

Connections

Hispanic Heritage Month

September and October 2021



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Office of Policy, Management and Budget
Administrative Services and the
Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights

Esperanza

By Raymond A. Limon, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Capital and Diversity; Chief Human Capital Officer

Dear Colleagues,

I'm honored to share my reflections on this year's Hispanic Heritage Month and what it means to me. This year's theme is: **"Esperanza - A Celebration of Hispanic Heritage and Hope."**

Esperanza means Hope. Hope is powerful! It can be experienced both individually and through family traditions, and it may mean something different to you than it means to me. In the early 20th century, my grandparents arrived in rural Nevada with a strong sense of esperanza after fleeing dire economic challenges and civil war in Mexico. My grandfather worked in the silver mines while my grandmother cared for their eight children. Survival and new beginnings were everything to them. At the age of 17, my father moved to Reno, and when he was in his early 20s he met and married my mom. Though neither my grandparents nor parents became college graduates, they all hoped that the next generation of children would make it to college someday.

My parents raised ten children (with two sets of twins!) and I am the oldest of those ten children. My parents struggled, but always surrounded us with love and encouraged us to go to college – to create that American dream. They demonstrated the dignity of hard work and I took on all sorts of jobs, including delivering newspapers, cutting lawns, selling popcorn and soda at ball games, and busing tables at restaurants. I eventually saved up enough money to go to college and received my political science degree. To support my dream of going to law school, I worked for two years, and then volunteered for the Peace Corps in Honduras. From there, I took the law school entrance exam, met an amazing volunteer who kept laughing at my jokes, enjoyed my cooking, and made me the happiest man in the world when she became my wife. With no money but with a duffle bag full of dreams and esperanza, we attended Indiana University where I received my J.D., and she received her master's in public administration (and she later received her PhD and is also a public servant). We have two amazing sons and I still think this is all a dream.

This story that I share is not unique. Many of you reading this now might be able to personally relate to this journey or you may know someone with a very similar origin story. The rich smells of tortillas and beans floating up from my grandmother's oil burning stove still resonate in my memories. I could feel the esperanza she had for me when she hugged me. My grandparents' and parents' journeys and sacrifices allowed me to chase my dreams.

Finally, heritage and hope, when combined, are powerful – especially when it comes to our families. It is my hope that during this Hispanic Heritage Month you celebrate the vast richness and diversity of our nation. And, it is my hope, my esperanza, that we can remember all the families that have come before us who have helped to make our dreams become reality.



Raymond A. Limon is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Capital and Diversity, and Chief Human Capital Officer, and he is a career member of the Senior Executive Service at the Department of the Interior. His Directorate provides strategic human capital, safety/health and training policies and services for the Department's 65,000 plus employees serving in over 350 occupations and 2,400 locations. Before joining DOI, Ray led the State Department's Civil Service HR Management office. Ray has also served as the Chief Human Capital Officer at the Corporation for National and Community Service (e.g., AmeriCorps, VISTA, Senior Corps, etc.), and chaired the Small Agency Human Resources Council, representing approximately 100 Federal agencies and organizations.

ON THE COVER: Maricela Constantino and her beautiful children. Learn more about Maricela on page 47.



Message from Secretary Deb Haaland

September 15, 2021

Today marks the start of Hispanic Heritage Month, a month full of cultural celebrations and recognitions. As we celebrate the cultures, languages, and contributions of

the Hispanic community at Interior, we recognize the rich history of those communities that contribute to our stewardship traditions.

Every year during this month, I think of my home state and the communities that live in New Mexico and how much we rely on each other. When we gather for Pueblo feast days, our tables are flush with traditional Pueblo oven bread baked in outdoor *hornos* – the Spanish brought both wheat and hornos to the Southwest in the late 1500s. Our families raise cattle and sheep, which are part of the cultural exchange of our ancestors. Squash, corn and green chile, pueblo agricultural staples, are cooked into *calabacitas* that so many Hispanic households call their own. Our food is a representation of our shared traditions. When I meet with Hispanic families, I feel like I’m sitting down with my aunts and uncles.

All over America, Hispanic communities carry on sustainable traditional uses for the land, pass on responsible stewardship practices to their children, and incorporate culture into the way they interact with the resources that the Earth provides.

At Interior, we have incredible team members whose experiences growing up in Hispanic families give them perspectives that are so valuable to our Department, as we strive every day to serve everyone.

As we look to increase Hispanic representation in our workforce throughout the Department and across the federal family, we celebrate the leadership of our Hispanic team members and focus on equitable access to the outdoors, environmental justice, and creating good jobs in a clean energy economy.

Enjoy this month’s celebrations and carry on that appreciation throughout the year!

Felicidades,

[See Secretary Haaland’s video message here](#)

Recruitment Resources

As Secretary Haaland is asking us to do, we must expand our outreach and effectiveness to better serve our diverse nation and overcome these challenges. This is how you can help. To get started, we need to recruit new and diverse voices to join our incredible workforce, and you are the perfect recruiters! To learn more, please check out:

[My DOI Career](#) – Explore occupations and how to navigate your career at DOI

[DOI Career Connection](#) – Learn about details and lateral opportunities across DOI Bureaus/Offices

[DOI 101 Hiring Guide](#) – Research DOI’s hiring authorities

[DOI University](#) – Discover employee development, coaching and mentoring

[Diversity Conservation Jobs](#) – Find opportunities with our conservation partners

[DOI Career Resources](#) - Review additional hiring resources

You can learn more about our [Employee Organizations](#), select one or more communities of practice you are interested in, and begin sharing your stories about your experiences with DOI and others.

Thank you!

- Raymond A. Limon, DAS-HCD

At a Glance

Populations of Spanish Speaking Countries

Mexico	128,932,753
Colombia	50,882,891
Spain	46,754,778
Argentina	45,195,774
Peru	32,971,854
Venezuela	28,435,940
Chile	19,116,201
Guatemala	17,915,568
Ecuador	17,643,054
Bolivia	11,673,021
Cuba	11,326,616
Dominican Republic	10,847,910
Honduras	9,904,607
Nicaragua	6,624,554
El Salvador	6,486,205



Clockwise from above: Western Hemisphere delineating Spanish-speaking countries; Mexico tourism poster from the 1950s; flags of Spanish-speaking countries (and Puerto Rico, the largest Spanish-speaking territory). Images from [Britannica](#).



HISPANIC-AMERICAN HERITAGE 2021

- 2 Welcome by DAS-HCD Limon
- 3 Message from the Secretary
- 4 At a Glance
- 5 Celebrate! & Table of Contents
- 6 Nina Otero-Warren, Pioneer
- 7 Reflections by Barbara Green
- 8 Finding Common Ground
- 9 Women’s Equality Day
- 10 Vanguard Award—Betty Soskin
- 11 **SPECIAL SECTION:**
- Our Hispanic/Latinx Family**
- 48 Veteran Profile: Ray Suazo
- 49 Combined Federal Campaign
- 50 Third Thursdays Roundtables

Celebrate!

[From NPS]: Have you ever heard a salsa rhythm that just made you want to groove? Have you perhaps bitten into a loaded taco bursting with flavor that makes you wonder how all of these flavors got into one bite? Maybe you have heard a friend from the Dominican Republic speaking Spanish to a companion from Argentina and thought, *wow, are they both really speaking the same language?* Take a dive deeper into the world of Hispanic and Latinx heritage! In this video from 2020, meet National Park Service and other Department of the Interior staff as they share their heritage and give us just a small taste of the immense diversity of the Hispanic and Latinx experience.

The [video above](#) was made in partnership with the Department of the Interior's National Association of Hispanic Employees and National Park Service's Hispanic Organization on Relevancy, Advising, Leadership, and Excellence. Enjoy!



About Connections

Connections Magazine is produced each month by a collaborative, multiagency team of volunteer employees from throughout DOI. Under the direction of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administrative Services **Jacqueline M. Jones** and

the Acting Director of the Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights **Alesia Pierre-Louis**, the **Connections** team strives to foster an environment where all employees are respected, valued, accepted, appreciated and feel included.

To find out more or to submit your ideas and suggestions for future issues, please contact Editor Steve Carlisle at stephen_carlisle@ibc.doi.gov. Thank you!

Adelina “Nina” Otero, Hispanic Homesteader and Suffrage Pioneer

By **Liliana M. Valderrama, Educational Tech, NPS, [Homestead National Historical Park, Beatrice, NE](#)**

The freedom and economic opportunities in America have attracted immigrants since our nation’s founding. [The Homestead Act](#), signed in 1862 by President Abraham Lincoln, enticed people to the west in the post-Civil War era. Anyone who was a head of a household, women 21 years or older, immigrants from certain European countries, and formerly enslaved folks could all stake a homestead claim. To earn the title for your 160 acres of land you had to live on and make improvements to the land. Various homestead acts eventually granted 270 million acres of public domain land to settlers.



Homesteading is connoted with images of white European settlers like [Laura Ingalls Wilder](#) and her series of Little House books. While European-American families did claim their stakes on the majority of homesteading land, this law offered opportunities for others to realize the dream of owning land. Blake Bell, a previous historian at Homestead National Historical Park, called the

Homestead Act “the first comprehensive immigration law.”

Take for example the homesteading history in the Southwest and fellow Latina [Adelina “Nina” Otero](#). Nina was born in 1881 to a wealthy and politically important family in the [Rio Abajo](#) region of what is now New Mexico. Her lineage on both sides traced back to the Spanish occupation of the area in the 1700s. Her family moved to Santa Fe when Nina was 16. At 26 she met her husband [Rawson D. Warren](#) in 1907. Unhappy, Nina divorced her husband after two years. She described herself as a widow and kept Otero-Warren as her last name.

Nina became active in New Mexico politics and worked towards women’s suffrage. In 1917, she was tapped to head



the [Congressional Union](#) chapter, a precursor to the National Women’s Party. Suffragists had realized the support of Hispanics in New Mexico was imperative to winning suffrage. Nina insisted that suffrage literature should be published in both English and Spanish to reach everyone. In the early 1930s, Nina and her partner, [Mamie Meadors](#), homesteaded and established a ranch called “[Las Dos](#)” [*the two women*].

As a Latina and Spanish speaker in the National Park Service, I look for ways to relate to the history I interpret, and representation is key. I connect with Homestead National Historical Park, and although my ancestors were not homesteaders, I can look to Nina Otero-Warren’s experiences and feel a direct link to her legacy.

Left: Homestead National Park, Beatrice, Nebraska. Above: Adelina “Nina” Otero circa 1900. Images courtesy NPS.

Embracing (and Tasting) the New

By Barbara Green, Equal Opportunity Manager,
NPS Region 11, Anchorage, AK

It was on 708 Patch Road, in a Spanish-style house built in the 1930s, that I learned to appreciate the invaluable heritage of our Hispanic and Latinx community. I was nine years old when my Army officer father was stationed at [Fort Sam Houston](#) in San Antonio, Texas, and I thank the Army for stationing us there since I was exposed to such a rich and vibrant culture. Texas was the glorious site of my first taste of Mexican fare and my life was never the same again. For a girl who loves to eat, and excels in eating since there isn't a dish I won't try at least once, I found my little slice of heaven.

Regardless of our differences, food can bring us together and connect us. The first few years of my life, I grew up mainly eating Korean food, so to have another type of cuisine to fall in love with considerably expanded my horizons. In the military, because the lifestyle is nomadic and we move from one installation to the next, we choose our family, and my chosen **abuela** (grandmother), **tia** (aunt) and **tio** (uncle) showed their love through cooking. I reciprocated the love by savoring each delicacy they lovingly prepared for me.

The year we lived at Fort Sam Houston before moving to Okinawa was educational and enriching for me. I was able to immerse myself in the Hispanic culture since most of my neighbors were of Hispanic descent. I often spent time with them and

learned how tightly knit the families were, along with seeing parents instilling in their children the importance of respecting

their elders. That resonated with me, since Korean parents also emphasize respecting one's elders. I witnessed firsthand how family is the most important social unit and close friends were considered part of the extended family.

The Hispanic and Latinx neighbors I befriended were Catholic and attended Mass regularly, which they invited me to attend with them. I marveled over the beautiful **mantillas** (lace or silk veil) the women wore on their heads while attending Mass; an external symbol representing humbling yourself before God, and worn with pride and dignity. The gleaming crystal rosaries they reverently held in their hands mesmerized me. And I appreciated being welcomed into an aspect of their life I would have never seen otherwise without their kind invitation. **Gracias, Señora Torres, por hacerme sentir amada** (thank you, Mrs. Torres, for making me feel loved).

Holiday and familial celebrations involved extended family and friends and included a smorgasbord of delicacies I voraciously indulged in. Did I happen to mention I love eating? From **chili rellenos, empanadas, enchiladas** and **paella** to **flan** and my beloved **sopapillas** [pictured, left], it was a blissful time for me. Appreciation for the food and the culture fostered my desire to learn how to speak the language and I took Spanish classes in high school. Just as it was on 708 Patch Road that I reveled in being allowed to experience a culture which truly interested and fascinated me, I hope you will be inspired by our efforts each month to highlight the historical and cultural contributions of our neighbors, friends and coworkers. **Gracias por sus aportaciones** (thank you for your contributions). May you find time to celebrate our Hispanic and Latinx community and polish off a sopapilla or two. **Feliz comiendo y celebrando** (happy eating and celebrating)!

Barbara Green is a member of the Connections Team and writes a monthly column entitled "Reflections." Barbara welcomes your comments and suggestions for future issues. Please feel free to contact her at Barbara.Green@nps.gov.



When You Look at Me

By Barbara Green

When you look at me, you don't see me if you
Think I am standoffish, aloof and uncaring.
And although you may speak freely
Does not mean I am inclined to sharing.

I would rather listen to you than
Listen to me and I don't care to chatter.
Yet, regardless of how I appear to others
It doesn't mean you and they don't matter.

I often stand in the back of a room and
Observe those around me interacting.
The animated banter and the lively
Groups huddled together laughing.

And I still remain in the back of the room
Watching with ruminative amusement.
When I do finally choose to mingle
I do so with considerable discernment.

A one-on-one dialogue is more appealing
Than being surrounded by a crowd.
I prefer the quiet setting of a library
Versus a party, which can be quite loud.

Although I have the ability to engage
With diverse groups and conduct briefings.
It is not my preference to be a public
Speaker and attend a myriad of meetings.

Please don't mistake my quiet demeanor
To speculate I am shy or conceited.
I am simply an introvert, embracing solitude
And recharging when I feel depleted.

I am not popular and don't have a lot of friends
And will never be the center of attention.
That is perfectly fine with me since I want to be
Unnoticed, yet with a good intention.

I appreciate the personality traits of an extrovert
And admire their gregarious charm and wit.
Our differences enhance the world we live in
And for me, my introversion is a good fit.

When you look at me, and truly see me
You will see silence doesn't equal apathy.
I simply prefer the beauty of solitude,
And will welcome you in when I am ready.



“Why are you so quiet? Are you shy? Do you have social anxiety disorder? Why are you so serious? Why don't you want to go out? Are you mad? Are you bored? Do you have any friends? Are you okay?”

Do these questions sound familiar to you? Then join the club, my fellow introverts, since I often get asked those questions outside of the workplace.

Diversity and inclusion are broader than race, national origin, gender, etc. It is all encompassing and dissimilar personality types are part of a diverse workforce. We may not be alike in a myriad of ways, yet to foster a pleasant and thriving work environment, it helps to recognize although someone may not think like you, act like you or in any way remotely resemble you, you can still learn to appreciate their differences and perhaps find common ground.

I equate distinctive personality types to a fragrant floral bouquet. Individually, a flower is beautiful, yet combined with other flowers to create a bouquet, even more impressive. Extroverts, with their affable nature, and introverts, known as observant and reflective thinkers, can create a cohesive team and richly contribute to the mission. We balance each other well, because an introvert, considered a good listener, will gladly let a charismatic extrovert captivate an audience and do most of the talking.

Let us embrace our differences and try our best to learn more about each other to help us get to a place of enhanced understanding and mutual respect. My introverted colleagues asked me to write about how we introverts feel, so with great pleasure, I chose to convey those thoughts and feelings in a poem. I hope you like it! And on that note, I encourage you to find a colleague with a contrasting personality and take time to get to know them better.

Cheers! - Barbara

Thoughts on Women's Equality Day 2021

By Lisa Branum, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Safety, Resource Protection, and Emergency Services, Washington, DC

I am an executive coach and I'm part of DOI's coaching consortium. I use that skillset to mentor and support ALL women who want to advance their careers and feel more fulfilled. I will answer any question! And the one I get a lot is, "How do you deal with work/life balance?" As a mother of four - including an 11-month-old - this is a really important issue for me. I want to normalize motherhood among our senior ranks. Policies around COVID, remote work, telework - these are all important to me and to all mothers (and fathers and other caregivers) out there. We need to understand the needs of moms and normalize the challenges of motherhood - even the less considered ones like nursing and pumping in the workplace.

As a senior leader in the traditionally male-dominated fields of emergency management, wildland fire, law enforcement and

aviation, I also think it's important that women be able to see themselves in leadership roles in these types of professions. That women are encouraged to apply for leadership positions in these professions and that they are empowered to meet the challenges around work/life balance that they may encounter by setting their own boundaries.

In addition to helping women see themselves in these roles, we also need to encourage diversity in recruitment strategies for senior positions - on hiring panels, in final selections - to encourage building ranks of women in the organization.

Even the words we use can empower women. I am a proponent of gender-neutral language and of upending common phrases such as "men and women," especially in reference to people on the front lines in traditionally male fields. We can and SHOULD think about "women and men!"



"Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women." — Dr. Maya Angelou

VANGUARD AWARD

LEADING THE WAY

ADVOCATING FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION

BETTY SOSKIN PARK RANGER

The *Vanguard Award* is presented by the *Connections* Team to recognize and celebrate the achievements of DOI employees who lead the way championing equity and inclusion. For October, the *Connections* Team is delighted to honor Betty Reid Soskin, National Park Service Ranger.

At the National Park Service's Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond, CA, Ranger Soskin spends her days recounting her rich and complicated history in hopes that her firsthand account will resonate with people and encourage them to share their own stories.

"I think everyone's story is very important. There is so much diversity," Ranger Soskin said. "It's in that mix that the great secret of a democracy exists." Ranger Soskin turned 100 years old on September 22, 2021. [Read her story here.](#)

For her outstanding efforts, the *Connections* Team presents Ranger Soskin with our *Vanguard Award* for October 2021.



Above: Betty Soskin at the Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond, CA. At 100 years of age, Betty Soskin is the oldest active ranger in the National Park Service.

(Luther Bailey/NPS photo)

Esperanza



*Meet just a few of our DOI family members
of Hispanic and Latinx heritage!*

Esperanza

A Celebration of Hispanic Heritage and Hope

By Howard Caro-Lopez, PhD (he/him/él), Lead MD-715 Program Manager, Embrace Division, Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights Chair, National Council of Hispanic Employment Program Managers

Each year from September 15 to October 15 the U.S. recognizes the numerous and vital contributions the Hispanic/Latino community have and continue to make to the nation's social fabric. It is a period for us to celebrate the myriad of ways in which the more than 60 million Americans of Hispanic/Latino ancestry support our collective prosperity through their contributions to our economy, communities, and cultural institutions, and through public service. Hispanic Heritage Month is also an opportunity to honor the over 200,000 Hispanic/Latino professionals who have committed to serving all communities across the country as federal government civilian employees.

This year's Hispanic Heritage Month observance theme, Esperanza: A Celebration of Hispanic Heritage and Hope, calls on all of us to reflect upon not only the profound historical impact the Hispanic/Latino community has made in shaping American society, but also how the journey of Americans of Hispanic/Latino ancestry embodies the hope for a more prosperous and equitable future. As [Victor Anthony Zertuche](#), the author of this year's theme selected by the [National Council of Hispanic Employment Program Managers](#), explained

in his submission, "The past year has been one unlike any in recent memory. For so many of us our lives have changed; we've celebrated life's milestones at home or spent holidays alone. But despite how our world has changed, we've kept our eyes on the horizon--we've held onto our hope. This theme celebrates our Hispanic heritage and our resilience. It provides us the opportunity to reflect on those who came before us and held onto hope to create a better tomorrow. It inspires us to recognize that we are stronger together and reminds us that although we are apart, with hope, we are not alone."



This spirit of resilience and hope is also embodied in the 4,146 employees at the Department of the Interior who identify as persons of Hispanic/Latino ancestry, and whose work is rooted in protecting and managing the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage. This includes not only overseeing 27 national historical sites devoted to the Hispanic/Latino historical experience, but also ongoing efforts to promote careers in conservation and environmental sciences through partnerships with organizations such as the [Hispanic Access Foundation](#). The Hispanic/Latino community has and continues to be an integral part of DOI's mission. As we experience this month of recognition, let us not only be reminded that Americans of Hispanic/Latino ancestry are not only an essential part of our nation's past, present, and future, but also that the Hispanic/Latino experience is, in fact, an American experience.



The [National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives](#) has released their 2021 Strategic Plan promoting the Senior Executive Service for Hispanics. Their goals are to identify highly-qualified Hispanics in the Federal workforce; energize, empower, and inspire a new generation of Hispanic Senior Executives; provide career development training; provide SES mentors and other highly qualified GS-14/15 mentors for their members; promote qualified Hispanic candidates for SES; and advocate for increased Hispanic representation across government.

Esperanza

Leticia Santillana Fernandez (she/her), Biological Science Technician, USGS, Western Ecological Research Center, Henderson, NV

What inspired you to become a scientist?

My older brother studied ecology in university and when I was trying to figure out my future, I visited him and fell in love with the work he was doing. His passion for his work and for constantly learning new things is what inspired me to explore the conservation science field. After that, I was accepted to join a group called the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program and I knew after that that I wanted to be a conservation scientist.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

The healthy tortoises I monitor and watch live their lives give me so much hope. The [Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program Collaborative](#), a network of conservationists from underrepresented communities, gives me so much **esperanza**. Being able to reconnect and see how everyone in this network implements conservation in their work is what gives me the hope and drive to continue giving 100% in everything I do, career-wise and life-wise.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

[Dr. Erika Zavaleta](#) has been the most inspiring person I know because she has been able to do so much both for conservation and diversifying the environmental field. I still do not know how she is able to be everywhere and do everything, and my hope is to follow in her footsteps.



What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

We need more diverse teams, we need your perspectives and experiences so that our conservation work is both holistic and culturally relevant. Our science work at USGS and within the DOI is not important unless we are able to communicate that well to all people and we know our communities will follow in our footsteps if they see us doing this work.

What advice do you have for future scientists and researchers interested in a geosciences career?

Reach out to people! Connect, reconnect, and ask all the questions. I am early in my career and I will always continue learning, but I am happy to answer any questions and concerns about being a scientist. I think I can speak for most that people love talking about their paths and work as researchers, so don't hesitate in reaching out--whether it is for a job, to hear about someone's research, or just make a friend.



The **Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program Collaborative (DDCSPC)** is a two-year experiential conservation training program for undergraduates who are interested in careers in conservation and in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field. Scholars take part in applied field research projects, professional internships, mentoring, and form strong professional networks. Scholars learn a variety of field techniques and research and presentation skills. Students are also prepared to help increase diversity,

equity, and inclusion in the field of conservation through coursework in communication, creative problem solving, leadership, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. The members of this consortium are the University of Florida, University of Arizona, University of Idaho, North Carolina State University, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Participation in this program is only available to students who are enrolled at these universities. [Find out more here!](#)
Photo courtesy DDCSPC

Esperanza



**Yadira Soto-Viruet (she/her), Physical Scientist
Country Specialist, Global Mineral Analysis, USGS
National Minerals Information Center, Reston, VA**

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

I started as a summer student and have been fortunate to be working as Country Specialist for Latin American and the Caribbean countries for over 7 years. I would say that one of my greatest successes has been being able to connect and develop a continuing partnership with colleagues from Latin American countries. I'm also delighted to serve as a voluntary member of the *Connections* team, which I believe brings us together by sharing our own stories

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

Being Hispanic and bilingual is my greatest treasure in my life and career. I was born in Puerto Rico. During my childhood, I had the opportunity to belong to a big and diverse family, which looked for any excuse to celebrate as a family with delicious food and music. Today, I am very proud of the richness of our heritage and diverse customs that helped shape who I am now personally and professionally.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

My family. Esperanza for me means that no matter the circumstances there's always a light at the end of the tunnel.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

My mother, who taught us the value of our heritage and inspired us to believe that we all can make a difference as well as to follow our dreams.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Every day is a good day to learn new things, do not underestimate yourself and, most importantly, always remember that you can make the difference and can do anything you set your mind to.

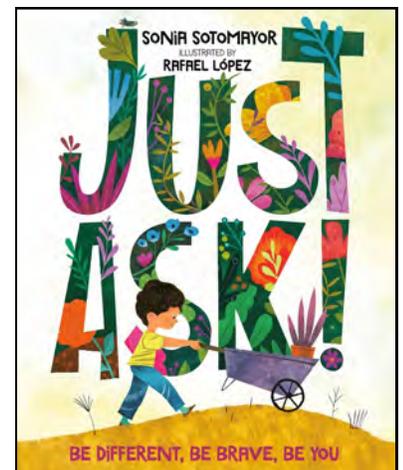
What inspired you to become a scientist?

Since I was a little girl, I became very interested in geoscience, especially earthquakes, rocks, and volcanos. What most inspired me to become a scientist was the time that I worked as an Education and Outreach Assistant for the Puerto Rico Seismic Network. My advice for future generations interested in a geosciences career is to say that their contributions, new initiatives, and knowledge always bring fresh perspectives and can make the difference in the geoscience field.

Yadira recommends:

Just Ask!

"Feeling different, especially as a kid, can be tough. But in the same way that different types of plants and flowers make a garden more beautiful and enjoyable, different types of people make our world more vibrant and wonderful. In [Just Ask](#), United States Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor celebrates the different abilities kids (and people of all ages) have. Using her own experience as a child who was diagnosed with diabetes, Justice Sotomayor writes about children with all sorts of challenges--and looks at the special powers those kids have as well."



Esperanza

**Grisel Madera, Law Enforcement Park Ranger, NPS,
Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park,
Atlanta, GA**

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

It has been opening a world of opportunities/possibilities in the eyes of my family and friends that otherwise were not even thought to be considered. Being a female in law enforcement can feel quite unique in itself but as a Hispanic female in the NPS, I feel like I am breaking barriers and creating that space to normalize the idea and the path of being in this line of work for more Hispanic females.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

The impact of my Hispanic heritage has shaped me in all aspects of who I am in this life and how I serve as an employee for the NPS. I am humbled to know that I can bridge together, in more ways than one, the gap of language and heritage for visitors when they come to our parks. I was born in New York but moved to Puerto Rico at the age of 12, where I was so blessed to truly be immersed in what my cultural roots meant. I learned to fine-tune my island accent, cook, experience the Caribbean beaches I heard about as a child and truly connect to what it means to be Puerto Rican. After graduating from college in 2001, I accepted an internship with the National Park Service here on the mainland and as they say, the rest is history. It has been 20 years since that internship and I could have never fathomed the idea of my life shaping out any other way. I have carried my proud Hispanic heritage to nine national parks, one wildlife refuge and four federal agencies. It all has led me to where I am today, to be a Law Enforcement Park Ranger, proud mom and wife. *Wepa!! [That's awesome!]*

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

Esperanza is what keeps the spark of curiosity going within my soul. I find hope in every person I speak Spanish with at the park. I find hope in every deep and meaningful conversation I have had on Auburn Ave. This is where Martin Luther King, Jr. was born and fostered the civil rights movement. This is where



I proudly serve as a Law Enforcement Park Ranger. Some of these deep and profound conversations have forever changed me. Esperanza is rooted and ingrained in the values of Latino culture. The hardship that follows each storm in the literal and figurative sense is what tests our grit and our inner passion to keep marching on. For example, even when we have days, weeks or months without electrical power or running water, like what happened after Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, it could not shatter the resilience of its people or shatter the hope and faith that lies within our rooted devotion to family and loyalty to community. I keep these same values always close to my heart and have translated that to my job within the NPS and to all the amazing people I have met.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

I would say for those joining the DOI, thank you. Thank you for coming to share your talents, your dreams, and your passions with the rest of us. Come as you are, the authentic and honest you will make us better and stronger as we create and expand our space within the agency for diverse ideas, solutions, and inclusion.

Esperanza



Melissa Romero (Amparán), she/her, Writer-Editor, Bureau of Reclamation, Albuquerque, NM

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

Serving a large contingent U.S. population for 16 years with another federal agency has meant the most so far. Recognizing the impact to thousands of beneficiary lives in need definitely brings me great pride. Combined

with my time at Interior, I achieved 20 years of federal service in May.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life?

Reflecting on my paternal grandparents and adversities they faced— uprooting their life in [Camargo, Chihuahua](#), Mexico to relocate to Carlsbad, NM, and eventually Albuquerque, then raising a family of five sons and five daughters on a cement finisher's salary. I recognize so clearly the opportunities afforded me as a U.S.-born federal employee. My goal is to quietly honor their legacy with a life of integrity.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

Mexico is one of the chief economic and political forces in Latin America. It has a dynamic industrial base, vast mineral resources, a wide-ranging service sector, and the world's largest population of Spanish speakers—about two and a half times that of Spain or Colombia. As its official name suggests, the *Estados Unidos Mexicanos* incorporates 31 socially and physically diverse states and the Federal District [see map, right, courtesy [Britannica](#)].

Faith is the key to my hope; it guides every decision. You can't always tell how job opportunities and assignments will align, but faith strengthens my hope just knowing great things can and do happen all in good time.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

My grandmother, Adelfa; her perseverance despite obstacles and tragedy is an example of inner resolve. She met my grandfather at a young age and patiently waited until just shy of her 21st birthday to marry. She accompanied a brand-new husband to a brand-new country, leaving the only home she knew. Adelfa was a humble homemaker all her life, 100% devoted to her faith and the family she built, even after the devastating loss of her 21-year-old son in 1974. At the time of her passing in 2018 at age 88, my grandmother was the loving matriarch of quite literally a small village: 31 grandchildren, 31 great-grandchildren, and 5 great-great grandchildren. I feel privileged to have witnessed the resilience so common to her generation.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

We need you and your perspective! Don't overlook DOI as an opportunity, a place where you can have both a satisfying career and make a positive impact to important efforts to protect valuable resources and preserve the heritage of our lands.

"No esperes nada de nadie. Espera todo de ti." In other words, you alone are responsible for your success.



Esperanza

Flor D'Luna Blum, Park Ranger, NPS, Scranton, PA

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

As of now, I feel that my greatest success has been being a part of the Wildfire team. I may not be on the line fighting the actual fire, but I talk to the locals near base camp. They all want to tell you their stories and I would just listen, which is all they want sometimes. The gratitude from these communities is overwhelming; they are happy you are there, fighting the fire and it's been such a rewarding experience.



Hispanic Heritage Month, I would do my tour in Spanish for any Spanish-speaking visitors. The tours were pretty successful, those Spanish-speaking visitors preferred hearing a person than listening to an audio device. If we have the resource (i.e., the Spanish speaker), why not use it? Enhance someone's visit!

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

By doing outreach in my local community, I hope to inspire the young (especially Hispanic children) and let them know that a career with the NPS is an option. I never saw Hispanic representation within the

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

I am extremely proud of my heritage. Several years ago during



NPS in my youth. Maybe if I did, I might have started my career path sooner. My biggest hope is to plant the seed now.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

Astronaut [Ellen Ochoa](#) is such an inspiration to me. We both graduated from the same high school (Grossmont High School) in El Cajon, CA. Just knowing that growing up, I felt that I too had the potential to go far and do something great.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Don't be discouraged by things people may say about your heritage. You were hired for a reason, not just to check a box.

I grew up learning how to dance *baile folklórico* [pictured, left, image courtesy [Relampago Cielo](#)]. I love the colorful dresses and ribbons in my hair. A couple of years ago, I went to Mexico City and saw teenagers doing the traditional dances and it reminded me of my youth. My favorite food is a chimichanga - I order it so often from my favorite Mexican restaurant that whenever I call, they already know what I'm getting! My favorite Hispanic author is [Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz](#). I love her fiery poetry; I can feel her passion after all these centuries.

Esperanza



**Monique Navarro (she/her/ella),
Education Specialist,
NPS, Channel Islands
National Park, CA**

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

Serving local youth and connecting them to the islands.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

Being able to navigate many places and contexts and code switch with ease.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

Esperanza is my paternal abuelita's *nombre* [name]. She continues to provide me esperanza and inspiration. She is a humble warrior who continues to serve her familia.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

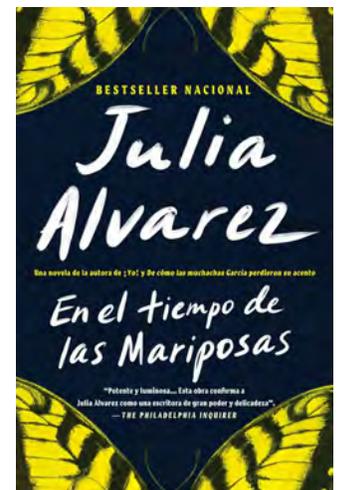
Mis padres, who instilled in all of their children a sense of aventura.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Invest in yourself and others to build your support system, then pay it forward. "At the end of the day, people won't remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them feel." Maya Angelou

Monique recommends: *En el Tiempo de las Mariposas*

'In 1960 in the Dominican Republic, four young women from a pious Catholic family were assassinated after visiting their husbands who had been jailed as suspected rebel leaders. The Mirabal sisters became mythical figures in their country, where they are known as Las Mariposas (the butterflies). Three decades later, Álvarez brings the Mirabal sisters back to life in an extraordinary novel.'



Channel Islands National Park in California encompasses five remarkable islands and their ocean environment, preserving and protecting a wealth of natural and cultural resources.

Geographic isolation over thousands of years has created unique animals, plants, and archeological resources found nowhere else on Earth and helped preserve a place where visitors can experience coastal southern California as it once was. Video courtesy NPS

Esperanza

Karl “Carlos” Schaffenburg, Supervisory Park Ranger, NPS, Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia, PA

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

Watching the people I supervise and work with succeed, find happiness, and move up.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

Being bicultural and bilingual is a way of life I would not trade for anything – it has increased my enjoyment of life exponentially. Where I work, the ability to interact with Hispanic visitors and dignitaries in our native language has been an especially satisfying, as well as enlightening experience.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

My father was a Mexican immigrant who found great success in the United States. Whenever I meet an immigrant from the Spanish-speaking world, and I find that he or she is working hard to improve his or her life, that gives me hope for our

country! Esperanza/hope is a part of my daily life – it allows me to seek new ways of looking at the world, bridge divides, heal from within, and helps me to succeed in helping others fulfill the mission of the National Park Service.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you’ve known and why?

Other than my father, I was most inspired by my college professor of Spanish literature during the year I lived in Madrid, Eugenio Suarez-Galbán. Eugenio knows better than anyone I have ever met how to motivate his students, help them acquire critical thinking skills, and gain confidence in their abilities. To this day, I remain passionate about Spanish poetry and drama, thanks largely to Eugenio. His enthusiasm for life is contagious!

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

If you have a lot of interaction with the public it is a great advantage to speak another language, like Spanish. It should not be overlooked, however, that familiarity with Latino/Hispanic cultures is a real plus no matter where you live or what you do. It enriches all of our lives and helps us to connect with each other in positive ways.



Esperanza

Vanessa Sanchez Burge (she/her), Recovery Biologist, FWS, Albuquerque, NM

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

I work in the Division of Ecological Services in the Southwest Region for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in the Branch of Recovery and Restoration. I consider my current position as a Recovery Biologist as a great success because of my ability to affect species recovery in the wild, which furthers our mission.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

My father is a great influence on my interest in critters and conservation. When I was young, my dad and I walked along the acequias of the Rio Grande, and he would teach me about its native plants and wildlife. Over the years, I have seen how the Rio Grande and its bosque have changed into a monoculture of invasive species. I love being a Nueva Mexicana; it's my home, my *gente*. Keeping our rich New Mexican culture and ensuring that our lands and wildlife are abundant and safe is very important to me and is always at the forefront of my thoughts about how I can make a positive impact.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

I have hope that diversity will play a greater role in my agency. As a Latina, I want to encourage other Latinos to pursue degrees in science and wildlife management. My hope for my career is that I have encouraged a diverse workforce in sciences. Adelante!

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

My father, Charlie Sanchez Jr., is an excellent example of inspiration. He knows critters and their habitat; he's creative - using innovative solutions to problem solve complex issues. He gives back to his community in any way that he can, by donating his time and expertise for community projects. He is Latino we can all look to for inspiration at many levels.



What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Keep working hard, learn, be curious, be kind, read, and help others!

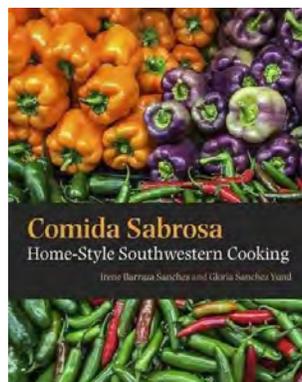
I am a member of the [Spanish Colonial Arts Society](#) located in Santa Fe, NM. Founded in 1925, its mission is to promote and preserve the traditional arts of New Mexico through its museum, Spanish markets, permanent collections, educational programs and library to reflect New Mexico as the historic birthplace of Hispanic art in the United States.

Vanessa recommends [Comida Sabrosa: Homestyle](#)

[Southwestern Cooking](#) by Irene Barraza Sanchez

"This book became an immediate bestseller when it was published in hardcover in October 1982."

Photo, above: Vanessa and her son, 11-year-old Nathan Sanchez-Martinez, at Sea Life San Antonio.





Mia Arvizu (she/they), Communications Fellow, NPS [Groundwork](#), National Community Reinvestment Coalition, Bakersfield, CA

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

So far I've really enjoyed meeting the San Diego Groundwork trust site and getting to know/share their impactful climate- resilient, community-shifting work.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

Being Chicane (gender-neutral substitute for Chicana) is the root from which I experience all life. My roots guide me and instill in me values that uphold reciprocity and place emphasized importance on community and the deepening of those connections. My roots show me sacrifice, struggle, and how to persist in life. Hasta la ultima carga mi Tata says, and that drives me.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

Mycelium, ferns, and flocks of birds are just some of the symbols that give me hope. Mycelium is the largest and oldest living organism on Earth and is a deeply connected network of fungi that helps spread nutrients throughout the whole community. Ferns are hardy plants that grow in difficult places and show us resourcefulness and endurance. Some birds flock by moving together some at the speed of the slowest bird. Nature has so much to teach us, and listening to these lessons brings me hope.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

There are a few people. My mom, my Nana Dorothy, [Maria Sabina](#), and [Favianna Rodriguez](#). My mom and Nana have sacrificed and worked really hard to get me from the fields of Lamont, CA to Bakersfield, CA to higher education. I'm very grateful for their commitment to themselves and their family. Sabina and Rodriguez are definitely ones to learn more about!

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Commit to the process of learning and ask yourself if the work you're doing is aligned with your values.

Pictured, left: [Flourish Flavors 2019](#) by Mia Arvizu



Esperanza

Emily Teraoka (she/her), Interpretive Ranger, NPS, [Minidoka National Historic Site](#), Hagerman, ID

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

In 2020, I got to work on [Tadaima!](#), a nine-week virtual program involving dozens of historic sites and community organizations, with 100,000+ viewers.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

It has taught me the importance of building relationships with communities as a public servant.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

I work at a site of injustice and am always looking for examples of allyship. Being multiethnic (Japanese and Mexican), it gives me hope knowing there are people in both of my communities who have stood in solidarity with each other historically and through recent events.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

My high school teacher, Ms. Morales, helped lots of marginalized and/or first-generation college students find scholarships and navigate the application process.



Esperanza



Tanja Williamson (she/her), Research Hydrologist, USGS, Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Water Science Center, KY

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

Designing research and communicating results that help us balance how we use our environment and can protect it.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

While my career has been unique within my family, it is similar in that, ultimately, it is just another way to contribute as part of and to the community. Knowing my family's history also reminds me that, depending on what is going on in your personal setting, worrying about the natural environment sometimes feels like a luxury. This context is critical when I'm

working in parts of the country where peoples' livelihood and family history are interwoven with resource use.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

How hard my mom worked to ensure I could make my own path and that it has let me pass on the same opportunity to my daughters.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

My grandfather - he was a marine, a firefighter, and, after retiring, he worked at the local high school helping to ensure that kids in his community finished school.

What inspired you to become a scientist?

Growing up, it never occurred to me that one could be a scientist; I had no idea that geologists, hydrologists, and soil scientists existed. I'd loved science in school, but even when I went to college, it hadn't occurred to me. I ended up in my first geology class by happenstance, and as soon as I started learning about how the world around me worked, I was hooked.

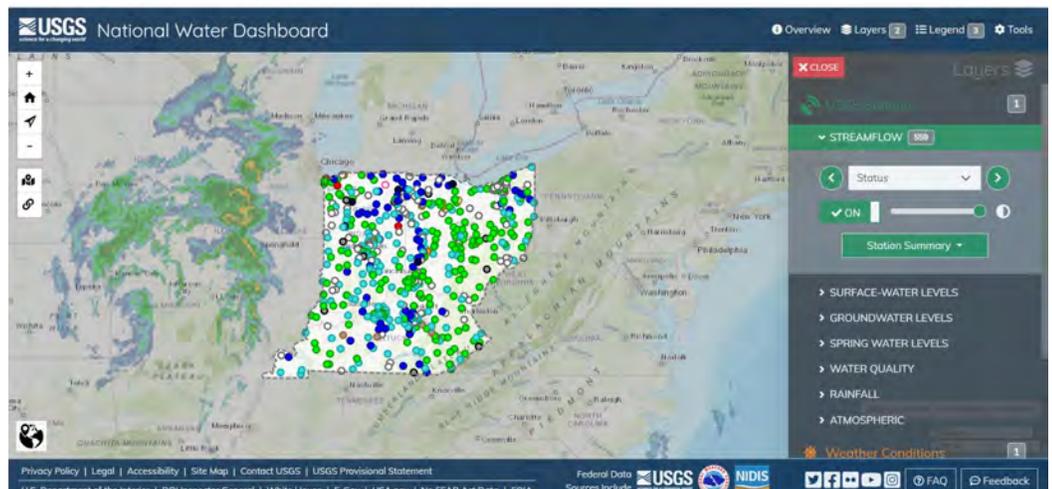
What advice do you have for future scientists and researchers interested in a geosciences career?

1) Be excited to learn new things. 2) Appreciate how much effort our agency spends collecting data. 3) Look for ways to use these data to investigate critical questions of how humans affect and are affected by our environment.

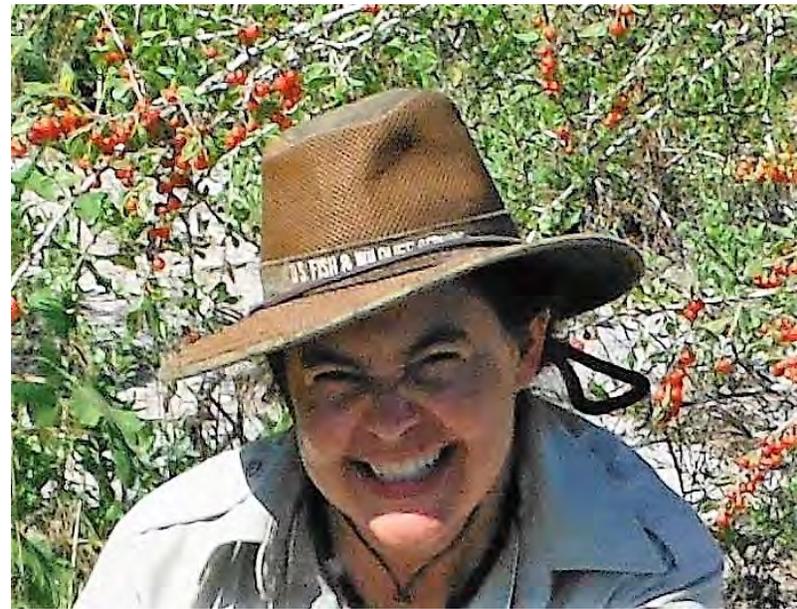


Have you heard about the [USGS National Water Dashboard](#)?

The dashboard presents real-time stream, lake and reservoir, precipitation and groundwater data for 13,400+ USGS observation stations across the United States. Check it out!



Esperanza



Carmen A. Blumberg, Wildlife Refuge Specialist, FWS, [Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, Austwell, TX](#)

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

The greatest success of my career is yet to come; however, being able to observe how people raised in urban areas learn to love nature if given the chance. All you do is give them the chance to participate in outdoor activities that are outside the box. Our persistent actions to communicate wildlife

conservation are successful if we respect and acknowledge differences among all people.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

Traveling and growing up in two culturally different countries enabled me to understand situations that otherwise would go unnoticed by many.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

“La Tierra me da toda la esperanza que necesito” - the Earth gives me all the hope I need to keep working for it.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you’ve known and why?

The most inspiring person I have ever met was not Hispanic; he was born in Turkey and came to the US as a child. Dr. Cem Basman was my environmental interpretation teacher at CSU, the kind of person you remember and value immemorially.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Keep at it, have patience. You will trip but you will get up again, stronger—there is much work to do for wildlife.



What is today known as the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge first emerged 120,000 years ago during the Pleistocene era when a barrier island was born. River sediments filled barrier lagoons, joining the island to the mainland. Grasses and trees invaded sandy ridges creating a home for Ice Age mammals such as lion, camel, bison, bear, mammoth and mastodon.

Today this landscape is best known for its prominent place in the American wildlife conservation movement. In 1941, when only 15

whooping cranes survived in the wild, the iconic bird became an emblem of alarm and concern for all endangered and threatened species. Aransas became a focal point of the national and worldwide effort to rescue the species from extinction.

Reintroduction efforts have made slow but steady progress. Globally, whooping cranes now number over 800, according to the International Crane Foundation. Photo courtesy FWS

Esperanza

Diana L. Restrepo-Osorio
(she/her), Geographer,
USGS, Kansas Water Science
Center, Lawrence, KS

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

The biggest success of my federal career was to graduate with a doctoral degree during a pandemic to become a full time Geographer for the USGS.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

Being a Latina has shaped my philosophy of life and therefore has guided all the efforts I have put forward during my educational and professional career. My ultimate goal is to be able to give back to the Latinx community abroad and in the United States.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

This year more than ever, our unwavering hope, resilience, and dedication has convinced me that there is a better tomorrow and that change is possible. Hope has allowed me to reach my educational and professional goals. I believe that hope is trusting that there is something grand around the corner. Hope is also believing that the greatest challenges can be overcome with tenacity and the right support system. Hope is knowing that after pursuing a goal, the end of that road leads to the beginning of a new adventure.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

My father, because although we have been in the USA 22 years, he has never stopped promoting the Colombian culture.



As the vice president of the Colombian Cultural Association in Kansas and Missouri, he has been on a journey to change the stereotypes associated with our country and he has never given up on this task.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

It may feel like a lonely road at times, but we are all here rooting for each other. Even if we are separated by distance, I encourage you to use the virtual tools available to find a community and get involved.

Diana recommends: Cumbia

Traditional Colombian cumbia always gets me dancing! [Totó la Momposina](#) (pictured, below, courtesy Britannica) is a brilliant singer, dancer and teacher who has dedicated her life to promoting the music of the Colombian Caribbean. [Her performance of "Tu Tambor"](#) is an

example of the ethnic diversity in Colombia and the deep African roots of our cumbia. Enjoy!



Esperanza

Lili Valderrama (she/her/ella), Educational Tech, NPS, Homestead National Historical Park, Beatrice, NE

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

I have a very new career; I was a seasonal interpretive/educational ranger for four years and enjoyed my time getting to know different parts of the country through the Park Service and now I have a permanent position at [Homestead National Historical Park](#). I had the opportunity to be a speaker at a naturalization ceremony held at [Biscayne National Park](#) in Homestead, Florida *[see picture, right]*. Sharing my immigrant story with hundreds of new American citizens is a proud moment I will never forget; I want to thank the Park Service for giving me that experience.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

It makes me prouder of my Latin heritage and being an immigrant, a person of color in a very white space like the NPS makes me feel like I am a voice for the diversity we have in our country.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

Meeting people from all walks of life with different backgrounds and experiences and feeling their love and appreciation for public lands gives me hope.



Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

My grandmother! She was always kind and dealt with so much adversity with grace and aplomb. And she cooked the best Peruvian food!

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Be as loud as you are at home. Get comfortable.



Left to right: Roman (8), John and Noah (12).

John Castañeda (he/him), Senior Human Resources Specialist, Office of Human Capital, Boulder City, NV

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

At age 40, I am blessed with a federal career spanning more than half of my life. I believe success is subjective and dynamic. At the end of each day, it's important to me to reflect upon my daily accomplishments. The sum of these accomplishments, continue to be my greatest success.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

I strive to ensure that elements of our culture can be found within my work. I take pride knowing that the foundation from which I was raised can play a part to enhance our ability to interact across all cultures and support Interior's mission, goals and objectives.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

Ironically, my mom's name is Esperanza! She has always taught my family, if you look toward your faith, you will also find hope. No matter the circumstances, I believe hope fuels our ability to remain humble, work hard and to always be kind.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

I am fortunate to have known both of my grandfathers into adulthood, each providing their own essence of wisdom, work ethic and love. My grandfather "Cuate" (Ernesto) was a true cowboy with a progressive sense of family. He valued education and hard work. My grandfather Pedro was a people person. He had a prodigious devotion to the well-being of his community, a foundation built in culture. As I continue to navigate my life and career, I often consult these gifts to benchmark my disposition, mindset, and decisions.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

In my experience, new employees should first work to understand the Department of the Interior's core values, and then assess where your unique skillset, perspectives, and experiences will complement these values. Cultural intelligence must also include recognizing and accepting that everyone has different ways of examining and solving problems, conducting business, and serving the public. I believe that while Interior recognizes the contributions and importance of Hispanic and Latin Americans in the workforce, it's up to you to find and seize positive opportunities.

Esperanza

Tanya Trujillo, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Washington, DC

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

I have been very fortunate to have an exciting variety of jobs and supportive mentors that have enabled me to become the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at the Department of the Interior. We have a great team and it is an honor to work on issues I am passionate about for the benefit of our communities and our environment.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

I am a proud New Mexican and I have grown up learning about the culture and history in the communities in my area. We have many unique examples of how we have adjusted and collaborated with each other to thrive in our beautiful surroundings. Water is a precious and sacred resource in New Mexico and I have always known about its importance. I have also always been fascinated by the tremendous role that science has played in our history here.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

I am very encouraged by the next generation of leaders that I meet, including those in my own family. My nieces and their peers give me hope for the future based on their good spirits and ingenuity.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

I am torn between Cesar Chavez and my grandmother, Guadalupe Trujillo. Cesar Chavez is a constant inspiration to me. My grandmother was one of the first Hispanic school



teachers in Northern New Mexico and she taught me a lot - from making tortillas to how to be friendly but tough at the same time.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

DOI is an open and welcoming place.

Esperanza



Nanette Gonzales (she/her), Deputy Director, Employment and Labor Law Unit, Division of General Law, Office of the Solicitor, Lakewood, CO

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

The greatest success of my federal career is having the

opportunity to lead and work with a group of talented, intelligent, and hardworking employment lawyers on a daily basis. This is made double sweet because my dad worked at DOI, so I feel a special connection.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

I am proud to be Chicana and have vivid memories of marching as a child with my parents in the Chicano movement. Although my family didn't have great wealth, we were happy and *unidas*. Family has always been at the center of Hispanic culture. As a result, some life and career choices I have made are to remain close in proximity to my family members rather than take positions that would separate us.

Spiral O'Neil (female pronouns), Contracting Specialist, BLM, Portland, OR

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

Getting to train and educate junior staff.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

I've had the opportunity of joining the Latino Leadership Program, a year-long cohort run by the Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber in Portland, Oregon.

What gives you esperanza/hope?

Hope keeps me going when I have nothing substantial or tangible to hold onto.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

One of my grandmothers used to say, "Cuando una puerta cierra, abre una ventana" [English: "When a door closes, open a window"]. Don't lose hope just because things don't turn out just like you planned because another or better opportunity may open up.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

My grandmothers were the most inspiring people I have known. They grew up with tremendous obstacles, being only allowed to attend school through sixth grade, before having to leave school to work. They stressed the importance of hard work, perseverance and education. They showed strength of character that I try to emulate.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

DOI has a wide breadth of differing disciplines and areas in which to make a career. The people have unique and interesting backgrounds and are dedicated to the work they perform for the Department so don't be shy, explore what the bureaus within DOI do.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

Stan Hockett. He was a longtime Federal government coworker who was a mentor in my line of work, and he had similar cultural experiences with being of mixed race like me.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Claim your heritage. It is your birthright, and nobody can take that away from you.



Esperanza

Annette Maes (she/her), Wildlife Repository Specialist, FWS, [National Eagle and Wildlife Repository](#), Denver, CO

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

Solicited and managed the installation of three large murals completed by three Denver local artists encompassing wildlife conservation, wildlife trafficking and Native American heritage to build partnerships with the local community.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

Being a Hispanic woman in the Federal workplace has not always been easy. We must work harder than others, always proving one's worth to those who doubt, and demonstrate resilience! In my life, I teach my boys that nothing comes for free; everything obtained takes work and determination.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

This year's administration has given me hope. DOI has its first Native American woman as Secretary and the Vice President is an Asian/Black woman, first ever in history! I never thought I would see a woman VP in my lifetime. Not to mention that 35% of this year's administration is people of color and 53% are women.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

[Paco Sanchez](#) was the first person to launch a Spanish radio station in Denver in 1954, a civil leader in his community and State Representative. There is now a Denver park and playground named after him. Mr. Sanchez and his wife attended my grandmother's wedding, and I personally knew his daughter when I briefly worked for her while in college.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Please join us! Hispanics and other people of color need to be represented more in DOI and need to have more opportunity. Don't give up, don't ever say to yourself you are not good enough. Grow a thick skin because there is always going to be

someone willing to knock you down or try to make you feel inferior, but there is also another out there willing to lend a hand and help you along by gaining experience, networking and willingness to be a great mentor.

My grandfather played guitar in a mariachi group for the love of it and of course for some extra cash. His songs were traditionally older and unfortunately I do not hear them often, but when I do it gives me very loving and fond memories of a great man!



Artists Benita Olivas (left) and Juanita Molinar (right) in front of their mural celebrating wildlife conservation.

Esperanza

Isabel Margarita Long (she/her), Program Specialist, Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Civil Rights (ODICR), Washington, DC

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

Establishing a memorandum of understanding between BLM, National Latino organizations, and the Sierra Club for the creation of a [diverse youth outings program](#). I still have a picture on my desk of the kids on the Appalachian Trail in 2010 [see image, below].

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

I bring another point of view to the table. There are not many people from the Southern Cone in the US, especially not many from Chile, my country of origin.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

That we have the first Native American Secretary of the Interior. That our leadership at DOI has a strong interest and commitment to diversity, inclusion, equity and accessibility.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

Labor activist Dolores Huerta. She is such a committed person.

At the same time she is so approachable and gentle.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

At DOI you have the opportunity to work on some of the most spectacular natural areas in this country. Working at DOI, you can ensure these lands are for the enjoyment of all people, regardless of their citizenship status, country of origins, ethnicity of race. At Interior you are welcome!



I come from [Chile](#), a country of poets. Poetry, literature, and arts play a big role in our culture. In terms of the physical features, our natural boundaries, the Andes and the Pacific Ocean, are our societal reference. The majestic Andes remind us of our remoteness, the thin and long country in the Southern Cone, and the immense Pacific Ocean, with its cold water and threatening tsunamis, remind us that we are not here to control nature. I'm personally in love with our [Atacama Desert](#), the driest desert in the world. For me, it represents minimalist beauty taken to a natural context.

Isabel recommends:

[Altazor](#) by [Vicente Huidobro](#).

"Inventa mundos nuevos y cuida tu palabra; el adjetivo, cuando no da vida, mata."

In English: "Invent new worlds and take care of your word; the adjective, when it does not give life, kills." - Huidobro



Esperanza

Christian Buenrostro, Mechanical Engineer, USBR, Fresno, CA

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

Mentorship - when I joined USBR, I felt lost and didn't know what to do. I found great mentors that I consider my friends. They were able to guide me through different processes and took me under their wing to teach me all they know about the projects and how to resolve different issues that come along with the job.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

By volunteering in science workshops and spreading the word about science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) careers in low income communities of California's Central Valley.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

José M. Hernández [*see below*]. He came from a migrant family and worked his way through school and never gave up to become an astronaut.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

To keep working towards your goals, always ask to do better everyday and take any opportunity that becomes available.



NASA engineer **José M. Hernández** wanted to fly in space ever since he heard that the first Hispanic-American had been chosen to travel into space. "I was hoeing a row of sugar beets in a field near Stockton, Calif., and I heard on my transistor radio that Franklin Chang-Diaz had been selected for the Astronaut Corps," says Hernandez, who was a senior in high school at the time. "I was already interested in science and engineering," Hernandez remembers, "but that was the moment I said, 'I want to fly in space.' And that's something I've been striving for each day since then." That hard work paid off when he was selected to begin training as a mission specialist as part of the 2004 astronaut candidate class. [Read more here.](#) *Photo courtesy NASA.*

Esperanza



**Leonor C. Perez, Property Management Specialist, NPS,
[Yosemite National Park, CA](#)**

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

My first great success was learning all about property management. I fell in love with my job and have enjoyed it. It was not easy and at first kind of rough as a property clerk and through the years the more I learned the more I was promoted. My second greatest success was being a part of making a bit of history when I was asked to be part of the group that helped during the dedication of the [Cesar Chavez National Monument](#). It was a moment that took me back to my childhood as I reread the history behind the movement that he championed. During this time I was honored to meet [Dolores Huerta](#), who also played a critical role in that movement.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

Being Hispanic in NPS has had its challenges, but I had enough faith in God to see me through all those challenges. Being raised as a field worker I learned to push hard at what I wanted

to attain and having a Hispanic mother pushing us to keep going and not settle for what was at hand. I have a wonderful job that I truly enjoy and can take ownership of. I love helping my park keep on top of our property and help others understand the whys and why nots of property.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

I always knew that no matter how tough or tight anything gets, there is always a way out of it. There is nothing that should take away the joy of life. Hope in the fact that things will always get better if you look for the bright side of things.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

My mother, my aunts (her sisters) and my godmother (my father's younger sister). My mother because she pushed us to be better than what we started out in life to get to were we needed to get. Her sisters because they were great examples of what it takes to succeed in life, not as millionaires but as real life attainable role models. My godmother because she was a very strong woman and worked hard to attain what she needed in life.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Never underestimate your ability. If you want something then work hard for it. Even if you think nobody is paying attention, your hard work and endurance will earn you the respect of everyone you meet. Be respectful even during times of trials and hardships; never fight fire with fire. Nothing good will come of a poor work attitude. If you want respect in your role as an employee then earn the respect of your coworkers and supervisors. Bottom line work hard, never give up!

[Photo, above: Leonor with Dolores Huerta, courtesy NPS.]

Esperanza

Nancy Fernandez (she/her/ella), Park Ranger, FWS San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex, San Diego, CA

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

My greatest success in my federal career is getting this job. This type of career is something unusual and not always heard of in my community. Nothing makes me feel prouder than being in a position where I can prove to myself and others that my family's sacrifice has not been in vain. Although at first I was seen as challenging traditional gender roles, now people are warming up to the idea of having women in leadership roles.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

Being a Latina in a majority White sector has made it very clear that there needs to be greater representation of people of color in these fields. This is so important because communities of color are the most affected by all the factors accelerating climate change. In order to reach these underserved conservation constituents, we need to find ways to make science communication relevant and effective. My cultural background and my career platform has allowed me to better reach and engage with the large and diverse audience that I am surrounded by.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

Seeing the smiling faces of kids and adults when they experience something new in the outdoors is what brings me much joy and hope for the future. I am working hard to share my love of the outdoors and if someone is able to find their own connection to the land, then I feel like planet Earth has earned another public land steward.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

It is very difficult for me to think of a singular person that has inspired me. I feel like I am a product of a community filled with collective strength and unfettered love. This community has shown me a deeply rooted connection and respect for the



land that feeds and shelters us. Every day I carry with me much love and appreciation for the land and share those feelings with others thanks to this career opportunity.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

There will be moments in your career that will challenge you. Before you come across one of these moments, start reaching out to people that will have your best interest in mind. Everyone needs someone that can listen and really understand what you are going through. They will be your biggest advocates and your biggest supporters. **[Cont'd]**

Esperanza

More from Nancy Fernandez:

My cultural influences are a reflection of both sides of my upbringing, one in a traditional Mexican household and the other in American culture. When I think of my absolute favorite musician, it will always be the legendary Mexican-American singer [Selena Quintanilla](#). Singing along with Selena playing from a boombox while unapologetically tossing my head and performing for an imaginary audience is one of my earliest childhood memories. Much hasn't changed since then!

Food is one of those topics that I took for granted growing up. My mom always cooked delicious meals and although I helped out a bit, I was never serious about learning how to make meals on my own. Once I moved away from home, I didn't

expect to need to learn how to make food just for myself. My entire life I had only seen my mom cook in family size batches and that is the only way I knew how to measure. It was such a learning curve having to teach myself to cook in smaller portions. Now that I have had plenty of practice cooking in smaller portions, I have also mastered cooking from the heart meaning that I don't measure much of what I cook. Experienced cooks reading this will instantly know that I am terrible at baking.

When my favorite music is playing and food is cooking in the kitchen, these sensory sounds and smells instantly reconnect me with who I am and I become grounded. This is the same feeling I get when I spend time outdoors. All these experiences are simply an extension of who I really am.



Known as the 'Queen of Tejano Music,' [Selena Quintanilla](#) was a beloved Latin recording artist. She made her recording debut in the 1980s, going on to become an award-winning recording artist in the Latin music scene with albums like *Amor*

Prohibido and *Selena Live*. In 1995 at the age of just 23, Selena was murdered by the founder of her fan club. Her last album, *Dreaming of You*, was released posthumously in 1995. Image courtesy [Britannica](#).

Esperanza

Maria Virginia Morales, Realty Specialist Lead for Rights-of-Way, Comm Sites and Film Permits, BLM, Reno, NV

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

Becoming a State Lead for the Lands and Realty Program.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

It makes me work hard at what I do and strive to be the best and to continue to learn.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

Knowing that I make an impact and am blazing a trail for those coming up behind me.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

[Cesar Chavez](#), because my parents came here from Mexico and were migrant farmworkers.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Be proud of who you are and where you came from and don't lose that connection to your Latin heritage.



“We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community. Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.”

- Cesar Chavez

Esperanza

Maria de Jesus Rodriguez (she/her), Administrative Clerk, USBR, Glen Canyon Dam, Page, AZ

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

Being the sole paleontologist for [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#).

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

Greatly as there are very few first-generation latinas in the field of STEM.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

Esperanza is being kept by continuously fighting for opportunities when they arise. Meeting children who have never seen a person of color in a park ranger uniform speaking in Spanish is what motivates me to keep "luchando" [fighting].

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?



My mother who immigrated from El Salvador in 1977 to build a better life for her children.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

The opportunities are endless; all you've got to do is work hard for them.



Eric Perez (he/him), IT Specialist, USGS, Golden, CO

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

I am new to the federal government but the highlight so far has been meeting my fellow brothers and sisters in arms. I completed 10 years in the US Air Force.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life?

I am very proud of my heritage and wear it as a badge of honor, I was raised in a very poor, rural town in South Texas and had to grow up strong. My hope is that not only my nephews and nieces will see what can be accomplished when you

have a goal but all the Hispanic/Latinx community can see we are no longer the minority and we can do anything.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

My mother and father, they believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Be collaborative; the organization is a blend of people from all walks of life and they all encourage success in each individual's life.

Esperanza

Solim Garcia, IT Specialist, NPS, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, Fredericksburg, VA

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

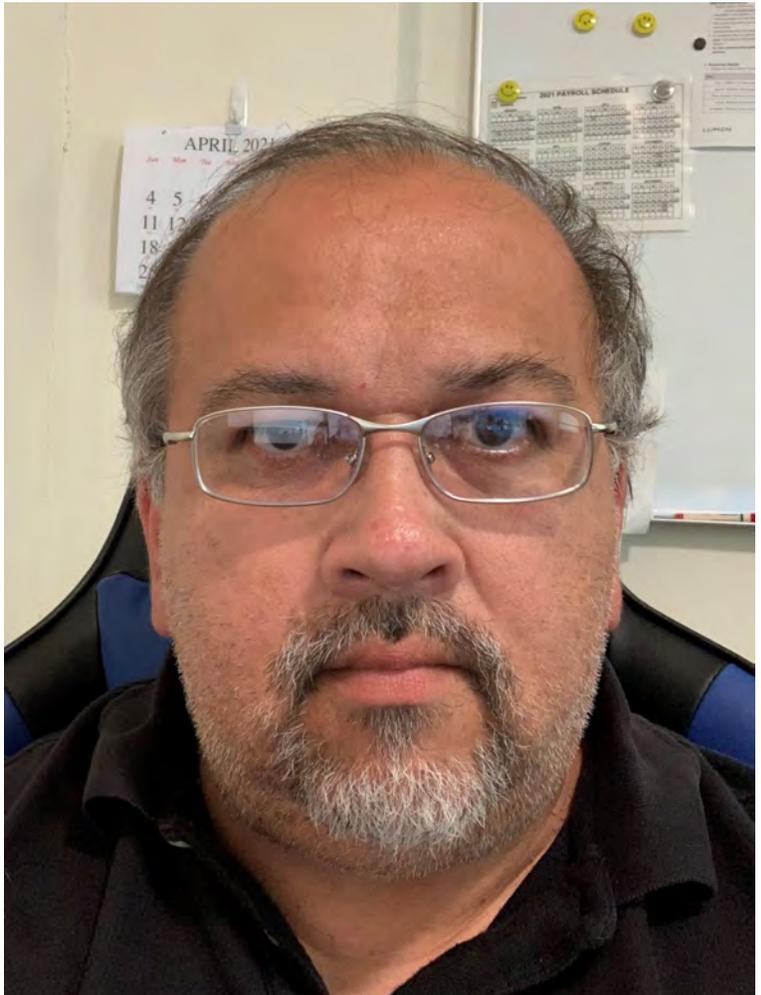
Landing a job in the National Park Service and being able to attend Generating Organizational Advancement and Leadership (GOAL) Academy. The park service mission and my own ideals match hand in hand, and it takes little if any effort to throw myself into the work I do because it is so enjoyable. I enjoy being able to help and assist others do their job to the best of their abilities with the resources given. I have witnessed programs and people shine, once you remove the barriers to their jobs like inadequate IT technology or not enough computers to accommodate the workforce. Once you can see the results of not getting stressed out in the office, you know you're onto something good. So much so that you can see the workers can get back into the field and shine their brightest at their respective jobs. GOAL Academy was almost a year long and it impacted me a lot, letting me learn about myself and how to lead others.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

As the son of a migrant farm worker, I know the value of hard work and where those tomatoes come from and what it took to get to the kitchen table. Granted, I'm not getting my hands dirty like I did when I helped my dad in the fields, but I learned to be persistent and loyal. The traits of loyalty and camaraderie in Hispanic families are strong, and I try to bring that to the work site. When I say "Park Service family," I really mean **family**, so the respect and comfort I try to provide my people (my parks) helps me to help them the best way I can.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

I have hope to be able to heal myself. But most of all I have hope in being able to make a difference in seeing others succeed. A park IT Specialist's job is to not only work on policies and restrictions and security implementations, but also on working with the park personnel and making sure they can do their jobs.



What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Keep tight to beliefs from your culture and heritage. I feel safe at the park service, which lets me open up to my park service family. There are many great offices/parks/programs out there that can use our heritage in helping others understand our mission (work and personal). Explore what DOI has to offer.

My favorite food from when I was younger and even today is cheese and green onion enchiladas. I remember how Grandma used to make it and this memory I cannot forget. I try to recreate it, and each time, I'm judging it to how I remember hers tasted. My dad also makes the same recipe and we still compare, and it makes us smile thinking back to family gatherings and the food.

Esperanza

Haley Johnson (she/her), Visitor Use Assistant, NPS, Grand Canyon National Park, AZ

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

As an Astronomy Ranger at [Glen Canyon National Recreation Area](#) and [Bryce Canyon National Park](#), I am proud at the number of young minds I inspired to look up and learn more about the night sky. Watching their eyes light up when they were able to comprehend the infinite reasons for protecting our dark skies. I am always looking for opportunities to reach out to our visitors and answer their questions, but helping them grow and learn something new or expand upon their current knowledge, that is what makes my heart soar.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

I feel being a Hispanic female has made me more approachable, especially here in the Southwest; I provide a safe place for many visitors. I've had many positive interactions with Spanish-speaking visitors and they were so grateful to be understood in their first language. I feel this opportunity for myself and our visitors has made a big difference in their Park experience. My life and career have been both challenged and inspired by these interactions. I have worked hard to learn more about the Colombian side of my family.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

Every day I have hope in humanity. In the darkest moments I still believe that everything will turn out well for us all in the end. Working for the National Park Service has been an absolute joy but there is always room to improve. It is my hope to stay with NPS and learn and grow at every opportunity.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

My grandfather, Juan Forero. He came to the United States from South America with not a penny to his name. He worked as a dishwasher and lived in a tiny studio above the restaurant for years. He would send his paychecks home for my grandmother and their three children. Without my



grandfather's hard work and dedication to his family I would never have had the opportunity to grow up in Arizona. The life given to me by my parents is all thanks to my grandfather and I will always love with his memory in my heart.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Don't be afraid to be proud of your heritage. Not all Hispanic people have the opportunity to have grown up surrounded by Spanish speakers. To embrace your family and who they are, where they come from is a gift and I would be honored to have such a history at my fingertips.

Don't be embarrassed to embrace your family and your family's past. It is a beautiful thing.



The Milky Way Galaxy over Bryce Canyon National Park. Image by Andy Porter, courtesy NPS.

"The Latina in me is an ember that blazes forever." - Sonia Sotomayor

Esperanza



Lucas Lucero (he/him), Senior Technical Advisor, BLM, Phoenix, AZ

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

As the BLM's Project Manager, I helped facilitate the successful permitting of the 300 megawatt Milford Wind Energy Project and 90-mile transmission line in southern Utah. This was the first utility scale wind project on public and state lands in Utah. I am proud of the teamwork of all of those involved.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

Being Hispanic has certainly shaped how I view and relate with everyone. It has fostered a sense of awareness that different cultures have unique perspectives, traditions and connections to the public lands. It has instilled in me a sense of humility, empathy, pride and community. It has also helped me to

remain open to learning and fostering diverse solutions to the challenges I come across in my career and life.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

I feel hopeful when I see diverse cultures, races, and communities being supported, valued and serving as leaders in the workplace, in my community and across the country.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

The most inspiring person is my maternal grandmother Bernice Holland. She instilled in me a sense of family, hard work, pride and tenacity. She was a constant reminder that you don't need to have money, connections, fancy titles or degrees to be a successful leader and mentor. She shared her opinions and knowledge (whether you asked for it or not), she kept us well fed, she hosted many rousing card games, she supported the church and never missed a birthday, baseball game or picnic. For all that and more I will always be grateful.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Your Hispanic/Latinx heritage is part of what makes you a unique and a valuable part of the DOI team. There are many opportunities to serve the public and your fellow agency employees so keep an open mind, work hard and never stop exploring all the opportunities available to you.

Growing up in southern New Mexico I love the green and red chiles! There is nothing that compares to the aroma of roasting green chile. I have fond memories of my family roasting Hatch green chile, baking empanadas with peaches from our trees, and steaming red chile tamales (we put slivers of juniper wood in the water pot for added flavor). I recall trips to the beautiful Gila National Forest to pick piñones (pine nuts). We would pick until we filled many coffee cans. Some would later be eaten raw and some would be lightly oven roasted. My grandmother Bernice made the best oatmeal cookies with black walnuts from her own tree. I ate so many I thought I would burst. Ahh good times indeed!



HATCH CHILE is a unique pepper grown in the Hatch Valley of New Mexico. While other people may say they have better chile, there is no chile in the world like that produced in the Hatch Valley. The Hatch Valley was once a floodplain for the Rio Grande, which is why it

has the nutrient-rich soil that makes the most fantastic chile. The temperatures also fluctuate in the Hatch Valley, which is another unique growing condition. There is nowhere else in the world with the same growing conditions for this delicious chile. Photo by Hayley Sanchez

Esperanza

Anabell Goldberg, Budget Analyst, BLM, Phoenix, AZ

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

Although I feel I have not reached my greatest success yet, I believe I am on the correct path to a successful career. I started my career in 2008 with the BLM AZ as the State Office Receptionist (GS-05) and am currently a GS-12! Along my path, I have had great mentors that have encouraged me to keep reaching but never forget to give back to those who are just starting their path.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

Being of Hispanic heritage has helped me participate in special projects and accomplish tasks that otherwise would not be possible. Such as when I worked in the Public Room, I was able to read and compose email replies in Spanish to the public from various Hispanic countries around the world who were interested in vacationing in our great state of Arizona. Special projects such as the technical advisor of a small group of BLM employees who helped translate the Junior Ranger book to Spanish, participant in helping develop a BLM Survey in Spanish, and currently I am the Special Emphasis Program Manager – Hispanic Employment Program for BLM AZ.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

I find esperanza when I see my Hispanic brothers and sisters in various positions within our Federal Government, from an entry position to a position in the Supreme Court! But I feel the most esperanza when I hear or see that our youth are being promoted/advancing in their careers! Arriva mi gente!

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

Very early in my career I met Esther Velasquez from the



National Operations Center; at the time she was the supervisor. I was in awe of her and here she was a Latina like me, achieving so much! It gave me esperanza that I could reach further in my career. She has no clue the impact she had on me all those years ago.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

The best insight would be to ask questions of those who are further in their careers. Don't be afraid to reach out to them; we all started from the bottom of the ladder. But mostly find several mentors to help guide you, don't limit yourself to one mentor. Each of those mentors brings a special set of skills that will help shape

you and your career. Vamos Adelante!

My fondest memories was as a child making fresh flour tortillas and crepes with my abuelita. Yes, crepes! Although my heritage is Mexican-Spanish, I grew up with sweet crepes. The grandchildren (me included) would be the assembly line, one to spread the butter, the next would add the jam, followed by the cinnamon, and lastly the person who would roll the crepe. We actually called them "rollitos" and it wasn't until I was in my teens when I learned their proper name, "crepes." Now I have passed the "rollitos" tradition to my grand-nieces and nephews. As we were making these sweet delicious rollitos, you could hear Los Panchos (bolero music) or Paco de Lucia in the background. My grandmother, in her youth, played the guitar. To this day, I still listen to Los Panchos or Paco de Lucia and think back fondly on those memories in the kitchen with my abuelita and primos.

Esperanza

Daniel Villanueva (he/him/his), Division Manager of Occupational Safety and Health and Emergency Management, USBR, Sacramento, CA

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

The greatest success is in my mission: Provide a safe and healthful workplace free from recognized hazards. Over the course of my federal career, I've been involved in Occupational Safety and Health in various ways; from enforcement to advisory roles, but the mission to protect our most valuable assets - our people, has never changed.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

It's impacted every part of my life, even before I became cognizant of it. My parent's language is Spanish and they were born in Texas where the language was primarily spoken. My parents gave me the gift of the language and it's proven to be quite useful. I learned of our country's legacy of racism and genocide of the indigenous people and understand that I may be judged by something other than the content of my character. It's motivated me to strive to educate myself and be the humanist that I am.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

My hope is best stated by Cesar Chavez and is as relevant today as it was when he said it: "History will judge societies and governments — and their institutions — not by how big they are or how well they serve the rich and the powerful, but by how effectively they respond to the needs of the poor and the helpless." It is my continuing hope that we overcome the barriers that make us selfish and not think about those less fortunate than us.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

The most inspiring person was not a person but a group of people I worked with. I was 13 years old and worked with migrant farm workers, many of whom were my cousins, in the



onion fields in/around Gilcrest, CO. I realized that my summer job wasn't just temporary for many people. I admired the way people supported one another while toiling sun up to sun down in the oppressive weather conditions. I also realized that we were looked down on because of the work we were doing by some in the community and by employers. These people continue to be my heroes!

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Working for DOI can be a rewarding personal and professional experience. Keep working on your personal and professional qualifications and strive to be in a position that is under represented by minorities: Leadership.

Esperanza



Jorge Balboa, Historic Architect, NPS, Daniel Beard Research Center, Everglades National Park, FL

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

Participating in the preservation of several historic properties for future generations to enjoy.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

Being able to see the world through a Hispanic "lens" and share that unique view as an architect.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

Hope through preservation is at the core of my philosophy as a Hispanic architect. Helping raise awareness of our past using the power of architecture and preservation.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

[Mario Romañach](#), Cuban architect [*see below*]. He was my hero growing up. His talent as a Cuban master architect is legendary. Fleeing communist Cuba at the height of his career in the late 1950s, he came to the United States with nothing, like so many thousands of Cubans, my parents included. Romañach became a professor of architecture at the University of Pennsylvania and continued his storied career here in America.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Embrace your heritage and let it empower you.



At left: a stunning mid-century Cuban minimalist design. Residence of José Noval Cueto, 1949. Architects Silverio Bosch and Mario Romañach were awarded that year with the Gold Medal of the College of Architects of Cuba. Image © [Docomomo Internacional](#).

Esperanza

Jacqueline Olivera (she/her), Park Ranger, FWS, Kilauea, Kauai, HI

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

Getting a full-time job in conservation. This field is very competitive and it's hard to find something full-time that pays you well.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

I come into any office with a beautiful cultural background that gives me insight on the views and feelings of a large portion of this country.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

I hope that more of my people join conservation as a career

choice and also make up a bigger portion of the federal workforce. We are a large part of this country, but when you see the federal workforce, it doesn't appear that way.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

My college classmates Lauren and Selene for their perseverance and amazing attitudes. They are hard working, easy to talk to, and just overall delightful people. The three of us landed federal jobs in different agencies a few years after college and I really enjoy watching their journeys in conservation and in life.

What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

Don't tone yourself down for anyone. Be proud of your background and don't be afraid to teach your team some Spanish!



Esperanza

Maricela Constantino (she/her), Endangered Species Biologist, FWS, Washington, DC

What would you say was the greatest success of your federal career?

I'd have to say the recent [delisting of the gray wolf as an endangered species](#) due to recovery. I worked with an amazing team on this rulemaking for several years, including in the midst of a global pandemic. While controversial, I am proud to say that we based our analysis on the best available science and application of [Endangered Species Act](#) policy.

How has being of Hispanic or Latinx heritage impacted your life and career?

I am often one of the few people of color in just about every setting (classroom, work, neighborhood, etc). While I spent many years wishing I wasn't "different," I can now honestly say that I am finally feeling empowered to embrace these differences and be true to myself.

What gives you esperanza/hope and how has it played a role in your career and life?

I have hope for the future. The topic of sustainability has become more mainstream now than ever before. The [UCLA Sustainability Committee](#) defines this term as the integration of environmental health, social equity and economic vitality. I have sincere hope that the social equity component of this definition will finally get the attention it needs. Hope plays a role in my career and life, as I always have hope that my actions will make a difference to those who come after me.

Who is the most inspiring person of Hispanic or Latinx heritage you've known and why?

My maternal grandmother, **Antonia**. She was the eldest daughter in a family of 17 children. She sacrificed her own education, only reaching the 3rd grade, so she could help raise her siblings. She went on to raise her own family in addition to working outside the home for most of her life. I attribute my own success in life to the sacrifices she made for her family. Grandma Toni was never idle and her work ethic continues to inspire me to always do my best.



What insight would you share with individuals of Hispanic or Latinx heritage joining DOI?

“Be proud of who you are. You will bring unique perspectives to every project you work on. This is exactly what DOI needs.”

Pictured, above and on the cover: front row, left to right, is Sophia (age 10), Luca (8) and Antonia Constantino (12). Back row: Maricela Constantino. Photo taken at [Owls Head Trail at Groton State Forest in Vermont](#) by Paul Constantino.

★ VETERAN SPOTLIGHT ★



Ray Suazo Arizona State Director Bureau of Land Management

Ray Suazo is an Air Force veteran who served four years on active duty as an F-15 crew chief in the U.S. and Germany. Following his military service, Mr. Suazo joined the U.S. Forest Service as a Range Technician and served in various positions with the Service, culminating with assignment as Deputy Forest Supervisor of the [Tonto National Forest](#) in Arizona.

Mr. Suazo joined the BLM in 2006, where he served as Chief Information Officer, Deputy State Director for Business and Support Services, and Associate State Director before joining the Senior Executive Service and being sworn in as the [BLM Arizona State Director](#) in February 2012.

A native of New Mexico, Mr. Suazo earned a B.A. in Management Information Systems from New Mexico Highlands University. He treasures his time in the Air Force and says the Air Force core values of ***“Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do”*** helped forge the solid foundation on which he’s built his 33-year federal career.

HONOR ★ VALOR ★ SERVICE

The DOI Veterans Resource Group is here for you. Please reach out to doi_vets@ios.doi.gov

YOU CAN BE THE FACE OF CHANGE



Belonging and Achieving

"My brother Bobby was born on November 3, 1970 and at 3 months old was diagnosed with Down Syndrome.

"In his younger years, he enjoyed participating in the Special Olympic games. He loved to socialize at the events and was very proud of his accomplishments. He decorated his room with all his winning ribbons and looked forward to the next event.

"I'm grateful for the sense of belonging and achievement that the Special Olympics gave him and others with disabilities. This organization continues to have a profound impact on individuals with disabilities and their families.

"Bobby was a real joy and would always do funny things to make people laugh.

"Sadly, Bobby passed away on July 6, 2006 at the young age of 35, but I will always remember the joy he had participating in the Special Olympic games."

Jennifer Stevenson, Business and Administrative Division

Ready to give? It's so easy to show you care: just click on the link below, pick your charities and select the amount you wish to donate. Thanks for your generosity!



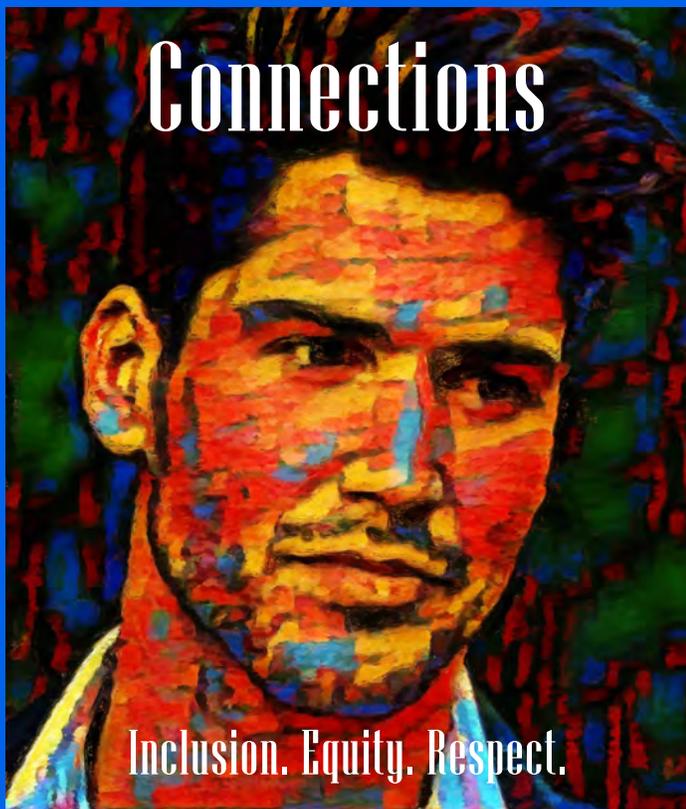
givecfc.org

CONNECTIONS THIRD THURSDAYS ZOOM 3:00 PM EASTERN

Each month, the **Connections** Team conducts a roundtable discussion as a follow up to that month's issue. Although speakers and panelists will vary, the roundtable discussions will be a safe and respectful place to discuss the content, ask questions of the team and share ideas, insights and stories to keep the conversation going.

Please join us! Just click on the date/time to register. Thank you!

November	Native American Heritage Month	Thursday, November 18, 2021 at 3:00 PM Eastern
December	Holiday Traditions from Around the World	Thursday, December 16, 2021 at 3:00 PM Eastern



The Connections Team is an engaged group of talented volunteers from across Interior who produce Connections Magazine, sponsor roundtable discussions and seek to foster greater understanding around inclusion, equity and respect.

[Contact us here](#)



Interior's Employee Assistance Program provider, **Espyr**, is here for employees and their dependents. **Espyr** provides confidential counseling and consultation at no cost via

telephone or other virtual means. A live counselor is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 800-869-0276 or visit [espyr.com](https://www.espyr.com) (Password: InteriorEAP).