

Being a Brown(er) Latina

By Camila Cardoso-Herrera, Contributing Writer

National Hispanic Heritage Month began on Sep. 15, and those who have stereotyped the Latinx community will be wearing Mexican hats because that is the only country being acknowledged. Wait! I completely forgot that it was Cinco de Mayo. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Hispanic Heritage Month was first established in 1998 because it encompasses anniversaries of independence for Latin American countries Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico and Chile.

Many questions come up from these statements, the first is why are we still using the word "Hispanic" to define the Latinx community? According to the U.S. Census, Hispanic/Latinx is a collective term that describes "a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American or other Spanish origin." But anyone who knows the real difference between Hispanic and Latinx knows that Hispanic refers to someone from Spanish-speaking countries (aka countries that were colonized to speak Spanish) and Latinx refers to people geographically from Latin American countries (going back to the U.S. Census's definition).

Now the question is, which is the correct terminology to describe those from Latin America. According to the New York Public Library, "It wasn't until 1980 that the term Hispanic first appeared in the U.S. Census." The term "Hispanic" became the default

term for people from Spanish-speaking countries, even though it also referred to people with Latin American heritage. In the early 2000s, "the global movement for gender equity brought about the rise of 'they' pronouns, and along with it the question of a gender-neutral 'Latino.'" "Latinx" should be used to include those who aren't from Spain but as well as to include gender-neutral terms.

America threw all Latin American countries into the same box like we all have the same history—as a matter of fact, we all look alike. When I think of what a stereotype is, it reminds me of the telenovelas (Hispanic/Latinx soap operas) I watch with my mother late at night. Specifically, I'm reminded of "Lo Que la Vida Me Robó," Angelique Boyer, a French-Mexican actress with white skin and blue eyes, played Montserrat, the beautiful main character with two men fighting for her. She was the one in every soap opera who played for every young browner girl like me, who were called "morenta" (brown girl) and developed insecurity about their skin.

It wasn't until my first year of high school that I learned that the reason Mexico needed white actors was so they could sell their soap operas to other countries. Browner people can't sell photogenic soap operas.

In an episode of "The Red Table Talk: The Estefans," hosts shared statistics showing that 1 in 4 Hispanics identify as Afro Latinx, and 2 in 3 dark skin Latinx

report experiencing discrimination." In the episode, Karmo Brown, a reality TV star on Queer Eye, stated, "y grandma would say, 'Don't go outside and don't darken up my family,' and I would not go outside until 5pm."

Brown explained, "[my grandma's] intent was to protect me and say things that [they] thought were going to help me, but the impact is that it destroyed me emotionally." Brown also talks about the emphasis on bringing attention to non-European features. "My family used to say your nose, and even my grandmother would squeeze my nose because my nose was more African," she said.

Diana Danelys De Los Santos, also known as Amara La Negra, another guest star on the show, tried to make a career in Mexico on the famous TV show *Sábados Gigante*. Amara La Negra also spoke on colorism in Latin America, stating, "I don't like to generalize, but we need to talk about how things are. A lot of us are hypocrites, and a lot of us are racist. [People will say] 'I am not racist,' but would you want your son or daughter to marry a Black person?" Amara La Negra also mentioned how directors would respond to her auditioning, saying, "I have gone to audition for novelas for these Latin Channels. Sweetie, we love your energy and your personality and everything but... We're looking for someone who looks more Latina."

The Latinx community has normalized the anti-Blackness through sayings like "Mejora la

Raza" (better the race) and acknowledging it means to make the race whiter. Although wanting to enter Latin America's entertainment industry, Amara La Negra found it very hard because she was a dark-skinned Latina and would only be the Afro Latina in a white-dominated industry. The interview ended with Amara saying, "God blessed you with Melanin. Melanin is a power. Understand they will come against you, and you need to be prepared for whatever is to come, y educate y prepare (educate and prepare yourself)." Because of the discrimination, she faced in Latin America, she started her career in America with famous reality TV shows such as "Wild N Out" and "Hip Hop Atlanta."

I will never be able to understand what it means to be Afro-Latina. However, as a brown(er) person from Latin America, I have faced colorism and verbal discrimination from my family members. In the "Red Table Talk" interview, Brown mentioned the importance of the mental journey to accepting one's skin tone—or, as I like to say, decolonizing yourself. Accepting one's skin tone is hard, especially when you're younger if all you see in those soap operas is someone with European features. As we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, let's remind ourselves that we don't all come from Mexico and all come from tan skin. We come in many skin tones, different hair textures, and from other countries.

COVID-19 Isn't Going Away

By Rachel Van Horne, Associate Editor

In 2022—after two years of a global pandemic, three years of college, the death of a monarch and never testing positive for COVID-19—it finally happened. I tested positive for COVID-19 and my perspective has changed in the short time since then. I am writing this article hoping my story will remind others to remain vigilant.

When the pandemic started and we were quarantined at home, life was basically canceled for several months. As a college freshman, I was crushed by the news of being sent home early, leaving my new friends and all the clubs I had joined. I was fortunate enough to go home and

quarantine with everyone I loved. When life returned to somewhat normal the following school year, I was adamant about wearing my mask and keeping my distance. I felt safe despite the potential exposure I faced daily just by coming to class. By junior year, it became even more relaxed. After vaccinations and drops in the infection rate of college-aged students, I felt the normalcy I had longed for. I let my guard down.

It only took a rudimentary understanding of this disease to know that at some point, my friends, loved ones and—even scarier—I would test positive. I lived in great fear of this day and

yet, when it came, I felt some relief.

No longer was I a "superdodger"—I was now just one of the hundreds of thousands of Americans who have tested positive since the beginning of the pandemic. But why am I writing this? We already know COVID-19 isn't going anywhere and nothing can be done to stop it.

I will not tell you to avoid people, skip the tailgates or return to total isolation as a prevention method for COVID-19. But I wanted to share some insights for when you do test positive. This year, the College has returned to pre-COVID-19 procedures, and the

Students Health Center no longer provides notes excusing students from class. This responsibility is left to the (already sick) student.

Following the initial email you have to send to notify your professors, you will probably have to send several other emails asking professors for zoom links, to catch up on homework, or make sure that your absences are excused. This year, professors are not required to provide Zoom accommodation to students for a COVID-19-related issue.

Read the full article on our website.

THE HERALD

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