

## WHAT DOES HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH MEAN TO YOU?



### **Alohilani Perry-Peters** **WellMed UM-Correspondence Team Lead**

---

"When I think of Hispanic Heritage Month, I think of my very first supervisor in the Air Force, Master Sergeant Miriam Saiz Montalvo. Miriam was born and raised in Brownsville, Texas.

"Miriam and I were stationed together at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph from 2004 to 2009. She introduced me to Hispanic Heritage Month. Prior to my arrival to Randolph AFB, I knew very little about the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month in the continental U.S. Even though I come from a culturally diversified lifestyle in Hawaii, my only exposure to Hispanic culture where I grew up was that of Puerto Rico. If you had asked me about pasteles or arroz con gandules, I knew it, but that was the extent of my Hispanic knowledge. My mentor and angel, Miriam, showed me there was more than Puerto Rican culture to celebrate during this time of year."

---



**Elisa Gonzalez**  
**WellMed Communications Specialist - Florida**



"Hispanic Heritage Month is a culmination of many facets of the Hispanic culture. Being Hispanic is not only knowing who you are, where you come from, but a connection to your heritage. This includes family, faith, food, cooking, dancing, music, colors, nature, language, etc.

"Being Puerto Rican and coming from a facet of many backgrounds, for me, being Hispanic is being connected to my roots that stem all the way from Spain to Africa, even the indigenous roots. Not only are we culturally diverse, but we are connected to our own ancestry history and the outcomes from that. As a middle child and first born girl, it means to carry on those Puerto Rican traditions and legacies that my parents, grandparents, and ancestors have left for me to learn and develop as an independent woman, while breaking those glass ceilings that seem to reside in today's society. I am proud to carry those traditions while creating new ones, but never forgetting where I come from and who I am proud to be. By putting family and faith at the top of the list, I am a proud Puerto Rican and celebrate Hispanic Heritage month not just in September but every day of my life."

---





**Maricela Rodriguez**  
**WellMed Senior Clinical Quality RN**

---

"I'm a third generation Mexican American. I took this picture of a mother and her daughter in May 2022 while on a missionary trip to Guatemala. I believe that in order for our culture to thrive, we must continue to pass it along to the next generation."

"Your individuality is important, but so is belonging. Recognize the parts of your culture that have shaped your past, and the parts of you want to carry with you into the future."

---

**Dr. Lorena Gomez**  
**WellMed at El Paso Drive**



"Hispanic Heritage month is a time of reflection and celebration. For me this month will be bittersweet as my Grandmother is in Hospice and will likely not be with us this time next year. As my eyes tear up while I write this passage, I reflect on the sacrifices my grandparents made to ensure a better life for their young family as new immigrants in this great country. I reflect on the hardships that my grandparents went through-my Grandfather working long hours in the fields and the dairies of Southern New Mexico in order to provide for his growing family and my Grandmother at home raising their eight children. Their steadfast resilience and family first mindset is what stands out to me the most. I am proud of their humility. I am proud of my mother, aunts and uncles and all their contributions to this great nation and I want to celebrate their successes.

"Personally for me, I felt a calling and paid homage to my grandparents by working nine years in the medical organization where they received their medical services in - a community health center in a small farming community in southern New Mexico. I am grateful to both my grandparents for everything that they did for their family and I was lucky enough that I had the opportunity to thank both of them for everything they did to help me accomplish my goals."

**Melissa Esparza**  
**Senior Program Consultant Risk Adjustment**



"Hispanic Heritage month is a time for me to step back and take great pride in our beautiful uniqueness. It allows me a moment to reflect on the people not only near and dear to me, but those who came before. I marvel at the road they paved, giving the Hispanic family of today a path to thrive.

"Simply put, we are diverse people that love loudly and fiercely. Given that the term 'Hispanic' covers such broad geographical scope, the infusion of so many countries represent an array of traits, both physically and intellectually. That medley provides distinguished flavor as evident in our art, music, literature, religion, folklore and food (to name a few). Despite the rich diversity, the common attribute is love of family. That fervor is central to the strong work ethic forever displayed.

"I am a Mexican American native to San Antonio. Historically I have deep ties to San Antonio. I am a descendent of Gregorio Esparza (Alamo defender). Amongst our family we often discuss why someone would stay in a fortress with the odds so greatly stacked against him. I believe his purpose was different from those of the famous defenders. As complex as things were and continue to be, I believe he wanted a better way of life for his family."

---