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It is truly an honor to celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month with all of you under this year's theme: "Collective Heritage: Honoring the Past, Inspiring the Future."

This theme resonates deeply, especially as we commemorate a significant milestone—fifteen years since the founding of our organization. This anniversary is more than a marker of time; it is a living testament to our enduring commitment to the mission that brought us together: to foster and inspire awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the past, present, and future contributions of the Hispanic community in Western New York.

Our heritage is not the story of one person or one family. It is **collective**—a shared legacy woven through generations, shaped by history, language, tradition, and values. It reflects the rich cultures of Latin and South America, the Caribbean, and Spain—threads that together form a vibrant tapestry that has enriched this nation for centuries. When we celebrate our culture, we celebrate not only where we come from, but the ways in which we continue to strengthen the fabric of America.

When we say "Honoring the Past," we remember the struggles and sacrifices of those who came before us—the pioneers who preserved our language, carried forward our traditions, and instilled the values that continue to guide us. We honor the leaders and trailblazers who fought for dignity, equity, and opportunity, and whose resilience laid the foundation on which we proudly stand today.

When we say "Inspiring the Future," we accept a shared responsibility. It is up to us to empower the next generation—to create access to education and opportunity, to instill pride in their heritage, and to ensure they know their culture is not only preserved, but celebrated. Inspiring the future means ensuring that our youth see themselves as leaders, innovators, and storytellers—as the next authors of our community's ongoing story.

As we celebrate fifteen years of progress and impact, let us remember that our strength lies in unity. **Together**, we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. **Together**, we lift up those beside us. And **together**, we will inspire and guide those who follow.

That is the true power of our **collective heritage**.

Thank you for your support, for honoring this journey with us, and for helping to carry forward a vision of a future where our community continues to thrive, lead, and inspire with pride.

Casimiro D. Rodriguez Sr.

President / Founder