

many years of waiting. Finally, I urge Federal, State, and local officials and private organizations to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies, programs, and activities.

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

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6919 of September 18, 1996

National Hispanic Heritage Month, 1996

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

America draws strength from the extraordinary diversity of its people. Our national character is enhanced by citizens who maintain and honor cultural customs brought from other lands. Hispanics, who have long been part of this tradition, were the earliest European settlers of this great Nation, with the Spanish founding cities in Florida in the 1500's, and Mexicans establishing homesteads in the Southwest in the 1600's. Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens in 1917, and other Latinos over the years, including Cubans and Central Americans, came to the United States in search of democracy, freedom, and a better way of life.

Hispanics, who are of all races, distinguish themselves as a community by fostering connections rooted in the Spanish language. Their diverse and vibrant culture includes elements originating in Spain, North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Hispanics share deep family values, recognize their obligations to the less fortunate of our society, protect their children, cherish freedom, and fulfill their patriotic duty to defend their country.

Earlier this month, I awarded our Nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, to Dr. Antonia Pantoja. Dr. Pantoja has inspired generations of Latino youth to "dare to dream." Believing that hard work can overcome any obstacle, she went from factory worker to college professor and has dedicated her life to bringing educational and economic opportunities to the Puerto Rican community.

Sadly, we recently lost one of our great countrymen, Dr. Hector P. Garcia of Corpus Christi, Texas. A member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, he is best remembered for his service to the Latino community, founding the American GI Forum to defend the civil rights of Hispanic veterans and organizing one of the first civil rights marches in the 1940's.

Many other Hispanic sons and daughters have served our country with distinction, making important contributions in the arts and sciences, the business world, academia, government, agriculture, and the Armed Forces. Helping to preserve the democracy and freedom all Americans enjoy, Hispanics have served in the United States Armed Forces in proportions much larger than their percentage of the population. Since

World War I, our Nation has awarded the Medal of Honor, our highest military honor, to more Latinos than any other ethnic group.

Today, let us honor Hispanics for their example of community and patriotism, and for the richness of their contribution to this great land.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 15 through October 15, 1996, as National Hispanic Heritage Month. I call upon all government officials, educators, and people of the United States to honor this observance with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities, and encourage all Americans to rededicate themselves to the pursuit of equality.

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

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Proclamation 6920 of September 18, 1996

Establishment of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument

*By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation*

The Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument's vast and austere landscape embraces a spectacular array of scientific and historic resources. This high, rugged, and remote region, where bold plateaus and multi-hued cliffs run for distances that defy human perspective, was the last place in the continental United States to be mapped. Even today, this unspoiled natural area remains a frontier, a quality that greatly enhances the monument's value for scientific study. The monument has a long and dignified human history: it is a place where one can see how nature shapes human endeavors in the American West, where distance and aridity have been pitted against our dreams and courage. The monument presents exemplary opportunities for geologists, paleontologists, archeologists, historians, and biologists.

The monument is a geologic treasure of clearly exposed stratigraphy and structures. The sedimentary rock layers are relatively undeformed and unobscured by vegetation, offering a clear view to understanding the processes of the earth's formation. A wide variety of formations, some in brilliant colors, have been exposed by millennia of erosion. The monument contains significant portions of a vast geologic stairway, named the Grand Staircase by pioneering geologist Clarence Dutton, which rises 5,500 feet to the rim of Bryce Canyon in an unbroken sequence of great cliffs and plateaus. The monument includes the rugged canyon country of the upper Paria Canyon system, major components of the White and Vermilion Cliffs and associated benches, and the Kaiparowits Plateau. That Plateau encompasses about 1,600 square miles of sedimentary rock and consists of successive south-to-north ascending plateaus or benches, deeply cut by steep-walled canyons. Nat-