

CULTURAL  
AWARENESS

# OBSERVANCE

## NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH



## FACTS

The Department of Defense joins the nation in paying tribute to Hispanic Americans who demonstrated selfless service and sacrifice in the U.S. Armed Forces: Army, Army Air Forces, Marine Corps, Navy, Coast Guard, National Guard, and the home front during World War II.

When war was declared on December 8, 1941, thousands of Latinos were among those that rushed to enlist. They fought in every major battle in the European Theatre in which the U.S. Armed Forces were involved, from North Africa to the Battle of the Bulge, and in the Pacific Theater of Operations, from Bataan to Okinawa.

According to the U.S. Army Center of Military History, Hispanics were not identified as an ethnicity on military records until the Vietnam War — so the exact number who served during WWII is unknown — however, unofficial estimates range between 400,000 and 500,000.

Latinas served in spite of cultural barriers that had in the past prevented them from leaving their families or traveling unaccompanied. As linguist, nurses, and Red Cross aides, and in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, the Marine Corps Women's Reserve, and these women broke through both gender and cultural barriers to serve their country.

On the home front, as the defense industries grew, Hispanics gained entry to jobs that had been closed to them in the past and were able to move away from traditional occupations such as agriculture.

Hispanic Americans played an immeasurable role in the United States' Armed Forces during WWII, serving bravely and with distinction from the initial attack on Pearl Harbor to the last days of the Pacific campaign.

The nation remains forever indebted to WWII veterans, who not only forever changed the course of history but who demonstrated selfless service and sacrifice in defense of global peace and security.

We remember the legacy of the "Greatest Generation" by Honoring the Past, Securing the Future.