

Navy Installations Command Celebrates Hispanic Heritage History Month

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By Scot Cregan, Navy Installations Command Public Affairs

Mary Ann Gomez, executive director of the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute (CHLI) was Navy Installations Command's Hispanic Heritage History Month ceremony guest speaker held yesterday at the Washington Navy Yard headquarters.

Gomez explained that this year's theme, "Energizing Our Nation's Diversity" invites us to reflect on Hispanic Americans' vitality and meaningful legacy in our Nation's cultural framework.

"One of the riches of our Hispanic community is that we add to this country's diversity. Just as each of you today bring your personal stories of heritage, traditions, values, beliefs, social-economic backgrounds and varied education levels to the Navy – Hispanics have differences too. We come from Mexico, Central America, South America or Puerto Rico. We have different accents, different education levels and different histories," Gomez said.

She discussed recent initiatives of her organization, CHLI, which was founded in 2003 by Members of Congress to advance the Hispanic Community's Economic Progress with a focus on social responsibility and global competitiveness. The organization is dedicated to fostering a broad awareness of the diversity of thought, heritage, interests and views of Americans of Hispanic and Portuguese descent.

Gomez closed her remarks by asking how the future Navy will be more representative of the U.S. population and how we can personally contribute as an agent of change.

"Latinos make up about 6 percent of the U.S. military veterans. However, they remain under-represented at only 5 percent of the serving officer corps," Gomez continued, "These numbers are important because they reflect where we are as a country and more importantly for organizations such as that focus on leadership. It matters if the leaders of organizations making decisions for our country, our future and well-being do not reflect the diversity of our country. Remember we are 'of the people and for the people.'"



WASHINGTON -- Mary Ann Gomez, executive director of the Congressional Hispanic Leadership Institute (CHLI) discusses "Energizing Our Nation's Diversity" as the guest speaker at Navy Installations Command's Hispanic Heritage History Month celebration at the Washington Navy Yard headquarters. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class John Belanger /Released)