

La Biblioteca

A Latinx Resource Guide: Civil Rights Cases and Events

Episode 4: Who Are We? Latinx and U.S. Identity

Library of Congress: From the Library of Congress, in Washington D.C.

Ed Morales: The notion of difference itself or variation or diversity is the identity...

Paola Ramos: Latinx, as much as a word talks about identity, I think the purpose of the word, is that it pushes you to find us and the most unexpected places.

Herman Luis Chavez: Hola, and welcome to La Biblioteca, an exploration of the Library of Congress collections that focus on the cultures of Spain, Portugal, Latin America, and the Hispanic community in the United States. I'm Herman Luis Chavez, a Huntington Fellow in the Hispanic Reading Room.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: I'm Maria Guadalupe Partida, also a Huntington Fellow in the Hispanic Reading Room. Hola, Herman.

Herman Luis Chavez: Hola, Lupita.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Season two of La Biblioteca focuses on A Latinx Resource Guide: Civil Rights Cases and Events in the United States, a research guide which has been curated here at the Library of Congress. This is our fourth episode, which explores "Latinx" as both a term and an identity.

Herman Luis Chavez: Hispanic, Latino, Latina, Latinx, Latine—in the last three decades, we have struggled to formulate a single identity, one that bears all the facets to the pieces of our being.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: In 2018, the Merriam Webster Dictionary was the first to formally recognize the term "Latinx" to mean "of, relating to, or marked by Latin American heritage, used as a gender neutral alternative to Latino or Latina." The Oxford English Dictionary recognized the term a year later.

Herman Luis Chavez: From university departments to celebrities, the term Latinx has been on the rise recently in the United States. The biggest boom of online searches of "Latinx" happened in 2016 shortly after the massacre of mostly queer Latinx people at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. The term has spread mostly in U.S. communities during the second decade of the twenty-first century

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Even so, the term isn't quite in common use. A Pew Research Center study in 2019 of bilingual Hispanic adults in the U.S. found that 24% of respondents had heard of the term Latinx, and that only 3% of respondents actually used the term. Young adults and college graduates were among the populations that were most likely to have heard of and used the term.

Herman Luis Chavez: Critics of Latinx claim that the term doesn't translate well to spoken Spanish and that it doesn't represent the wider Hispanic community due to its limited use. On the other hand, users of the term say that the term is inclusive, as it removes the gendered endings of the terms "Latino" or "Latina" and acknowledges those who do not speak Spanish but who still come from Latin America.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Although its origins are unclear, we recognize that classifications and references to the Latinx identity are growing in the United States and might help a growing demographic and budding generation define themselves. As of 2010, the Hispanic population became the largest minority group in the U.S., currently accounting for more than 60 million of the country's population. As this community grows, the term Latinx may help us address the country's shifting demographics, understanding the intersectionality of our identity in a new context, both today and in the future.

Herman Luis Chavez: Today, we welcome Ed Morales, an author and journalist who has written for *The Nation*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and other publications. He is the author of *Fantasy Island: Colonialism, Exploitation, and the Betrayal of Puerto Rico*, *Latinx: The New Force in Politics and Culture*, and *Living in Spanglish*. Morales is a lecturer at Columbia University's Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race and the City University of New York's Graduate School of Journalism. The evolution of terms such as Hispanic and Latino and similar hyphenated identities still remain contested, can you tell us about how is it that the term Latinx emerged?

Ed Morales: I've been teaching seminars at the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race since 2010. During the seminar, I would often ask students whether they prefer to identify as Latino or Latina or their country of national origin. And, around that time there had been a Pew Hispanic research poll that said that more young people were not wanting to identify as Latino and preferred their country of national origin. So, coincidentally, in the middle of those kind of discussions, there emerged some of the students who wanted to use this word Latinx. At first, I didn't understand why, and then they began to explain to me that it was about rejecting the gender binary but in general, a way of including in the discussion of Latinos not only non non binary people, but also the LGBTQI community. One of the reasons we got to Latinx was because the original term Latino was sort of the more liberal alternative to Hispanic. Within that term, there were discussions about privileging women more. At first, there was a Latino and slash a and then it became Latina slash o to privilege women even further and then this Latin@ term became popular in the mid 2010s as well. I contributed to a volume about Latin@

media. And, that's the 'a' with the 'o' that looks like the @ sign in the email or on Twitter. But, that really only lasted for a couple of years.

Herman Luis Chavez: There's also the community of people that struggle to identify with the term Latinx and they don't feel like it yet addresses their Latino, Hispanic, or Chicano identities. You mentioned an older Pew Research study. I want to mention a more recent Pew research study that was conducted in late 2019 that demonstrated that only 3% of people who knew about the term Latinx actually use it. So, can you tell us a little bit about the people that maybe struggle to identify with the term and why that disconnect between use and identification exists?

Ed Morales: Well, first of all, one of the critiques I've heard about that particular poll is that it was an extraordinarily small sample. But, it's true that there's a lot of pushback against Latinx and a lot of it is people not knowing the term or having heard about it. And, that's one of the main criticisms of Latinx is that perhaps it's the product of a form of elitism where it was popularized in university settings and it's been seized on by a lot of academics. Like for instance, you know some departments have renamed themselves Latinx studies. And, there was criticism of some of the candidates in the Democratic Party, using the word Latinx, and that was criticized as being elite. There is no doubt about it that it comes from younger people, the leading edge of thinking, and it doesn't really catch on until many years later. I don't think it's surprising that a lot of people haven't heard of the term. Some people who have heard of the term object to it for reasons I think that are coming both from liberal or left sides and wider conservative sides. The main pushback from liberal side is or or more harder left side is again that Latino represents a word that is part of colonization or it was coined by the French to try to get together Caribbean islands, who were colonized by romance language speaking European countries and that the idea of Latino has a direct descendant from the mestizo ideology of Latin America and therefore, is a colonizing word. Then from the right, there are people who the X seems to create a violent reaction among people. And, people say that it's not Spanish, so then it reflects sort of a US colonization of Latin American culture. That one I find a little silly because there are so many English words that are used in in Latin America and for many different reasons, and there's no rejection of them. Then, there are some people who I think there's a sort of a homophobia, that is you know people don't want to admit that they feel that maybe it centers nonbinary or LGBTQ people too much to have the X. As far as the objections from the Left, I completely understand the negativity that's directed towards whatever herencia that we have from mestizaje, but it's a two sided process. The whole idea Latino is the ideology that was imposed in Latin America, but at the same time, it reflects an actual process that happened. Sometimes there was violence involved, and sometimes people's free will was involved in terms of intermarriage and the creation of a large body of mixed race people. And

that large body of mixed race people remains, and struggles to figure out what their identity is—particularly in the harsh environment of the binary in the US. You know I've talked about before that Latino identity in the US—when it came into being in the era of national liberation struggles in the 1960s and 70s—was often used to help Latin American descendent people to identify with the blackness and indigenusness. And, it's been kind of like this thirty or forty year period after that in which Latinoness has been associated with the agenda of mass marketers and people involved in electoral politics, who want to oversimplify the Latino experience and alienates people, and I completely understand that.

Herman Luis Chavez: We've seen Hispanic, Latino, Latina, or Latinx then we've had sort of, as you mentioned this intervention of *mestizaje*. As you mentioned earlier and just have reiterated, this interesting divide between how we recognize those who may identify, as you know, Afro-Latinx—the black and white issue already that happens between those within the communities. And so, I think this really raises the issue of any sort of monolithic *Latinidad*. Can you mention a little bit about the inconsistencies with this notion of this monolithic *Latinidad* and why it's so challenging for us to arrive at a particular label for this community?

Dr. Ed Morales: In some senses all identities are manufactured, but it seems more manufactured because it doesn't have a grounding in either a strong sense of racial identity or ethnic identity. It's an ethno-racial identity, which includes elements of ethnicity and strong politics of race that confuses people. The categorization, as part of the way that we view the world. And so, since it's difficult to categorize Latinos, it's easy for people to throw up their hands and say it's impossible to do categorization here because people are so different. The notion of difference itself or variation or diversity is the identity, and it's hard for people to get their arms around that because it's kind of a logical contradiction with the way things are set up. I mean we're constantly reminded of this in our everyday thinking, even on the university level in choices that we fill out when we describe who we are. There's a kind of totalitarian idea of right and wrong that's being pushed. And, what's unfortunate is that when you are maybe on the side of marginalized people, it's important to take sides, as well. So, that's a problem too. I mean that's the problem that think that the complaints from Afro Latinos and indigenous Latinos are showing, which is that living with the understanding that there's a lot of variation and that our identity is a multiplicity of differences can overshadow the real concerns of you know racism that exists among Latinos and Latin Americans and African and Indigenous people bear the brunt of. But at the same time, in terms of politics, the society is recognizing Latinos in whatever vague way as a group and there's a chance for political power or an understanding of who we are by trying to come up with the strategic essentialism about what we are in order to present ourselves because I think we are less powerful if we cling to our individual national

identities. One of the things I always say is that there's another contradiction to this identity, which is that we should be trying to forge ties between us, but at the same time, we cannot neglect our individual national identities and continue to focus on that reinforce it. And, I think that myself, I've done that with the last two books that I ever written—one which is focused on the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the US and the other one which is called *Latinx*.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: In your book, *Latinx*, you also make mention of the *Mestizaje* ideology, one that has strong historical roots in Latin America and one that could be interpreted differently in the U.S. Could you tell us what *mestizaje* means and why this *mestizaje* or notion of hybridity has been hidden from the American discourse and how does *mestizaje* relate to forming this *Latinx* identity.

Dr. Ed Morales: There's two aspects to *mestizaje*. You know *mestizaje* is what happened historically because of the way that the Spanish colonized Latin America, which involved imposing a caste hierarchy and organizing society by using a number of terms that described differently shaded people and how they would be interpreted racially. And, that is still something that is a legacy and remains in Latin America. It can be a kind of a metaphor for social class by a series of varying shades that indicate how at the top, you know how to European you are or how black and indigenous you are at the bottom. But then there's the *mestizaje* ideology, which a lot of people are identifying with *mestizaje* itself. And which is an ideology that was used by a few Latin American countries that the beginning of the 20th century to combat the problem that race science was posing for Latin America. They used Darwin's ideas to create a hierarchy among races in the world, and they used that to sort of make a false hypothesis about how race is biologically based. And, what that did is that it made people sort of natural slaves or natural inferior people that was completely determined by biology. Latin America had a problem because, according to race science, there were too many people in Latin America that were biologically inferior, so what they did was particularly in Mexico and Brazil, but other countries have their own version of it, they decided to promote this idea that because their countries were mixed, it was positive, and that they wanted to celebrate the fact that they had these mixed race populations. But, the ideology what it did was, it patronizingly accepted people of color, but it always assured that there was a white privilege in the ideology, and it encouraged people to aspire to whiteness either through their words and deeds or through intermarriage. And, what that did was eradicate the real cultures of Black and Indigenous people in Latin America. In United States, you had the one drop rule, which said that if you had any trace of blackness and you, you were black, and a big reason for that was because there were lots of free black people in Latin America, at the same time that they were

importing slaves and so that wasn't true in the South in the United States. In the South in the United States, there were no free black people. In fact, they were raiding the North part of the US to get free black people and bring them to be slaves in the southern part of the United States. So, the reason why mulattos or mixed race people were never recognized in the US is because it was against the interest of slave owners who wanted every possible person who could be eligible to be a slave to be a slave. In Latin America, a lot of people argue that because they were mixed, they were not fit for slavery. So, that's why you had this really strong binary in the United States, and you had this this different system in Latin America. I'm not trying to say that it was better in Latin America. I'm just trying to say that it was different, and it did have some implications on those societies. And, some black people have different status in society. So, it's just a difference, about the way that society is evolved. So, the mestizaje, it's a historical event. And, one of the arguments in my book is that mestizaje ideology, as it was practice in Latin America can change in the US by exposure, ironically, to the harsh black white binary which allows a lot of Latin American descent of people to actually realize that they are Black and Indigenous which they weren't allowed to do in Latin America. And so in a sense, the harsh black and white binary of the US has the potential to liberate Latin American people from the propagandising notions of mestizaje ideology. Now, I know that a lot of people object to the fact that it is true that mestizaje ideology sort of remains intact in the United States. One of the examples is maybe like what you see in Spanish language media, you know where there's a valuation of light skinned people. It's really hard for them to to focus on anything that has to do with blackness. All of that is a direct reflection of how mestizaje ideology remains uninterrupted in the US. There are also, I think a lot of examples of Latino people or Latin American descentend people who have embraced or realized how racist mestizaje ideology is and have created different kinds of identities, in the United States. And, that's what I tried to theorize about what the future of Latinx is. It's the continuing growth of awareness about that and and the rejection of racism.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: In chapter nine of your book titled Urban Space and Identity, you also talk about an urban identity that is shared by Latinx community, African Americans, and Asian Americans and you interconnect all these groups together. Can you tell us more about what this urban space means and what it signifies in shaping a Latinx identity and perhaps what it means for the future of Latinos as they forged tied with other groups in such shared spaces?

Dr. Ed Morales: The urban experience in the United States, in general, has been something that could promote progressivism, solidarity between people—working class or working poor backgrounds. I think that we can see that these suburbanization of the US was a deliberate

strategy that was used to break up these kind of progressive political activism that was happening in US cities in the early part of the 20th century between mostly European immigrants. With this white flight, which is something that I lived through in my childhood. I witnessed growing up in the Bronx you know the mass exodus of white European ethnics from my neighborhood and other neighborhoods and how that transformed into a majority Black and Latino landscape for urban barrios in the United States. At first, it was very grim, and this is one of the reasons why they created hip hop in the first place where people do not have access to musical education or any kind of recreation, so they just made culture out of you know what they had around them. After that, the Black and Latino people who live in urban spaces and you know and as I also I mentioned Asians and other groups have learned to create solidarities, political movements, demands for education, anti-gentrification movements that coheres as as a form of political resistance. And, you can see how that happened in the summer, with all the Black Lives Matter protests. It wasn't just African American people involved, it was just a coalition of a bunch of diverse groups of people who lived in and shared urban spaces. In that chapter, I'm not necessarily just talking about just Latinx barrios or that Latinos are the ones who hold the key to understanding progressive politics in urban areas. I'm showing how so a lot of Latinx identity has developed in this milieu, and it's one of the strengths of Latino identity right now.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Thank you so much Dr. Morales for expanding more on that chapter of your book. We would love to conclude with any calls to actions that You would like to provide our audience with today.

Dr. Ed Morales: We are really in an important time now, where there is some awareness about oppressions and the needs of marginalized people, whether you're Black, Latino, Asian, LGBTQ, women. It's a moment where it will be possible for some of us to move into positions of power and influence that we didn't have before. As a result of that, people need to remember that it's not about them and that there's still masses of people that need to be nurtured and given the opportunities that everybody else has. And, that it doesn't become you know what I call the book neoliberal multiculturalism where people are just placed into positions of power and nothing really changes. But, I have a lot of faith, because I think particularly younger generations have a lot more complex and detailed understanding of what we're facing.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Today, we also welcome Paola Ramos, author, Emmy-award winning journalist, and Latinx advocate. Ramos is a host and correspondent for VICE and VICE News, as well as a contributor for Telemundo News and MSNBC and a political appointee during the Obama Administration. She is also the author of "Finding Latin-X: In Search of the Voices Redefining Latino Identity,"

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Hi Paola, welcome to La Biblioteca podcast.

Paola Ramos: Hi, thank you so much for having me.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: So you are the author of *Finding Latinx: In Search of the Voices Redefining Latino Identity*. In the introduction of your book, you note that the immigrant journey—from Latin America to the U.S. has been the dominant narrative of the Latino community. And by contrast, you argue that the Latino community within the U.S has been less examined and explored. We would love to start off by asking you what is Latinx and how does this emergent identity or label relate to the story of the 60 million plus Hispanics living in the U.S.?

Paola Ramos: The way that I define Latinx is nothing but an inclusive term that attempts to give light to the 60 million of us that live in this country. For many years, we've sort of talked about us in a way that has always referenced our parents' generation, you know that immigrant story that I was alluding to. But, I think this term does something that for many years we haven't done, which is trying to understand who the 60 million of us are. No? So it's people that look like me, but it's you know at least 3 million to 4 million Afro-Latinos. Right? It's Indigenous folks it's trans folks, it's people that speak English but also Spanish and Spanglish. It's liberal Latinos and conservative Latinos. And so, I think for for far too long for many years we've sort of you know, kept going with this narrative without taking a step back and looking at us and understanding how us right the younger generation, middle generations are different from the older ones. And so, I think at least Latinx attempts to sort of tell the story of who we are right now.

Herman Luis Chavez: That's I think so valuable in terms of like contextualizing this in the sort of generational change that is occurring within the broad Latinx population in the US. And I think that also brings up a point in terms of you know who does use a term and who doesn't. So, I'm wondering if you can tell us a little bit about how Latinx, as an identity term has been something that has been dividing for the community and maybe is heading towards something more uniting.

Paola Ramos: It would be a mistake to say that it is a widely used term. I think that's why this conversation is so important because at least Latinx—as controversial as it is—at least it's forcing us to do something that we haven't done a long time, which is simply to talk about identity, to pause for a second, and understand who we're talking about. I had these conversations with my grandparents all the time, but I think the moment that you start breaking down the term and the moment that you start explaining that X that causes so much alarm, the moment that you put a name to it in a face to that X, people get it, no? And, so when I tell someone like my grandfather Latinx is is someone like me, right? Why? Because I don't want to

choose one or two labels. I want to be many things under one umbrella. I want to be Latina and I want to be queer, no? Latinx is someone like your own friend, abuelo, who is a Black Cuban, but for many reasons, he's never felt part of the Cuban identity, because he's never felt part of that Latino label, no? That's him, and then I tell him I'm like Latinx is someone like you. Why? Because you are a person that came to this country with the idea of simply having more freedoms. And, that to me is the one thing that unites all of us Latinos, right which is that there is someone in our families down our tree line in our generations that came to this country with one goal and that one goal was always to strive for more liberty and more freedoms. And, if that is the case, and that is a story that we believe, no? Then Latinx itself should sort of captures that, which is let people be who they are, no?, let people lean into their identities. And, I believe that right now it's the only term in the dictionary that that captures that, right? And, that's what I'm still trying to figure out. Why do people reject that so much, right? Why does it cause so much hate? And, I think it's an important discussion to have because there is something that pisses people off, there is something that brings out hate when Latinos see themselves suddenly next to someone that's Black, and then next is someone that's trans, and next to someone that's Indigenous. Some people don't like that image, and I think that's the conversation we should be having.

Herman Luis Chavez: I think that that's a shared experience that many of us can resound with. I was just talking with my dad a couple of weeks ago—as a young queer Latino myself—about the the way that we talk about transgender individuals in Spanish, right? My dad kept saying, “Yo no crecí así,” I didn't grow up that way. For me, I was like, okay but here you are now. This is the conversation that we're having now. There's this aspect of the community perspective that comes in and the individual connections that we have with our own family members, but also the other Latinx people that we interact with and that you know brings me back to your book. Can you tell us in your experience what you have found are the communities that Latinx resounds with the most and why it is something that is so important to those communities?

Paola Ramos: I mean the first community that comes to mind are LGBTQ, specifically like trans folks. So, a lot of the people that I've interviewed in this book and just through the years, I spent a lot of time with like trans asylum seekers, trans migrants, trans Latinas in the country, and I think we take a step back and we understand their story, we understand that it's not that different from a lot of our parents, no? A lot of these trans people that migrate to this country migrate because it's life or death for them, no? I think, give you a trans person in Latin America, your average age, your average life expectancy, is no more than 35 years old, which may seem dramatic but it's something that a lot of Latinos who migrate to this country understand no? You migrate, because you want a better life for yourself, you want a better chance at opportunities.

The story with them, they resonate with this term, because for many years, they come here, and then suddenly they are rejected for who they are, no? They come to this country searching that freedom, and then they don't find jobs and they're discriminated against. They have to conform to certain stereotypes to certain identities. When this country promises you one thing: that you can be whomever you want no? And among ourselves among our Latino community, for so many years we buy into those stereotypes and we buy into that idea of if you are Latina you have to be beautiful in a certain way. I think, suddenly, with this term Latinx, all it does is that it creates more space for them. It creates space for a trans woman to say that I am as Latina and as a woman as any Latina is. The interesting thing is that you find that at everywhere, no? You find that, not just in in trans folks and LGBTQ folks but other like straight Latinas that don't conform to the same sort of gender norms that their abuelos or their moms did. And, same with men, no? A lot of young Latino men that want to get away from perhaps you know some machismo in some stereotypes in our own culture. In that sense, Latinx that's why I say it is a term for everyone, it is a term for my own Cuban grandmother who fled Cuba, who for many years was sort of told to put her head down and then suddenly when she's introduced to this term that tells someone like her that she can speak up if she wants to, she can do what she wants, and she can organize her own community that that speaks to her as well. I guess what I would say is the moment that you truly explain the word for what it is, the moment that you get the misinformation out of the way, it becomes a more popular word. There's thousands of examples like that, right? At the border, I spent so much at the border, typically talking to like Mexican immigrants. One of the best examples I have of this word is was when suddenly you introduced Indigenous migrants to this narrative, and you, you you include Indigenous migrants into this label and these are folks that don't speak Spanish or English maybe they speak in Q'anjob'al or Mam, you know the Guatemalan dialects and languages. And, they too suddenly become part of the immigrant narrative in the Latino narrative. And, so the beauty and the curse of this word is that there are examples everywhere, no?

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Thank you Paola. I would also love to discuss Chapter 5 of your book, titled "Unbroken," where you make connections to the U.S. Mexico border, mental health, and the younger Latino/Latina population. In this chapter, you head to El Paso after the 2019 Walmart shootings and reveal alarming rates among the young Latino population. As you mentioned younger Latinos and Latinas are more susceptible to mental health setbacks and approximately one in five Latinos will approach a doctor. Throughout your book, you include the stories of young Latinos that you encounter. How are they redefining their Latino identity, despite the adversity present, within these younger generations.

Paola Ramos: There is one common thread throughout the book right and throughout these stories is that each of the stories has an element of pain, right? And ,that is typically because the younger generation of Latinos has seen their parents, and sort of normalized these pains and injustices in different ways, right? And, I think because part of our original story was always that when you come to this country, you are told to assimilate, no? You are told to look a certain way, and you are told to strive to power in a certain way. And so there's always this feeling of feeling extremely grateful for what this country has given you to the point that you put your head down. I think the common thread that I find with the younger Latinos that I speak to in El Paso but really anywhere, is that they're rejecting that, no? They're rejecting that assimilation, they're rejecting that normalization of injustice, they're rejecting that pain, and they're speaking up in a way that their parents and our parents, perhaps never could. For many reasons, some is because we, I mean, I'll speak for myself and a lot of people is because we carry the privilege of a US passport no, or a green card or your residency. And, it's because we carry the privilege of being able to speak in two languages, right? It's because we carry the privilege of being part of a system and understanding the system and navigating in a way that our parents didn't. And so a lot of the taboos and these norms that they had to succumb to, we reject that. And, so I think that is a huge pattern that is redefining who we are, because that means that we define what it means to be American—no one else but us.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: Hispanic and Latino Americans are the largest minority group in the United States. That should mean that this community's presence is quite large, right. When we think about Latino communities, many of us may not deem the Midwest—from having a considerable Latino presence. But, in a chapter Of your book titled home, you depict the widespread presence of the Latino community in the Midwest. Can you talk to us more about these unknown Latino voices that you encountered in the Midwest?

Paola Ramos: Latinx, as much as a word talks about identity, I think the purpose of the word is that it pushes you to find us in the most unexpected places right, including a place, like the Midwest, which according to many of us is is a white state. When the reality is that for decades no, for over a century we've been there. That chapter is simply an exercise of I went to the Midwest and then I started sort of finding us and not by the numbers or by the books but through culture, right? And so, I'm in Chicago, I'm in Illinois. There I let myself be led by smells, right and trying to understand how Latinos have been putting their foot down like through creating a small businesses of food and restaurants, no? And, so I spend a lot of time there finding food in Illinois and you find out that it has brought comfort and refuge for decades to our people. I go to Wisconsin right, and I'm surprised to know that in Wisconsin, you have the largest Latino music festival in the country, right, and so there I let myself be led by by music,

by musicians, by Latinos that for years have been playing music in Wisconsin. And then, I go to Minneapolis and it's the same thing you look up and down the streets and you see murals and it happens to be that a lot of these murals are created by Latino artists. And then, in Iowa same with religion, no. I walk into like Mount Pleasant, Iowa and again a small small town that I had never been to suddenly you realize that it's full of immigrants that find home and comfort in religion and in these institutions, and so the whole point of that chapter is to understand that the moment you break away from these stereotypes, no, the moment you look at just culture, you put the politics aside, you put the statistics aside, you look at our culture, we are everywhere. We are not just in the Florida and Texas and Arizona, as in California. We are literally everywhere, and our culture is so entrenched now in this country. All you have to do is just look a little bit more and listen closely.

Herman Luis Chavez: Latinx presence is everywhere, there's this push to have these conversations with our parents, our grandparents, those who came before us. There's this push to find those who identify with the term and to locate this Latinx identity across the country. You know there's so many differences in the communities and the ways that we get to representation and identity and Latinx is one of the ways that we're trying to get there. So I'm wondering if you have any pieces of advice that you would be willing to give for those who are on this road, on this trajectory towards finding themselves trying to situate their identity.

Paola Ramos: I remember when I was younger and I was in Miami I felt like I was in a bubble, where I didn't really have to think about identity so much, and so it took me leaving Miami, no, and coming to different parts of the country to understand what it meant to be me in those spaces outside of what felt comfortable to me, and I think there's always this like initial intuition to perhaps not really think about it, put that put that in a box, trying to assimilate, trying to Americanize yourself. If I look back, I wish I would have leaned, leaned into what it meant to be me, what this accent meant, what my family's history meant, no, what it meant to be you know queer and Latina and have immigrant parents. I wish I would have spent more time unpacking that then, so my only piece of advice is to not run away from that, to lean into it, because when you do that, you suddenly find that there's a lot more people that are going through the same thing as you are. And, it's always good, because you educate yourself and you educate others and, then you start like you start finding your people in your history, in places that you least expect it to. It's a time where we're questioning right, whether or not such a thing like a Latino community Latinx community means. And so, again, I would just encourage everyone to not be so scared about these words and Latinx, to not reject it so much and to just spend time understanding where the rejection comes from. But, more than anything who is part of your community, you know? it's very easy for us to be fragmented, it's very easy for us to live in

different states, and it's very easy for us to find our own fights, but we have so much in common, and so all I'm trying to do right now is advocate for all of us to find that voice that we do have in common.

Herman Luis Chavez: Talking with both Paola Ramos and Ed Morales today has really revealed to us that this whole concept of the term Latinx and the Latinx community is one that is really predicated on finding community and where that community is and what it means for us as a community of people from Latin America or with roots in Latin America to be in this country. One of the things that really stands out is how Morales and Ramos shared about the communities that use the term Latinx and what it means for these different communities to have a word that they feel like represents them and how we can then take these communities and understand how they fit into this broader larger community of these 60 million people that live in the United States. That community also includes people in our newest generation. So much of this is also a generational question, of those of us like you and me, Lupita, who are in Gen Z and the way that we are interacting with people of other generations and how we—as we grow older and more and more new generations come in—are figuring out what it means for us to come together as an entire community. But, you know, this issue has been a historical one. We've been trying to figure out for years what it means to call ourselves a term.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: This diverse community has a long history of identity seeking. Before the 1970s people who descended from Latin America were counted as white on the census. The Chicano Movement and an emerging Latino presence in the U.S. ignited a push to include the term Hispanic as a category on the 80s census. The term Hispanic entailed any individual who originated from a Spanish speaking country. Thus Hispanic was tied to language, and it referred to individuals from Latin America or Spain but not from Portugal nor Brazil. Beginning around the 1990s, the term Latino gained momentum, and it was tied to geography as it categorized individuals who have roots to Latin America and who did not necessarily speak Spanish or came from Spain. During this time, there was a debate on whether a label or category—Hispanic or Latino was most appropriate. As Dr. Morales mentioned, other labels and terms such as Latin@, Latine, and Latinx have emerged. But overall, I think we can conclude that one term won't ever encompass all the identities that this diverse community bears. It's all based on individual choices, self-expressions, and experiences. Thus, there is no single right identity. Now, how do we move forward from here? For now, I believe attempting to comprehend why some individuals are using the term Latinx is a key to understanding this growing community of more than 60 million people.

Herman Luis Chavez: Absolutely. Additionally, I would like to add that there are those who may see themselves as a part of the Latinx community who do not necessarily see themselves as descended from Latin America, but from Spain and from the land that became the U.S. after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. We can also consider how those who are descended from colonial Spain or Latin America—such as those whose family roots on what is now US soil go back 500+ years as part of the settler colonial past that is as significant to U.S. history as it is to Latin American history—may seek to identify. As we look to the future, we need to consider

what it means for us to acknowledge communities that use different terms than we might, but also to understand that ultimately, the 60 million or less that do live in the United States can come together to recognize the unity that we have in being proud of who we are, no matter what it is we decide to call ourselves.

Herman Luis Chavez: Happy Hispanic Heritage Month 2021! Thank you for tuning in to La Biblioteca, Season 2. I'm Herman.

Maria Guadalupe Partida: And I'm Lupita. Be sure to tune in to the next episode of La Biblioteca! For more information on the Latinx community and civil rights, visit us online at guides.loc.gov/latinx-civil-rights.

Herman Luis Chavez: Hasta pronto!

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