



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DEPENDENTS SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR, EUROPE
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September 22, 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR DODDS-EUROPE EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: National Hispanic Heritage Month--September 15 - October 15, 2006

On September 17, 1968, Public Law 90-498 National Hispanic Heritage Week went into effect as a means of recognizing the accomplishments of Hispanic-American citizens. In 1988 the law was amended by Public Law 100-402, expanding the event to National Hispanic Heritage Month. Hispanic Heritage Month begins on September 15 (timed to commemorate the anniversary of independence for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico and Chile) and ends on October 15. This year's theme is *Hispanic Americans: Our Rich Culture Contributing to America's Future*.

The term Hispanic, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, refers to Spanish-speaking people in the United States of any race. On the 2000 Census form, people of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino origin could identify themselves as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or "other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino." More than 35 million people identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. According to the Census, by the year 2020, 1 in 5 Americans will be Hispanic/Latino.

Many Hispanic Americans trace their roots to the cultures of the indigenous peoples of the Americas -- including the Arawaks (Puerto Rico), the Aztecs (Mexico), the Incas (South America), the Maya (Central America), and the Tainos (in Cuba, Puerto Rico and other places). Some trace their roots to the Spanish explorers -- who in the 1400s set out to find an easier and less costly way to trade with the Indies. Other Latinos trace their roots to the Africans who were brought as slaves to the New World.

During Hispanic Heritage Month many educators throughout America will be teaching about the contributions of Hispanic Americans. Learning about Hispanic culture and integrating the cultures in the classroom helps develop "ethnic literacy" in all students. Developing ethnic literacy fosters pride in one's own culture and a respect and appreciation for the uniqueness of others.

However, it is not only students who can benefit from such knowledge. It is essential that all of us learn to understand the ethnic diversity that is our country.

Promoting cultural diversity among the work force develops cohesion and a multi-talented organization. We need to capitalize on each individual's talent.

Please join me in celebrating this rich and diverse culture by participating in planned events that are taking place in your area. I encourage all employees of DoDDS-E to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities. Let us all take advantage of this time to learn more about the history of Hispanic Americans and how they have contributed to the culture and heritage of our nation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Diana J. Ohman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "D" and a long, sweeping tail.

Diana J. Ohman
Director, DoDDS-Europe