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HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH: EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

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9/15/2023

Since the 1968 declaration of a week of celebration by then-president Lyndon B. Johnson and, later with President Ronald Reagan extending the festival to a month, from September 15 to October 15, we celebrate, in the United States, NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH.

Through the commemoration of National Hispanic Heritage Month, this Nation, on the one hand, recognizes and celebrates, as its own, the past and present legacy and contributions of the Hispanic community – throughout all spheres of society (religious, military, cultural, health, educational, scientific, political, economic, cultural) – to the progress, development, greatness, and prosperity of this North American society.

But, on the other hand, this celebration requires Hispanics who live here to reflect, during this month, not only on our current situation as migrants, our principal cultural and social contributions to the United States, and our best desires and hopes for a better present and future, but also and especially, that we ask ourselves: What are we doing, as a Hispanic community in this Nation, to achieve our goals and dreams?

A text does not exist without context. Reality does not advance and transform without starting from a knowledge of reality. Our current context and global and North American reality is one of enormous crisis, marked by countless urgencies, difficulties, and problems in all areas of human coexistence and life in society. We are witnessing a change of epoch, a transition from modernity to postmodernity, and, simultaneously, an era of significant changes.

In the United States, we are witnessing, as in all humanity, the tremendous social consequences of all kinds left to us by the pandemic, serious and violent political polarization, partisan fanaticism, the discrediting of traditional parties, the arrival of new waves of migration, the demand for better and greater social recognition by those who - traditionally - were considered minority groups, to increasingly serious and frequent catastrophic events of nature, greater participation of women in various decision-making positions in social life, greater political awareness of young people, and greater electoral participation.

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Technology has transformed communications, the commercial and entertainment worlds, and changes in the traditional configuration of family and the number of its members are looming. The perception of the United States as an exemplary democracy within and outside our borders is changing. Fewer Americans profess some religious belief. More people live alone. Labor and economic difficulties persist for the majority, and the growing Hispanic presence nationwide continues– now of Venezuelans – as the majority-minority.

The United States cannot progress if the Hispanic community here does not. On the contrary, the Hispanic community in the United States cannot progress while the serious social problems that we all know and suffer from daily persist. We cannot remain idle; the present and future we yearn for is built by all of us, every day, in all the areas in which we create our daily existence.

The transformation of our reality of today and tomorrow presents significant challenges. We must abandon the selfishness, partisanship, and petty patriotism that breeds violence, divisions, and isolated ghetto lives. We have to bequeath our culture and learn and adopt the culture of the Nation that welcomes us. We must learn to integrate ourselves into this culture without undermining our origins, history, values, language, and culture. We must learn to integrate without diluting or alienating ourselves.

But integration into the dominant culture requires, first, our Hispanic integration - our integration - as originating from different Latin American countries but with similar past, present, and future origins, histories, languages, and cultures.

The Hispanic community in the United States must be instructed, trained, and educated. Social advances in academia, in the scientific, technical, and technological spheres, require us to be up to date in all areas of human knowledge. There is no progress without education and training.

Only through comprehensive, permanent, and sufficient education and training can we be assured of the best and greatest participation in this Nation's social and, especially, political life. Well-trained and guided by Hispanic leaders, who are also trained and educated, we can have access to representative and decision-making spaces in this Nation's government and destiny.

Our civic and political participation has to be a search, not of selfish and personal interests and ambitions, but a political task understood as a search for the common good, for the good of the entire Nation - and with it, the good of the Hispanic community here present. To abstain and evade our responsibility and political participation is to leave the construction of our present and our future in the United States in the hands of others.

This citizen and political participation, in all areas of public life, must also be a well-formed, qualified participation in truth, self-criticism, and criticism. This participation must

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be free of inferiority complexes and one that invites, guides, and points out new methods and paths for the progress of all.

We all know the daily, undignified, and painful situation that ostracism brings and the thousands of sufferings that so many of our immigrant brothers and sisters live, who yearn to come here or have arrived here in search of better living conditions than those they achieved in our Latin American countries.

Achieving better living conditions, better and greater political recognition, and greater government participation, and looking to immigration reform and our better positioning as citizens of this Nation, is a goal that challenges and commits us all. This is a task and an irreplaceable and unpostponable responsibility to which we all must dedicate our best energy and drive.

The search for better conditions for all immigrants in this Nation, a nation of immigrants, is a task of humanity and justice, a task with which – until now – the governments and politicians of our day have not prioritized and to which it falls to us to defend, build, and achieve.

Our daily efforts, work, and struggles in this Nation and our citizen and political participation in the United States must echo in our countries of origin. Political corruption, social injustices, inequality, and a thousand forms of death in Latin America can no longer be the excuse and cause of the suffering of millions who are forced to risk and leave everything to undertake unworthy and inhumane migratory conditions.

We all have a responsibility in this Nation. But we do not forget that the greatest share of responsibility in the tragic migratory phenomenon lies – by action or omission – with the leaders of all social areas, the leaders, politicians, and rulers of Latin America.

May this HISPANIC NATIONAL HERITAGE MONTH not only represent a month of parades and celebrations, but also one of reaffirmation of our presence in the United States through union and action, which enables hope for our present and future in the United States.

The time has passed to wait for what the United States can do for you, for us, for Hispanics. Remembering John F. Kennedy, let us ask ourselves: What can we all do for America? Now is the time to return to the historic national motto: *"E pluribus unum:" out of many, one.*

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