

Michael Eure Show – Episode 57: Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month

INTRODUCTION: Hello, this is Michael Eure, and I'd like to invite you to the Michael Eure Show, featuring student hosts and very special guests talking about a variety of interesting topics. You can find us on the Eagle Stream YouTube channel.

MICHAEL EURE: Good afternoon. Welcome to the Michael Eure Show, and we have such a great lineup of special guests today. Right now, what I'm gonna do is give everybody an opportunity to briefly introduce themselves. And before they start, I do wanna say Taj Hewitt will be the student co-host, and he is a great young man. He was a student I coached in the fall of 2021, and he'll be graduating soon, and he'll tell you more. But Taj is also a Scott Scholar, and he is a member of the Student Senate. So, I'm gonna let Taj take it over, and each person briefly introduce yourselves. Thank you.

TAJ HEWITT: Yeah. So, I will be your co-host for today, and as Mr. Eure said, I am a current student at Wake Tech, just doing my, you know, steeringly duties. And I just wanted to say that everyone can go ahead and start introducing themselves. So, Marcus Flores, if you'll get us off.

MARCUS FLORES: Hi, everyone. I'm Marcus Flores. I'm the curator of community and social history at the North Carolina Museum of History in downtown Raleigh.

HEWITT: Ben?

BENJAMIN SAUCEDO: Hello, everyone. My name is Benjamin Saucedo. I am a Wake Tech alum. I actually spent a very nice time there, and I'm currently pursuing my bachelor's degree in mathematics at Campbell University.

HEWITT: Hermione?

HERMIONE MOUL: Hi, my name is Hermione Moul. I am a freshman at Wake Tech, and I am also a member of our Spanish Honor Society.

HEWITT: All right. And then Sgt. Marcus Bethea.

SGT. MARCUS BETHEA: Hello, everyone. Sgt. Marcus Bethea of the North Carolina Highway Patrol. I'm based here in Raleigh at our headquarters in downtown Raleigh

with our Public Information Office. And I also work part time with Wake Tech's Basic Law Enforcement Training program as a classroom and fitness instructor.

HEWITT: Excellent. And so, to get us on the way, I'd like to say that Hermione is actually a member of the Sigma Delta Mu at, at Wake Tech, which is a Spanish honor society. And in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, I just wanted to ask you, Hermione, could you tell us a little bit about the events that Sigma Delta Mu is doing this month?

MOUL: Yeah. So, for Hispanic Heritage Month, Sigma Delta Mu is hosting a Day of the Dead celebration at the South Campus on October 31st, where we will have traditional treats, school painting and opportunities to learn more about the culture.

HEWITT: Excellent. And I'm sure that that will be a very, very important activity for Wake Tech and for Sigma Delta Mu. I just wanna say thank you. Thank you, Hermione. And right after that, we are going to go into a slideshow, which is just a cultural video segment.

EURE: And if you wanna comment on it, about the, this is events that were done by the Spanish Honor Society in the past. If you wanna talk about it, you may while it's, the slide goes.

HEWITT: So, these are just a few events that Sigma Delta Mu has actually conducted in the past. And, as you can see, the like to involve students in their activities and really get people from not only Latinx communities, but every culture together to collaborate and create something that can inspire others to, to keep that cultural link strong.

EURE: OK. Well, I think that this is great, and the event is gonna be on October 31st on the Southern Wake Campus. Is that correct? OK. And the public is invited, or is it just students?

MOUL: Yes, everyone is invited.

EURE: OK. Thank you. So, I think we have some people backstage, and one of our guests is gonna leave, and one of her fellow students is gonna come and talk a little bit more. Hermione?

HEWITT: Thank you, Hermione.

EURE: OK. Hey, hello Jenny. How are you?

JENNY AGUILERA: Hi everyone. I'm good. Thank you for having me.

EURE: Good.

AGUILERA: How are you, Michael?

EURE: I'm good. Do you wanna introduce yourself first? And then we're gonna have you talk a little bit about DEI.

AGUILERA: Yeah, of course. So, my name is Jenny Aguilera, and I'm currently involved in student government along with the DEI Council. In student government, I am Senate chair for the Northern Campus, and so, I'll lead my Senate in different meetings. And then, with DEI, the council is to promote diversity, equity and inclusion, because these are the heart of our mission to serve our community, our community on campus and all who come to our campus. And the DEI Council come, comprises a cross-section of faculty, staff, students and administrators who are committed to leading the work of DEI for the college. And then, we also have work centers that kind of touch on our five priorities, which is student success, campus climate, education and training, workforce initiatives and communication. So, we are pretty rounded, and we want to make sure that everyone can enjoy being a member of Wake Tech to whatever capacity they are.

EURE: All right. And we got a little bit out of sequence, so I do wanna ask Jerry to play the Care Center video. And also, all of these videos that you see and slideshows are gonna be put in the chat for the audience to retrieve later. So, can you do that, Jerry?

[Video promoting Wake Tech's Care Center plays]

EURE: Thank you, Jerry. And as a student success coach, that is the department I'm a part of, so we certainly want to make sure you know. And for students, if you need anything, check us out. We do success coaching by majors. All brand new students have success coaches. And now, I'm gonna turn it back over to Jerry.

HEWITT: By Jerry, I think he means me, and so ...

EURE: It's a transition period. Jerry used to do what you do. Yes, Jerry's doing something different. I mean Taj.

HEWITT: So, right now, I want to get into Ben's journey because Ben actually worked on a START project with myself, and it was about the 2020 Census in the Latinx community. And so, Ben, I just want to ask you, can you tell us a little bit about your experiences, from when you were younger and coming to Wake Tech and how it prepared you for your current journey?

SAUCEDO: Yes. So, I'm actually not from North Carolina. I'm born and raised in Los Angeles, more specifically, in the San Fernando Valley. And in the San Fernando Valley, the Latinx population is actually 52%. So, I was surrounded by a lot of other Latinos and Hispanics. I was also, it was just very common to hear people speaking Spanish in public and just, like, you know, playing Spanish music and engaging with different foods and all that stuff, the cultural mixes with the different Latin American countries. So, honestly, just being surrounded in an environment like that really allowed me to just grow with confidence. Not having to fear or, you know, just kind of be, feel like I'm outnumbered, like in, like school or something like that. Like, I, it was very common just to be surrounded a lot by other Hispanics and Latinos. So, that really kind of built up the confidence that I have now to this day to just really kind of dive, head into whatever challenge I face, whether it's academically or professionally.

And that kind of just, like what I was saying, that just kind of really encouraged me to continue motivate, to motivate me to get my higher education. Because part of my START research that I conducted was just seeing the different, the lack of education, really, in the Latinx community, not only in the U.S., but in North Carolina. So, that just kind of is keeping me from going forward, really keeping, keeping me moving on.

HEWITT: Excellent. And, Ben, would you say that these experiences have helped you grow as a person, especially in the society that we live in today?

SAUCEDO: I would say it definitely has just mainly because I've been able to go through different experiences with other people. So, that's helped me become a very resilient person, and I'm able to really learn to adapt to different environments, no matter how drastic the change is. So, I would say that really helped me build just that, I guess, grit that I need to just keep moving, keep fighting even when things get tough.

HEWITT: That's excellent. And now I'm going to go over to Mr. Marcus Flores, who is a, as he said, a curator at the N.C. Museum of History. And he actually has a master's degree in Spanish, and he has experience in teaching Spanish courses.

So, I just want to ask you, Mr. Flores, what do you think about Hispanic Heritage Month as a whole?

FLORES: What I think about it as a whole? I think it's a great thing to get the exposure that my, this minority community needs, because sometimes we're not represented in a lot of these spaces, especially working at the museum of history here in North Carolina. Latinos aren't really represented as much as we should be because we are a growing community here. Like Ben, I'm from New Mexico. Obviously, it's different from California, but I'm from New Mexico, where the majority is Hispanic or Latinos. So, it's, it was a different change from here. But I think it's important that we have this month and especially to celebrate it here in North Carolina to, to give exposure to our community.

HEWITT: That's great. That's great. And I just want to come back to you, Ben, and, as I've said before, Ben and I actually worked on a project from the START program, and it was about the 2020 Census in the Latinx community. So, Ben, could you just elaborate and explain on the data that you gathered and how that really changed your perspective on the current state of the Latinx community?

SAUCEDO: Yeah, absolutely. So, I ended up talking to, ended up making two posters because we were comparing, I wanna say quality of life because we were looking at education, poverty status, income, occupation and the changes with that and within the Latinx community from 2010 to 2020. And then, another, the second poster that we worked on was we decided to focus specifically on educational change within the Latinx community in North Carolina. And a lot of that data was, honestly, very surprising, a little bit startling, if I'm being honest, simply because a lot of education levels, they either remained the same within lower categories – for example, one of the data points that we found was Latinx in Mecklenburg County, there is, there's been an increase of Latinx who have less than a ninth-grade education, and then, like, for example, in Winston-Salem, there's been about, a stagnant amount of high school dropouts. So, that data it just really, like I said earlier, it really motivates me to keep going and keep, you know, just keep striving for academic excellence. And it really makes me want to continue pursuing education from, as far as I can, really.

HEWITT: Yeah. Yeah, I agree. And like I said, that was a wonderful project that Ben and I worked on, but he was the main, you know, fuel behind that project. So, anyways, right now, we are going to go into a commercial break and play a short video from Career Services. So, sit back and enjoy.

Jerry?

EURE: I think Jerry is back looking for some stuff, but if he is not ready, we can continue with some more questions.

HEWITT: Yeah, of course, of course, because I have plenty. So, I can go over to Sgt. Marcus Bethea, who is a part of the N.C. Highway Patrol. And his mom is actually Puerto Rican, is that correct?

BETHEA: Yes. So very, very interesting background on my part. So, my mother is Puerto Rican on her mother's side and Mexican on her father's side. And my father is African American and born and raised in North Carolina.

HEWITT: Excellent. So, I'm sure you have, I'm sure you have a lot of knowledge on the Latinx community, and you've probably grown up in a culture of, you know, Latinx experiences. So, a question I want to ask you, you know, working with the N.C. Highway Patrol, can you explain about the Basic Law Enforcement Training Academy?

BETHEA: Sure. So, as far as Basic Law Enforcement Training, I'm at Wake Tech. Of course, they offer a very, very prestigious program, very well-known throughout the state. They offer both a full-time, what we call the day class, where it's basically a semester of school where students can come take a full-time coursework and get their certification. They also offer a night part-time course, where students come at night. They'll stay in class for roughly four to five hours, and this is a much more lengthier program, but it allows them to do it on a part-time basis in the evenings and ultimately get their certification that way.

So, I've been a part of this program with Wake Tech as an instructor since 2018, and I've had a very pleasant, very positive experience. I've enjoyed training students and, and passing along that knowledge and wisdom. And I'm very proud when I see these guys and how they're doing the job, wearing the uniform and seeing them live their dreams as I once did when I was in their shoes.

HEWITT: Excellent. And that was an important question I wanted to ask because, not only did you give us your job description, exactly what you do, but another thing that I want to know is how exactly has growing up in a Latinx household and how has those experiences helped you and shaped you, even made you decide to want to go into that field?

BETHEA: You know, my experience is, once again, it's a very, it's a very different kind of experience that I had, you know, much different from Marcus, much different from Ben. But at the same time, there is a connection there. I was born in Arizona, so I, too, come from the Southwest United States, which is a very highly populated, especially Mexican-influenced, part of the country. I came to North Carolina from El Paso, Texas, which, once again, is a border city. Spanish is widely spoken, so it was always there. And as a small child, you know, identity and culture just wasn't really emphasized a lot in, in my home. So, these were, you know, the influences were there, but a lot of it wasn't directly talked about.

And I, you know, I touched on this with Michael in a previous discussion we had. You know, I had grits and, and, you know, collard greens with, with, you know, breakfast and dinner at home. But then it was enchiladas, and it was the rice, and it was, you know, the tostadas and, and all these things. And it was just food. There was no component attached to it. But the older I got, the more this identity kind of became visible, and in some, it became something that I explored. And once I came to North Carolina in my middle- and high-school years, I started to realize this, this part of me a lot more because people asked about it.

I arrived in North Carolina prior to the big boom in the migrant population. So, I arrived here, and I saw Black and white. You know, this is a day and age where brown is, is everywhere, and I'm here at the start of it, and to see it grow and flourish and to see, you know, the Ben Saucedos of the world that are now grown up and now becoming the entrepreneurs, becoming the police officers, becoming the bankers, becoming tech gurus, it's, it's amazing just to see that growth in North Carolina alone.

HEWITT: Yeah. Well, it's, it's an excellent story. I can see exactly why you chose to join the, well, law enforcement. You know, you seem like a very resilient man and a very hard-working man. But, but I want to actually pose the same question to Marcus Flores. You know, what Latinx experiences made you want to go into the field of, you know, history. And, you know, I know you, you even published a book. Is that correct?

FLORES: Yes. Well, growing up with, I, my family's been in New Mexico for 400 years, I'd say, and they just, that's what I grew up with, just hearing Spanish. I didn't speak Spanish, but I heard it around me. I understood it, and then I went to school for it, and I still have a hard time speaking it at times. But that is something that has really pushed me is, look, knowing my history because I do genealogy as well. That's the book I published on my family. So, knowing the history of my family and the

culture that I come from and just the traditions, that kind of thing has pushed me to go into the careers that I've gone into. And moving to North Carolina, that was one of the, the things I looked for in the job is something that will allow me to help minority communities like mine get, get more of a voice in places like North Carolina or the Museum of History. So, it, it kind of moved throughout the years, and it's pretty awesome that I'm able to do what I'm doing in a place that it's not as common.

HEWITT: And I just want to ask, is there anything specific that the Museum of History is doing for Hispanic Heritage Month?

FLORES: Unfortunately, there's not. Last year, we had one case that we had that we brought out a lot of the, the artifacts that we do have, the, the little bit of a artifacts that we do have, and we showcased them. But this year, we, we didn't have a chance to actually do that with other, other projects that we have. But, hopefully, in the future, if I could start doing that with bringing in more, more objects to the collection, which will help to build that like, to build more exhibits and to build a rapport with the community.

EURE: And I'm just, I'm gonna break in because I talked to Marcus a little bit earlier about the relationship between the indigenous people in North America, South America and the islands, and how the Spanish came and kind of conquered them and made them all speak Spanish. But I would like to correct, connect that the indigenous people and the American Indians, and the Museum of History does have an American Indian Cultural Festival in the month of November, which I think would be very well, I think it's always well attended. They expect 14,000 people. I know it's on the same day as Raleigh Christmas Parade. Can you talk a little bit about the relationship between those populations?

FLORES: I'm not sure what you ...

EURE: About the indigenous people in different, like in Venezuela versus Puerto Rico versus Dominican Republic versus other places that speak Spanish. But Spanish is the language that binds them, but also their history as being indigenous people.

FLORES: Yeah, that's the heart, the, like, you're saying Spanish is the one that connects everybody. And I could just speak to where I'm from because there is Pueblos in New Mexico, even Arizona. I lived in Arizona for five years, and they have the, their reservations, and they still keep their traditions and their history there. But they do have that common language of Spanish or English today. Right? And the

traditions of, of the conquistadores that came through. But we're all a mix. I think we could say we're all a mix of, of indigenous and, and African American as well or, or African, I should say. So, I think that's an important thing that we should all take into account, and, and if you see the, the studies that are being done today, that's being brought out a lot more, and the indigenous and the African side of the Latino culture is actually being highlighted and, and connected to in a different way than it was before. So, it's, it's really an important time.

EURE: Thank you. And, Taj, I'm going to leave for a minute, and we're gonna bring Ben in, and we're gonna do a little break. So, Jerry, do your thing, and when you come back, I'll be gone. But I'll be back toward the end. Go ahead.

HEWITT: All right. So, he meant to say we're gonna bring Bryan in. So, welcome, Bryan. If you could just introduce yourself briefly.

BRYAN VASQUEZ: Hi, everyone. My name is Bryan. So, I'm, I would say that I'm a first-year at Wake Tech, but I'm planning on finishing my associate this year as well. So, kind of doing everything in one year, and I'm planning on transferring to UNC-Chapel Hill. And I am Latino. I'm from Mexico, and I'm also indigenous, ironically, from the conversation we were just on. I'm from the [indecipherable] tribe of northeastern Mexico, which is also part of the [indecipherable] Nation. And, yeah, that's a bit about me.

HEWITT: And speaking about, you know, these, these tribes and the different cultures, and Marcus Flores spoke about how all these countries are linked by the, the language of Spanish. I just want to ask, and this question is to, anyone can feel free to answer, but has there been any country or state or whatever it might be, place that you visited that really gave you a different perspective on the Latinx community? Jenny, I think you may.

AGUILERA: I, I'm not from here. I'm from Dallas, Texas, and I grew up in a Latina community. So, coming here, it was really different to see how, how much smaller the areas are. And I know in comparison, North Carolina to Texas is still, geographically is very different. But I did notice that it was a lot more subtle, and it was a lot more quiet. And it was harder to find, you know, community organizations that were focused on Latinos and Latinx folks. So, I think it's an interesting contrast. I think it's definitely something that I'm still getting used to and, you know, there are places that I do feel more comfortable interacting with older folks in the way that I would back home in Texas, you know, because I grew up around, you know, folks who knew my grandma, and they just knew her, and they knew that I was her

grandkid. And so, they treated me like family, and even though they were shop owners and stuff. So, it's definitely different, but I can say that my experiences at Wake Tech have been pretty good at wanting to be diverse and wanting to include Latinx folk and all, you know, also non-white folk in the community and trying to have a real understanding of what those communities need. And also, with my job, it's been great being able to be a part of the community. I did an event at the Mexican Consulate, which was amazing, and it's so great to find little festivals and cultural, culturally significant festivals at that, in the area. You know, the turnout not might be huge, but it's still, it's still wonderful to see, you know, to see families and grandparents and folks and stuff. How it doesn't really matter where we are, but, you know, those dynamics are still kind of there.

HEWITT: Definitely. OK, so now we will be going to a small commercial break. We will be playing a slideshow for you, so sit back and enjoy. Jerry?

OK, so I guess we won't, again. But that's OK because we have so much to talk about and so many lovely people to share. So, what I want to ask now is, Bryan, being a member of the indigenous community, being, you know, from Mexico, I want to ask you how important do you think Hispanic Heritage Month is, you know, for people who might not know about the culture or people, who think they know about the culture but might have misconceptions.

VASQUEZ: I think it's a great time to reclarify a lot of misconceptions around the Latino community. I know, in my high school, we would do a lot of like presentations and stuff on different aspects of the Latin American countries and the diaspora here in the United States. And a lot of people would come up to us after that, and they would be, like, "Wow, like, I actually never knew about that." So, it is actually, like, really interesting to see how much people can learn from everything that can come from all of the, like, heritage months embracing different cultures. So, it's definitely exciting in that aspect, and it's also nice to uplift people who maybe might not have the opportunity to speak on certain things that are passionate, passionate, that they're passionate about. Sorry. Like, for example, my school that, a lot of different members of the Mexican community, since my school was predominantly Mexican, they were able to do, like, guest speaking. They were able to do dances, singing, and it was just something, generally, like a really fun time. And I think that's, like, the main thing to highlight is that, like Hispanic Heritage Month is supposed to also be a lot of fun and just, like, enjoying yourself and getting immersed in something that you might have not known about before.

HEWITT: Excellent. So, overall, you'd say that Hispanic, Hispanic Heritage Month is a beneficial celebration for the community?

VASQUEZ: Definitely, yes.

HEWITT: OK. All right, so now I want to ask Sgt. Marcus Bethea, working in law enforcement, is there any stereotypes or any, you know, bad news that people looking at law, people think law enforcement might have against Latinx members?

BETHEA: Oh, that's a very, very interesting question, and I would base a lot of that on my own experiences. So, you know, I, I lived in the Southwest United States, and once again, being in El Paso, Texas, and I'm sure Jenny could relate coming from the Dallas area. You know, you, it's, it's nothing to, to see Hispanic or Latino police officers. They're everywhere. When I came here, it was virtually nonexistent. Just to kind of reflect my age, I started my law enforcement career in 2002 as a Raleigh police officer, and there were times, many times where I was the only Spanish-speaking officer in the entire city. There were times when I would respond to calls and then, you know, in communities that were predominantly Spanish-speaking, and when I would speak the language, people would stop in their tracks because they just had never seen somebody with a uniform and a badge speaking the language. So, it was a very big growth process. I think there was a lot of intimidation with the police. You know, once again, not necessarily accurate. I think a lot of it was just lack of knowledge, lack of understanding of what the police department's values were. So, there was a, a barrier. There was a gap, and it was just as difficult for other police officers because they didn't know the language. They didn't know the customs, and so there was a disconnect. And I think that, in itself, gets kind of blown into this, this idea that there's a misrepresentation between being able to connect police with the community, community to the police.

So, that was an ever-growing, a part and component of, of community policing that needed to be worked on, needed to be adjusted and needed training and needed development. And it's still a continuing process in law enforcement training. You'll find in academies throughout the state, they will actually have Spanish seminars, crash courses on the Spanish language to help these young police recruits communicate with our communities out there. I know it doesn't necessarily provide all the knowledge that they need, but every little bit helps. So, it is a growth process.

My experience has, has, has been very good in the profession, you know, moving on to the Highway Patrol and becoming a state trooper. Same thing, I've had my experiences to where the language has gotten me by, and I've been able to help

someone successfully, whereas the next officer or trooper doesn't have that advantage. You know? So, it is a learning process. It's still developing, but I think the strides that are being made are very positive. And I would certainly hope that all the members of our Latino community are seeing those efforts.

HEWITT: Yeah, definitely. And we have some questions in chat directed at you, sergeant. And the first one is from J.S., and she actually asks, and I think you may have answered the majority of this question already, but she asks, "What stereotypes have you encountered, and how can we support and promote change?"

BETHEA: OK, stereotypes as far as toward the police, I'd say common stereotypes are the immigration debate. Immigration is a federal issue. In my career, I have worked in city law enforcement, as well as state law enforcement. We do not enforce immigration laws, but, of course, someone new to this country, especially someone who might have come from a different place and is now here, we are all one and the same in their eyes. So, oftentimes, especially in the early stages of my career, people would run from us. People would fight us. Hispanic people would, for otherwise very minor things that they were stopped for, because of this idea that, "If the police get me, they're going to send me back," when, in reality, we have no part in that. We have absolutely no part in that, but, of course, they don't know better. So, once again, that added to the disconnect. We'd stop a car for something as simple as an expired license plate. Next thing you know, the person is running from us. We're chasing them down. We have to apprehend them. It might result in an altercation. Now, someone's going to jail over what would have been a traffic citation. And there was a lot of that happening in the early to mid-2000s because of the immigration issues and the, the misconceptions that were circulating. So, that was a big stereotype.

We, as North Carolina state troopers are not enforcers of immigration laws. Your local city police officers and county sheriff's deputies are not enforcers of immigration laws. That is a federal matter, and there are situations within the legal system where it can turn into that direction through the legal process. But as far as us, boots-on-the-ground law enforcement officers, that is the farthest concern of ours. We're here to help you, whether it be somebody damaged your property, whether it be somebody stole something from you or whether it be you were involved in a car collision and one of our troopers responds. We are there to help you more than anything else. Anything else beyond that is, is something we're not concerned with.

HEWITT: Yeah. So, I think that answered J.S.'s question very insightfully. And, hopefully now, I think the commercial break is ready, and we can transition smoothly.

So, Jerry? OK, well, a recurring theme, a recurring theme. Technical difficulties, but, you know, we move on.

So, I'd like to go into another question from, from the chat. So, we have a question from Garla Glover Smith, and she asks, "Are there any books that highlight Hispanic culture that any of you guys have enjoyed? Can you recommend some?" So, I know Jenny, you're an average reader.

AGUILERA: Yeah, one of, it's not necessarily a, you know, it's more of a learning book. That's just what I like reading. But it's called "Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican-American Race" by Laura E. Gomez. And it's basically just kind of, like, a historical background of the original Mexican American people around the 1840s and then kind of into the Mexican-American War. But it does highlight how, you know, the American government of kind of forces Latino folk to, you know, pick one way or the other, at the same time not giving them a choice of, you know, how to identify and how to exist, especially when, you know, indigenous folk went through so much prior, you know, with colonization and all of that.

And then there's another book that's pretty good, and it's called "Harvest of Empire," a history of Latinos in America by Juan Gonzalez. And it's just kind of a memoir-type book with, you know, family portraits of real-life immigrant Latinos. And then it tells about some of their accounts of coming from their home countries to this side of the border. So, it, they are kind of heavier reads, not, you know, the funnest or lighthearted, but they are good.

And I do recommend a lot of the children's books at Barnes & Noble that are in Spanish, like, they really are just beautiful. And they, you know, remember to include Black and indigenous folks when talking about Latino people because they, the media definitely portrays Latinos as, you know, white-skinned and green-eyed with telenovelas and all of that. And that's just not the case for how, you know, many Latinos look and how many indigenous, you know, folk look and how people from the islands look like. So, I do think that those are good and great to share with kiddos. Very, you know, classroom friendly, too.

HEWITT: Excellent. So, Garla Glover Smith, I hope that answered your question, and, if you'd like, we can display some of the books in the chat later. But right now, we're going to ask another question from chat, from Laura Bethea actually, and she says, "In what ways are you agencies/organizations addressing equity in recruitment, hiring and retention of Latinx professionals? What needs still exist?" So, I think this question is directed toward sergeant.

BETHEA: Once again, this is, it's been an evolution in, in law enforcement and recruitment. And, you know, looking back in my career over the last 18 years, I've done everything from sitting in the seminars where we're doing the, the crash course in, in Spanish phrases and, and, you know, trying to get some, some verbal knowledge to our officers, everything on up to now openly attending Hispanic and Latino festivals and events, setting up a recruitment table. And I myself have done that and participated in these events on behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the State Highway Patrol, to let people know, "Hey, we're here. We're hiring. There is space for you. The door is wide open."

I think, generationally, what we're seeing here, and I kind of touched on this earlier, it's, you know, 20 years ago in North Carolina in particular, the Hispanic population boom was, was kind of, of just beginning and very quickly hit a peak. And, you know, a lot of people here were not English-speaking. A lot of people here may not have been U.S. citizens, which is a requirement for law enforcement. To be a police officer, you have to be a U.S. citizen, whereas to join the military, you don't. Fun fact. Fast forward, a lot of these children that were born in those days, the late '90s, excuse me, the early to mid-'90s, are now adults. They're now of age to get into law enforcement. They are fluent English speakers. They are United States citizens. They are familiar with the government system. They are familiar with the judicial system. They are much better educated than, maybe, their predecessors were. So, it's a different element, a different extension of their families, and this is the group that's coming into the profession. So, that, in itself, has added to the evolution.

So, we're seeing, you know, in terms of, where in the past, we used to have to, you know, very blatantly reach out and say, "We need you," we're starting to see a bit more of the outside coming to us saying, "Hey, here I am. I want to join, too," and that's one of the most impressive things that I've seen in my career at this point is to see the Latino youth come to the BLET program at Wake Tech. And they've told me face-to-face, "I want to help my community. That is why I'm here. And I want more and others to come on board to help in this venture." So, it's just a very interesting turning point that we're at.

Recruiting and retention is still a priority. We want our agencies to reflect the communities that we serve, and so, we are doing our part to attend the events, to get the word out, to spread knowledge, awareness and education. But, you know, let's be, let's be real and let's be honest, to get into a profession like this, you have to want it. You have to have the passion for it. You have to have the calling for it. This is a profession where you can boost your life. It is real. It is dangerous, and not

everyone wants to step forward and do it, rightfully so. So, it is, it is, it's a fine give-and-take, but I'm very impressed so far at the changes and the progression that I've seen, and I, I expect it to get better. I expect my colleagues and co-workers to do their part, all of us to do our part to grow this continually. So, I think we're in a good place, and I think, moving forward, it's gonna get better.

HEWITT: Wow. Well said. Well said. And I'm sure it's excellent that we have a representative of law enforcement because that gives a, an added layer to what we need to really improve the community.

So, the video should be ready now. Fourth time the charm, hopefully.

[Career Services promotional video plays.]

HEWITT: OK. So, thank you for, thank you to Career Services for providing that video. It was very insightful for any student that needs help in choosing their career path.

So, we'll continue the show, and we're going to go for about five more minutes just to get in a bit more information and answer the, the remaining questions that are in the comments. So, we have a question from Valentin Hernandez, and I think it's a very good question. And he asks, "Any advice to adapt to the U.S. as a Latino?" He said he's been living here for a year, and he's been struggling with that. So, I think, Bryan, it would be very appropriate if you could answer that. Being directly from Mexico, you have experience, you know, coming to the U.S. So, what advice do you have for, for Valentin?

VASQUEZ: Yeah. So, what I've come to realize is that there's, like, Mexicans just about everywhere in the United States. So, when I, I briefly attended Cornell and I lived in Ithaca for, like, a few months, and I managed to find a community there. So, it's really about just finding, like, those small, like, restaurants or stores or, like, even like clubs or places to just socialize that have Latino communities. And it can be hard, but there might be, like, maybe like, platforms on, like, social media, like there might be Facebook groups in your local area. You can definitely seek out, like, taquerias. That's a great place. I don't know if you're from North Carolina, but I know when my father moved to North Carolina as well, like, he struggled a lot. But our town, Angier, is very, very Mexican. There's lots of different places you can go to, to seek that sense of community and that sense of, like, being back at home. But I definitely recommend, like, going to, like, Mexican markets or trying to find, like, restaurants to regularly visit and, like, make some friends. I made some friends that

way, so it's definitely, definitely helpful to seek out some of those places. And if there aren't any, there's always online spaces that you could interact with. And just, like, calling family a lot, that can also, like, help you when it comes to, like, the emotions of, like, missing home and whatnot.

HEWITT: Yeah. Yeah, I completely agree because, you know, I'm actually from Jamaica myself, and I, there's a, actually a strong Jamaican community. So, I can, I can agree with everything you're saying. But, you know, Mr. Marcus Flores, do you have any more advice that you can add, you know, being someone that's came up through the workforce?

FLORES: I think Bryan covered a lot of it. Also looking for groups, like, not just Facebook groups or online groups, but there are organizations in the state that can help. There's professional, the Hispanic Professionals of North Carolina, as well as El Pueblo and Diamante here in the Triangle area that can help with that. And they also have some festivals throughout the year and gatherings. Just finding that sense of place and community is what, what is helpful. It's, it takes a while because I'm still looking, looking for that. I've only been here a year, so still looking for that. And it's just trying to build, build on that and just getting those experiences that other people have done and going forward with that.

HEWITT: I see. And it's been a very informative show, a very, a very, very in-depth show on, you know, Hispanic Heritage Month. And we all know the importance of Hispanic Heritage Month, and I want to thank all of you guys for coming and spending your time here. You know, Marcus Flores, Sgt. Bethea, Ben, Jenny and Bryan, thank you guys for, for sharing your insights and giving input on Hispanic Heritage Month because it's very important for representation of the community.

And I wanna thank you to the viewers for sitting and watching through this very informative program. And I want to thank you to Career Services and DEI for supporting this program. And now, I think we will be going to the closing, and, hopefully, that will play. OK. So, yeah, thank you everyone. I think you can all wave the audience goodbye in a very informative show.