



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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**OPENING REMARKS BY CHAIRMAN RICHARD A. MESERVE
AT THE
HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH OBSERVANCE
10:30 A.M. THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2000**

NRC AUDITORIUM

Welcome to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's observance of Hispanic Heritage Month. My colleagues on the Commission and I are pleased to have the opportunity to participate with you in celebrating the Hispanic heritage of our Nation. Joining me this morning are Commissioners Nils Diaz, Edward McGaffigan, and Jeffrey Merrifield. I want to thank the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights and the Hispanic Employee Program Advisory Committee for sponsoring this event, and to express my appreciation to our guest speaker, Ms. Anna Marie Arias, and the Young Ambition Dance Company for agreeing to be with us today.

Our theme for today's observance, "Children, Our Hope for the Future," focuses our attention on future generations of Hispanic Americans and their impact on the destiny of the Nation. As Barbara Williams has pointed out, we aspire to a future in which all succeeding generations of Americans, including Hispanic-Americans, have the economic, technical and social skills to compete successfully in an increasingly complex world and to contribute to the long-term growth, stability, and advancement of our Nation. Hispanic Americans constitute the fastest growing ethnic group in America and may soon constitute a majority of the population of California. It is in the interest of all to recognize that the Hispanic American community is a valuable component of our multi-cultural society.

Perhaps a starting point is to acknowledge our shared historical heritage. The "American experience" – a phrase that is often used by observers of our society – includes strong and long connections to Hispanic history and culture.

As most of you know, the Hispanic heritage of America extends back in time to the earliest European presence on the North American continent. Beginning in 1513 with Ponce de Leon's landing in the vicinity of present day Cape Canaveral, Florida, and extending to 1821 when Mexico achieved its independence, Spain

exercised governmental power over parts of the North American continent for a longer period than the United States has existed as an independent nation. At the zenith of its power in the New World, Spain claimed nearly half of the continental United States, exercising sovereignty

over a vast arc of territory extending from “La Florida” in the east all the way to the Pacific coast. Called the “Spanish Borderland” because it represented the northern-most extent of Spain’s Latin-American-based holdings in the New World, New Spain and “La Florida” represented the first high tide of Latin-American influence in North America. Ultimately the Spanish concluded that the cost of maintaining the borderland proved greater than the benefits derived from it. Nonetheless, there is an important cultural legacy that has endured, particularly in the western portion of the borderland, to the present day.

Today, the historical “Spanish Borderland” is the center of an unprecedented revival of Hispanic culture and a second high tide of Latin-American influence in North America. Fed by one of the largest continuous mass movements of people in the 20th Century, the flow of immigrants to “EL Norte” represents a complete reversal of the conditions prevailing in the 16th century. The North American borderlands, which were once seen as barren and unproductive compared to the riches available in Latin America, have in our time become a source of economic survival for the people of a region afflicted with violent conflicts, repressive government, and limited economic opportunity. The vibrant Cuban community has resuscitated the concept of “La Florida” from its base in southern Florida, the Hispanic cultural heritage of New Spain is renewed every day by the continuous flow of Mexican immigrants into the Southwest and California, and our major metropolitan areas have been transformed into a new home for Puerto Ricans, Central Americans, and other Latin Americans.

Unfortunately, the narratives of many of the recent immigrants are filled with the same frustration and concern for survival that marked the narratives of the Conquistadores who labored to transform the North American borderlands into a hospitable environment in the 16th century. The sense of being strangers within an alien environment is tempered in the narratives of the modern immigrants, however, by the knowledge that there are millions of Hispanic Americans who share culture, language, and aspirations for a better life. We should all welcome the coalescence that is enabling this community to exercise the political and social power that are the birthright of all Americans.

The purpose of Hispanic Heritage Month is, in part, to remind each of us that the Hispanic-American experience is a long and important component of the American experience. Our understanding of the unique history, culture, and perspectives of our fellow citizens of Hispanic origin will also serve to help inform the educational and social programs that are being developed to address the issues and concerns affecting this rapidly growing segment of our population in the 21st Century.

The second purpose of Hispanic Heritage Month is to express to our current 70 Hispanic employees of the NRC, including the 11 newest Hispanic employees hired in FY 2000, that you are not outsiders in this community. Your talents and skills are welcome and valued additions to our common effort to carry out our mission effectively and efficiently.

Thank you.

Let me now turn to the introduction of our guest speaker for this morning’s observance of Hispanic Heritage Month. Ms. Anna Maria Arias is the owner-publisher of *Latina Style Magazine*, which since 1994

is the only national publication that is 100% Latina-owned. The magazine has a circulation of 150,000 and a readership of over 600,000 Latina professionals, entrepreneurs, and college students. It was chosen by the National Association of Hispanic Publications as the First Place Winner among Outstanding English or Bilingual Magazines for 1999. Ms Arias was recently honored by the Greater Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce with the 1999 Entrepreneur of the Year

Award and by the Changing Images of America Foundation with its Entrepreneurship Award. Ms. Arias began her career in radio as a news anchor and writer in Honolulu, Hawaii. She subsequently worked as media and campaign organizer at the Democratic National Committee, on the production staff of the CNN Crossfire Program, and as managing editor of *Hispanic Magazine*. A native of California, Ms. Arias earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications from Hawaii Pacific University. She currently resides in Northern Virginia.

Please join me in welcoming Ms. Anna Maria Arias.