

Why we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month

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Every year in the United States, we observe **Hispanic Heritage Month** from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15. What began as a celebratory week in 1968 is now a 30-day recognition of the histories, cultures and contributions of Americans whose families and ancestors came from places like Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America.

A Port of Portland colleague perfectly summarized why it is important for us to celebrate this month: “There is communal value in celebrating diversity, both within our country and local communities, and within the Hispanic/Latinx community itself.”

We are a stronger nation for our rich, diverse backgrounds.

As Port employee Roxana Walls recently shared on behalf of the Latinx Employee Network & Friends, an **Employee Resource Group** she chairs at the Port, “For a group who comprises more than one-tenth of all active voters nationwide, but holds only 1 out of every 100 elected

offices, Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity to give voice to our values, share the richness of our culture and hopefully become more familiar to a wider audience.”

I’m grateful for the work of our Latinx Employee Network, which has a host of activities planned for us this month. Port colleagues will be reading and discussing “**The Devil’s Highway**” by Luis Alberto Urrea, as well as viewing **Our Mothers/Nuestras Madres**, which is directed by César Díaz and featured in Hollywood Theatre’s **Portland Latin American Film Festival**.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/D7BTJi7kqEE>

We also recognize that Hispanic Heritage Month comes at a time of challenge and heartbreak. While a pandemic continues to disproportionately impact Latinx people and other communities of color, wildfires have devastated a number of towns that are home to Latinx families. If you’d like to support recovery efforts, the **Rogue Valley Relief Fund**, **League of United Latin American Citizens** and **PCUN** have funds dedicated to the wildfires.

Although many try to divide us, it’s important to remember that America is only great if we lift up every person who calls this country home. That’s why, in joining other Employee Resource Groups to proclaim their support for the Black Lives Matter movement, the Latinx Employee Network referenced a powerful quote shared by Latinx activists: “Tu lucha es mi lucha (Your struggle is my struggle).”

May we unite over shared struggles and shared celebrations this month.

*Kristen Leonard is Chief Public Affairs Officer at the Port of Portland. She also is an Executive Sponsor of the Port's Latinx Employee Network & Friends **Employee Resource Group**.*