

FITCHBURG YOUR STORY: Latin Talk - Angel Viruet

["Saxifrage" choral music plays, performed by the Fitchburg State University Choirs]

Prof. Kisha Tracy (intro): Welcome to the Fitchburg State University Perseverantia Podcast network. This is the Fitchburg Your Story series in which Fitchburg State students tell the stories that make our city and university unique.

["Saxifrage" fades out]

[brassy latin merengue plays over the transition]

Angel Viruet: Hello and welcome to Latin Talk. I'm Angel Viuret and today we're getting into cultural heritage of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, the community of the school, Fitchburg State. And we'll also be talking about how the history, identity and community mold together to create a new cultural view.

[brassy latin merengue plays over the transition]

I'm gonna start at part one, which is Fitchburg's cultural landscape. Like Fitchburg, the city is a beautiful city. If you walk around, you'll see a lot of beautiful things. There's a lot of sites to see, areas to walk, knowledge to know. And with that said, I like to say Fitchburg is a city with a lot of cultural diversity. Latinos make up about 30 % of its population and out of those 30%, Puerto Ricans make up the largest group of 22.2%, which also is followed by Mexicans and Uruguay as the making out for the top Latinos in Fitchburg. This beautiful community has greatly added to the city's cultural layout.

At Fitchburg State, the Center of Diversity and Inclusion, also known as CDI, plays an important part in making an inclusive environment. CDI offers programs that promote, appreciate, and respect for differences, giving chances for exploration, understanding, and celebration. Yeah, I've personally gone to one of these events, they're great events, I think they're fun. Everybody's there, doesn't matter color, skin, ethnic background, everybody's there and they're all through one. They're all in one basically.

Through programming and mentorship and dialogue, the CDI supports each person personally by seeing and respecting all cultures, views and experiences. This is very true. I've gone to the CDI office countless times, you know, just to either chill there because they're very welcoming or to ask questions and them asking me questions. They're great people. It's a great thing at Fitchburg State. I'm very glad to be here.

Now I'd to about my friend Izzy. I got his feedback on this and his whole point of view. Izzy, a student at Fitchburg State, shared his thoughts. He longs for school to add more melanated and Hispanic culture alongside the white culture on campus.

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Angel Viruet (cont'd): Izzy - he's Caribbean as well. I'm Puerto Rican, I'm Caribbean. I kind of see where he's coming from. But as of late, it's just been so inclusive. It's a great thing. It's something special and it creates a broader and bigger community, which is what Fitchburg State is. He is grateful and happy to be in a community such as this.

Now let's talk about Fitchburg's architecture. Fitchburg's architecture and landmarks tell stories of its past, including the immigrant population. Like I've seen this firsthand myself walking around. I spent the summer here in Fitchburg. I got to walk around and see landmarks and the historical sites. I believe saving these sites and reusing them as community centers or museums can be important connections to the city's heritage. Sharing images and documentaries and narratives online can further help awareness and appreciation of Fitchburg's cultural history.

[brassy latin merengue plays over the transition]

Moving on to part two, we have university initiatives and community involvement. Fitchburg State is working to show and celebrate its diverse community. In 2024, the university gave honor to Hispanic Heritage Month with its first raising ceremony, symbolizing the contribution of Latino communities to the university and society.

The events organized by the community and the CDI with music and conversation on Latino perspective, culture, significance, impact. The flag seen between Hammond and the alumni quad represents the diversity of the different countries and regions such as Peru, Colombia, Spain, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, New Guinea, and more.

The theme for Hispanic Heritage Month 2024 was Pioneer of Change, Shaping the Future Together through the spirit of innovation, resilience and unity defines the Hispanic experience. The celebration includes various programs to honor and encourage the study of the important role of Hispanic and Latino communities in history and society.

Dr. Donna Hodge, the new president of Fitchburg State, just started efforts to designate the university as an Hispanic-serving institution, also known as an HSI. With this, she aims not to only support the Hispanic population, but to also promote diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community.

Adding lectures on the city's history and traditions of its diverse communities into the university curriculum can create students' connections to Fitchburg, the city. These sessions could also be led by teachers or residents who are okay sharing their experiences and giving authentic views into the city's cultural landscape. This semester, we have been lucky enough to host a lot of special guest speakers who have shown, given us our understanding of cultural heritage.

[brassy latin merengue plays over the transition]

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Angel Viruet (cont'd): Moving on to three, we have personal perspective and cultural heritage. Personal stories are powerful for connections. I have interviewed students in the community and members show a lot of perspective on the heritage and identity. I interviewed a couple people. Ms. Horne, a faculty member at Fitchburg State, views cultural heritage as a tapestry of tradition passed down through generations. She speaks about the university's 130-year history, showing an emphasis on how stories, traditions, and even campus legends are shared from class to class, with alumni staying active in school events.

Isaiah Thomas-Pierre, a student, believes cultural heritage is about the diverse way people live their lives, their language, food, faiths, and daily practices. It seems that Fitchburg's cultural heritage is deeply influenced by its Caribbean and Black communities. He appreciates how the mix of Hispanic, Black, White, and other communities and other cultures on the campus creates a broader, more inclusive community. Isaiah shares his thanks for being part of such a diverse environment.

And lastly, we have Matt Dre, a Fitchburg State basketball player, associates cultural heritage with family tradition and values imparted by his parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles. He sees Fitchburg State in a quickly growing cultural hub where backgrounds and teams come together and make mutual respect and unity.

These varied perspectives inspire the title of the podcast episode. Cultural Heritage, the different views, thoughts, and things that mean to you. It underscores the nature of the cultural heritage and the importance of being aware, diverse point of views.

[brassy latin merengue plays over remainder of the narration]

In conclusion, believe Fitchburg and Fitchburg State exemplify how embracing cultural diversity enriches a community. Through initiatives like the CDI, the HSI efforts, and the community engagement programs, the university is making an environment where every culture is celebrated and respected by sharing stories, saving historical sites, and even honor our shared history that values diversity.

Thank you for joining me on Latin Talk. Let's continue exploring and celebrating the vibrant cultures that make Fitchburg a unique and inclusive community. Thank you for listening.

[brassy latin merengue punctuates in conclusion]

Out.

[Perseverantia Network theme fades in]

Gabriel Rivera: You're listening to Perseverantia, the Fitchburg State Podcast Network.

[Perseverantia Network theme fades out]