

The vibrant Hispanic influence can be seen in all aspects of American life and culture, from distinctive cuisine to colorful festivals, and from the rhythms and melodies of traditional music to the contagious beat of today's most popular songs. Throughout our Nation, Hispanic men and women have distinguished themselves in every endeavor and, with our cultural and linguistic ties to our trading partners throughout the Western Hemisphere, Hispanic Americans are crucial to maintaining our Nation's competitiveness and prosperity in the global economy of the 21st century.

Not long ago I had the privilege of awarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our Nation's highest civilian honor, to Cruz Reynoso, a man who has devoted his life to promoting civil rights and championing equal opportunity for all our people. A son of Mexican immigrants, he has lived the American Dream, going to college and working his way up to become the first Hispanic American to serve on the California Supreme Court. A force for positive social change in our Nation, he is just one of many talented Hispanic Americans enriching our national life.

Cruz Reynoso's success underscores what we already know: education and equal opportunity are the keys to ensuring that people of Hispanic heritage can take full advantage of America's promise. My Administration has focused on improving educational opportunities for Hispanic children through the Hispanic Education Action Plan, as well as by reducing class sizes across our Nation, greatly expanding the Head Start program, working to turn around failing schools, and making college more affordable through tax incentives and scholarships. By expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, raising the minimum wage, and moving people from welfare to work, my Administration has also helped expand economic opportunity for Hispanic American working families. We have brought the Hispanic unemployment rate to its lowest level on record and the Hispanic poverty rate to a 20-year low. We have also worked hard to create an Administration that truly reflects America, with the most Hispanic appointees and the most Hispanic judicial nominees in our Nation's history.

Even as Hispanic Americans grow in number and influence in our country, they have not forgotten their roots; they have not forgotten the pain of discrimination, of being ignored or left behind. Instead, millions of courageous and compassionate Hispanic men and women across our country are working to create a just and equal society, uniting around a firm commitment to build One America in this new century.

In honor of the many contributions that Hispanic Americans have made and continue to make to our Nation and culture, the Congress, by Public Law 100-402, has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation designating 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, 2000, as National Hispanic Heritage Month. I call upon all Americans to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

**William J. Clinton**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., September 18, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on September 19.

**Proclamation 7339—National  
Historically Black Colleges and  
Universities Week, 2000**

*September 14, 2000*

*By the President of the United States  
of America*

**A Proclamation**

Rooted in the segregated South of more than a century ago, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) for decades were the sole source of higher education for African Americans. Generations of African

American educators, physicians, lawyers, scientists, and other professionals found at HBCUs the knowledge, experience, and encouragement they needed to reach their full potential. Over the years, HBCUs have compiled an enviable record of achievement, educating almost forty percent of our Nation's black college graduates. Today, building on that tradition of excellence in education, HBCUs confer the majority of bachelor's degrees and advanced degrees awarded to black students in the physical sciences, mathematics, computer science, engineering, and education.

And HBCUs have accomplished this record in the face of daunting challenges—including limited financial resources and a relatively high percentage of disadvantaged students—without resorting to high tuition fees. The faculty and staff of HBCUs have created a nurturing environment for their students, set high academic standards and expectations, and served as inspiring role models for the young people around them. As a result, the dropout rate at HBCUs is much lower than for African American students at other educational institutions, and enrollment remains high.

In addition to educating many of our Nation's most distinguished African American professionals, HBCUs reach out to improve the quality of life in surrounding communities. Whether renovating housing, providing job training, instituting Head Start and senior citizen programs, mentoring elementary and high school students, or teaching nutrition, the students and faculty of HBCUs share their time, talents, and educational resources to make a positive difference in thousands of lives. Just as important, HBCUs serve as living repositories of African American history and heritage, preserving the words and artifacts of proud generations of African Americans and reminding us of the crucial part these men and women have played in the history of our Nation.

For well over a century, HBCUs have made their mark as vital institutions of higher learning. They have educated millions of young people, and today they maintain their lead role in preparing African Americans and students of all races for the challenges and opportunities of this new century.

**Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 17 through September 23, 2000, as National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week. I call upon the people of the United States, including government officials, educators, and administrators, to observe this week with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities honoring America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities and their graduates.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this fourteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

**William J. Clinton**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., September 18, 2000]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on September 19.

**Proclamation 7340—National POW/  
MIA Recognition Day, 2000**

*September 14, 2000*

*By the President of the United States  
of America*

**A Proclamation**

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the onset of the Korean War and the 25th anniversary of the end of the war in Vietnam. For many Americans, these milestones bring difficult memories; for former prisoners of war and the families of those still missing in action, these anniversaries evoke particularly painful memories and emotions.

In both of these conflicts, hundreds of thousands of brave Americans left their homes and families to defend freedom and democracy in the face of communist aggression. Thousands lost their lives in battle, and the fate of 10,000 Americans is still unknown—they are missing in action. We know