

Academic Research Brief

Hey *Hispano*: Forget the Celebration, Address Your Internal Prejudice

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As we celebrate and honor the legacy and enduring contributions of millions of Latinx in the United States, let us remember that our roots in this country extend well before the U.S. was established (Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010; Menchaca, 2001; Sáenz & Morales, 2015). We are not an easily classified ethnic group as our cultural, racial, and global geographies are as diverse as the terms that have been crafted to categorize us: Hispanic, Latina, Latina/o, Latinx, LatinX, Latin*, Latin@, Latina/o/x, *Hispanohablantes* – and the list goes on. Yet, masterfully embedded within the aforementioned is the incessant will of the colonizer to rob us of our vast diversity (Alcoff, 2006; Milian, 2013). The Latinx community is not a monolith and neither is our culture and while we should celebrate the legacy of our contributions, we must also get working on a plethora of issues that have plagued us since colonization. During this month and beyond, let us all work towards ensuring the intragroup diversity of the Latinx community is celebrated, centered, and recognized. For far too long racial violence, intra-group prejudice, anti-Blackness, and Indigenous erasure have forced a false narrative of who is, and what it means to be, Latinx in the U.S. (Alcoff, 2006; Jiménez Román & Flores, 2010). We endure, wedged within the U.S. racial binary that refuses to recognize our racial heterogeneity (Perea, 1998), and imprisoned by our own ignorance that allows us to presume that if we help in the marginalization of non-mestizx, we will somehow gain access to privileged spaces where mestizx skin is seldom allowed.

While Hispanic Heritage Month will continue to be *celebrated* by some as a pseudo recognition of our contributions, let us not forget that children are still in cages at the U.S.-Mexico border (Dickerson, 2019), #BlackLivesMatter is also our struggle (Black Latinas Know Collective, 2020), farmworkers, meat and poultry factory workers are infected with COVID-19 at higher rates than any other group of workers (Sáenz, 2020), and anti-immigrant rhetoric has disproportionality harmed the mental and physical health of Latinx youth (Eskenazi et. al., 2019). Therefore, while there is always much to celebrate, I urge us all to use this month to identify the way in which we each contribute to the marginalization of other Latinx. We must identify how we perpetrate colorist, sexist, racist, prejudiced, and homophobic rhetoric and behaviors. Our willful ignorance has serious consequences for those who endure further in the social margins than ourselves. Notably, to fully embody the phrase *Latinx community* – we must come to an understanding that the oppression of one member signifies the crumbling of the whole. To be in community is to consciously commit to interrogating false narratives of Latinidad and embrace the intersectionality of our multiple identities – we must start with self and be radically honest (Williams, 2016) about our ugly side. I reckon that internal labor is worth the celebration.

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