

Proclamation 7121 of September 15, 1998

National Hispanic Heritage Month, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The presence of Hispanics on this continent predates the founding of our Nation, and, as among the first to settle in the New World, Hispanics and their descendants have had a profound and lasting influence on American history, values, and culture. Since the arrival of the earliest Spanish settlers more than 400 years ago, millions of Hispanic men and women have come to the United States from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba and other Caribbean regions, Central America, South America, and Spain, in search of peace, freedom, and a more prosperous future. They brought with them a deep commitment to family and community, a strong work ethic, and an unwavering belief in the American Dream.

In a Nation that derives so much of its strength from many cultures and races, Hispanic Americans are a thriving force in our society and a vital part of our economy. For example, businesses started and operated by Hispanic women constitute one of the fastest-growing categories of small business in the United States today. This entrepreneurial spirit has contributed to the strongest U.S. economy in a generation.

As we approach the 21st century and face the challenges of a global economy, we recognize that the success of our Nation is closely tied to the success of our citizens of Hispanic heritage, who are a large and increasing segment of our population. My Administration is committed to ensuring that Hispanic Americans have the opportunities they need to realize their dreams of a better life.

The key to those dreams is education. We must continue to reach out to Hispanic youth, encouraging them to stay in school, graduate from high school, and go on to college so that they can compete successfully for good jobs and take advantage of promising career opportunities. As part of these efforts, my Administration is committed to ensuring that our \$600 million Hispanic Education Action Plan is fully funded. This initiative will provide the investments needed to help Hispanic students master basic skills and become proficient in English. It will also assist schools in implementing reforms to reduce dropout rates, enable adults to receive basic skills training and participate in English-as-a-second-language programs, and offer assistance to colleges and universities that serve large numbers of Hispanic students.

This month, as we remember with special gratitude the gifts that Hispanic Americans bring to every aspect of our national life, let us reaffirm our efforts to ensure that all Hispanic American families have the tools and opportunities they need to make the most of their lives. Working together, we can meet the challenges of the 21st century in a way that will celebrate our differences and unite us around our common values.

To honor Hispanic Americans for their many contributions to our Nation and our culture, the Congress, by Public Law 100-402, has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation des-

ignating September 15 through October 15 as "National Hispanic Heritage Month."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 15 through October 15, 1998, as National Hispanic Heritage Month. I call upon all government officials, educators, and the people of the United States to honor this observance with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 7122 of September 15, 1998

**National Historically Black Colleges and Universities
Week, 1998**

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Education has always been at the heart of opportunity in America. That has never been more true than today, when a revolution in technology is fundamentally changing the way we live and work and learn. In this new era of dynamic challenge and possibility, we recognize that the best opportunities for personal and professional success will go to those who are well educated. Our Nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) play a vital role in helping to extend access to a quality education.

Established before and just after the Civil War to educate free black students, these institutions have been African Americans' primary route—and for many the only route—to higher education. Struggling to exist in a segregated society, striving to keep tuition affordable despite limited financial resources, these schools nonetheless upheld their mission of academic excellence and equal opportunity.

Even after the 1954 Supreme Court ruling that ended legal segregation of America's public schools, the need for HBCUs did not disappear. These schools continue to provide young African Americans and other students with a nurturing and affirming environment. Today, America's 105 HBCUs are educating almost 300,000 African Americans, and they count among their graduates the majority of our Nation's African American military officers, physicians, Federal judges, elected officials, and business executives. The distinguished faculty members at HBCUs serve as role models and mentors, challenging students to reach their full potential and to refuse to set limits on their dreams. HBCUs are a source of great pride and a symbol of economic, social, and political growth.

As our Nation grows increasingly diverse in race, culture, and ethnic background, these institutions are a valuable source of knowledge about the history and heritage of African Americans, serving as keepers of significant archives and centers for the study of African Americans'