing the ladder in private practice, Sotomayor served on the board of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, the New York City Campaign Finance Board and the State of New York Mortgage Agency. In 1992, she was the youngest judge appointed to her District’s Court. In addition to her work in the Court of Appeals, Sotomayor also began teaching law as an adjunct professor at New York University in 1998 and at Columbia Law School in 1999.
STEPHEN N. ZACK

Stephen Zack is a Board Certified trial lawyer and a widely recognized leader. Mr. Zack is Past President of the American Bar Association and was the first Hispanic American to assume the ABA Presidency. Mr. Zack was also the first Hispanic American and youngest President of the Florida Bar. He has served as President of the National Conference of Bar Presidents and as the Chair of the ABA’s House of Delegates. As President of the American Bar Association, Mr. Zack created the Commission on Hispanic Legal Rights and Responsibilities; the Commission on Civic Education in the Nation’s Schools; and the Task Force on Preservation of the Justice System. Zack is a recipient of the 2017 Spirit of Excellence Awards. Learn more at ambar.org/spirit.
Richard Pena served as chair of the ABA Commission on Hispanic Legal Rights and Responsibilities from 2017-2021. He received the 2020 ABA Spirit of Excellence Award for his excellence in the legal field and dedication to promoting diversity in the profession. He also received the 2019 Joseph C. Parker Jr. Diversity Award and was the first Hispanic to serve as president of the State Bar of Texas. Richard Pena has also served as president for the American Bar Foundation and the Austin Bar Association. Learn more at: abajournal.com
Born in Puerto Rico, Ambassador Mari Carmen Aponte’s family stressed the importance of education to her at a very young age. One of only 180 Puerto Ricans enrolled in an ABA-accredited law school, Ambassador Aponte attended Temple University School of Law and became the first Latina lawyer in Pennsylvania. Ambassador Aponte was appointed to the District of Columbia Judicial Nomination Commission, where she helped bring more women and Hispanics to the D.C. bench. In 2010, President Obama appointed Mari Carmen Aponte as ambassador to El Salvador, the first Latina lawyer to hold the position and the first Puerto Rican woman to be appointed as an ambassador. Aponte is a recipient of the 2015 Margaret Brent Awards. Learn more at ambar.org/brent.
Tony Coelho

Anthony Lee (Tony) Coelho was born June 15, 1942, in Los Banos, California. His parents, Otto and Alice Branco Coelho, were the children of Portuguese immigrants. As a teenager, Coelho had an accident on his parents’ dairy farm that caused lifelong epilepsy. Coelho went on to become an elected Representative for the state of California in 1978. Coelho became the first Hispanic-American in House history to serve in as Majority Whip. The most significant piece of legislation Coelho sponsored was the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which he introduced on May 9, 1989. He also founded The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy and Innovation at Loyola Law School—Los Angeles.
Raquel Aldana is an immigrant from Central America, a first-generation college and law school graduate who paved her way into the profession to further the rights of immigrants, undocumented students, women and Latina lawyers. She uses her voice to fight for diversity in the field of law for both Latino students and women lawyers. She is currently the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Diversity at UC Davis, and a professor. Previously, Aldana was a Law professor at the Boyd School of Law, University of Nevada, Las Vegas; and the McGeorge School of Law where she also served as Associate Dean for Research. For academic excellence and her devotion to the rights of immigrants and refugees, she was a recipient of the 2019 Margaret Brent Awards. Learn more at ambar.org/brent.
HON. IRMA GONZALEZ

Judge Irma Gonzalez was the first Latina of Mexican heritage to be appointed to the Federal Bench, serving on the United States District Court for the Southern District of California in 1992. Judge Gonzalez retired from the federal bench in 2013, previously serving as Chief Judge of the District Court from 2005 to 2012. She is a founding member of Latinas in the Law, which was established in 2005 to mentor young Latina lawyers and law students, promote the advancement of Latinas as legal professional, provide opportunity for personal growth and development, and serve as role models for children in the community. In 2021 she was awarded with the ABA Margaret Brent Award.
Chief Justice Steven C. González was sworn in as the State of Washington Supreme Court’s 58th Chief Justice on January 11, 2021, following a vote of his peers for a four-year term. Before joining the Supreme Court, Chief Justice González served for ten years as a trial judge on the King County Superior Court hearing criminal, civil, juvenile, and family law cases. Prior to his election to the King County Superior Court, Chief Justice González practiced both criminal and civil law. He was an Assistant United States Attorney in the Western District of Washington, a Domestic Violence Prosecutor for the City of Seattle and in private practice at a Seattle law firm. He is a recipient of the 2022 ABA Spirit of Excellence Award.
Regina Montoya is nationally recognized as one of the top lawyers in the country. In 1993, she served in the White House as Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. She was one of the first Latinas to earn a partnership in a major corporate law firm in the United States and has received numerous accolades for her achievements including the 2020 Margaret Brent Award (ABA Commission On Women in the Profession). Montoya is a leader in the nonprofit community and has dedicated herself to numerous issues including the economic advancement of the American Latino community. Learn more at ambar.org/brent
MARIANA BRAVO

Mariana Bravo is the President of the Hispanic National Bar Association. She has also served on the Executive Committee for the past six years as Vice President of Divisions, Sections and Committees, Vice President of External Affairs, Vice President of Programs, and the Regional President for Virginia, Washington, D.C., Maryland and West Virginia. Bravo serves on the Board of Directors of SCORE, a national non-profit organization, dedicated to providing mentoring and education to small businesses, including minority and diverse business owners, through its more than 10,000-person volunteer team.
Carlos M. Bollar

Carlos M. Bollar is the Immediate Past-President of the Hispanic National Bar Association. He currently is Co-Chair of Archer’s Environmental Justice Practice Groups and represents clients on environmental litigation matters. He is Past President of the Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey and is a Board of Trustees Member in the New Jersey State Bar Association. Bollar served as member of the Supreme Court of New Jersey’s District IV Ethics Committee from 2011 to 2014.
EDUARDO JUAREZ

Juarez is a supervisory trial attorney with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, where he litigates individual, class and systemic lawsuits under the federal civil rights statutes prohibiting employment discrimination. His work in the LGBTQ+ legal community led to accolades, including the 2014 EEOC Pride "Chai Feldblum Award".

Juarez is a former public defender in Washington, D.C., and began his legal career as an associate with Sidley & Austin in Chicago. Active in various LGBTQ+ political and professional organizations, he is a past president and first openly gay Hispanic/Latino/a/x President of the National LGBTQ+ Bar Association and past chair of the LGBT Law Section for the State Bar of Texas. Juarez is a recipient of the 2018 Stonewall Awards. Learn more at ambar.org/stonewall.
Although Joseph Marion Hernández served as Delegate of Florida to the House of Representatives from 1822-1823, Romualdo Pacheco was the first Latino/a/x to serve as a full representative in the U.S. Congress. Pacheco was elected to represent California in 1877 and served three terms until 1883. Prior to serving as U.S. Representative, Pacheco served as governor of California (the first and only Latino/a/x to serve in this position since California’s statehood), California State Treasurer, and California State Senator.
Sylvia Mendez is a civil rights activist. At age 8, she was the plaintiff of the school desegregation case *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946) in California, dealing with Mexican-American students in California. It served as a precursor to landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Judges hearing the case were the first to say that separate was never equal. In the year following the decision, California required all school districts in the state to desegregate. Two statutes concerning segregation of Asian and Indian students also were repealed. Sylvia Mendez said the case was successful because of the involvement of a number of other organizations, including the NAACP.
Judge Mary Murguia was appointed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in 2010. She is the daughter of Mexican immigrants, and received her J.D. from the University of Kansas Law School. In 1990, Murguia joined the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Arizona and, four years later, she was promoted to criminal chief deputy of that office. In 1998, Murguia moved to Washington, D.C., and became counsel to the director of the Executive Office for United States Attorneys at the U.S. Department of Justice. In 2000, Murguia was appointed to the U.S. District Court in Arizona, becoming the first Latina to serve as a federal district court judge in that state.
CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO

Born and raised in Las Vegas, Catherine Cortez Masto is the granddaughter of an immigrant from Chihuahua, Mexico. She served two terms as Attorney General of Nevada and in November 2016, she made history by becoming the first woman from Nevada and the first Latina ever elected to the United States Senate. During her time as Nevada’s top prosecutor, Cortez Masto became well known as an advocate for seniors, women, and children. She earned a law degree from Gonzaga University.

*bio from Britannica.com*
Elia Diaz-Yaeger is Past President of the National Hispanic Bar Association. She is a shareholder at Lugensuhl, Wheaton, Peck, Rankin, & Hubbard. Her primary areas of practice include industrial employment, insurance defense and coverage, environmental law, and commercial litigation. In 2017, she was recognized by Chambers USA as a Women in Law Future Leader Gender Diversity Award winner. She is passionate about promoting diversity and the inclusion of women and Latino/a/xs in the legal profession. Diaz-Yaeger is a past-president of the Hispanic Lawyers of Louisiana.
Judge Peter M. Reyes, Jr. is a judge on the Minnesota Court of Appeals. Judge Reyes served as national president of the Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA) from 2012-2013, president of the Minnesota Hispanic Bar Association from 2000-2003, and on the Board of Trustees for William Mitchell College of Law from 2005-2014. Minnesota Lawyer named him as one of the “Top Ten Minnesota Attorneys of the Year” in 2001, one of the “Attorneys of the Year” in 2012, 2016, and 2017, and as a recipient of the inaugural “Diversity & Inclusion Award” in 2017. He is also a recipient of the 2019 Spirit of Excellence Awards. Learn more at ambar.org/spirit.
BARBARA J. DAWSON

Barb Dawson is a senior investigations and litigation partner at Snell & Wilmer. On a national basis, Barb currently serves as Chairperson of the American Bar Association’s Section of Litigation, the first Latina to do so. She recently served as one of 16 members of the ABA’s Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary that vets and rates federal judicial candidates for the United States Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal and District Courts. Dawson has served as chair of the Board of Directors for Lex Mundi, an international affiliation of 160 independent law firms located in 100 countries. Her experience has included legal engagements, law-related presentations, projects and board of directors’ duties on six continents.
VICTOR MARQUEZ

Victor Marquez is a governmental relations specialist and assists both private companies and nonprofit organizations develop mixed-use residential and commercial real estate development projects. Marquez is a former president of the Hispanic National Bar Association (2007-2008), the first openly gay person to lead the organization. He led the HNBA in developing the Public Interest Law Track and restarting the Voting Rights Section. Even before he became President, Marquez conceived the LGBT Section and was a pioneer in pushing for the full acceptance and recognition of the LGBT membership by the leadership of the HNBA. Marquez was a recipient of the 2016 Spirit of Excellence Awards. Learn more at ambar.org/spirit.
Thomas Saenz is the President and General Counsel at Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), and formerly practiced civil rights litigation at MALDEF for 12 years. During that time, he successfully challenged California’s unconstitutional Proposition 187 and led numerous civil rights cases in the areas of immigrants’ rights, education, employment, and voting rights. Saenz achieved several victories against ordinances unlawfully restricting the rights of day laborers, served as lead counsel in the 2001 challenge to California’s congressional redistricting, and was also the lead drafter of the Amicus brief on behalf of Latino organizations supporting affirmative action Supreme Court case *Grutter v. Bollinger*. 
ABA Diversity and Inclusion Center

Diversity and Inclusion in the Profession Awards

The ABA Diversity and Inclusion Center includes various entities that award those who have paved the way in the legal profession for, with, and representing various diverse backgrounds, including:

- **Spirit of Excellence Award**: Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession awards legal professionals whose life/careers demonstrate a commitment to racial and ethnic diversity in the profession.

- **Stonewall Award**: Commission on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity awards legal professionals who have effected real change to remove barriers on LGBTQ+ expression in the legal profession.

- **Margaret Brent Award**: Commission on Women in the Profession awards outstanding women lawyers who have achieved professional excellence and paved the way for other women in the legal profession.

- **Paul G. Hearne Award**: Commission on Disability Rights awards an individual/organization for performing exemplary service in furthering the rights, dignity, and access to justice for people with disabilities.

- **Raymond Pace & Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander Award**: Council for Diversity in the Educational Pipeline awards an individual/organization that has demonstrated exemplary leadership and pipeline success.
Continue to learn about the contributions of Hispanic/Latino/a/x Trailblazers and Activists

Check out these websites to learn more about this important month!

- Smithsonian Latino Center: [latino.si.edu/](http://latino.si.edu/)
- Human Rights Campaign Foundation Latinx Heritage Month Page: [www.hrc.org/blog/latinx-heritage-month-more-than-one-word-more-than-one-heritage](http://www.hrc.org/blog/latinx-heritage-month-more-than-one-word-more-than-one-heritage)