**Miranda  Intro:**

Here’s a little section of a poem I once wrote:

The color of my skin says nothing about my ethnicity.

My red and yellow undertones, seen by people near me, looks like I came off the Mayflower in 1650.

People turn their heads as I cross the street wondering how could a man as dark as my father  be related to to me.

Funny things is that, I got this skin from him.

As the fluency of spanish rolls off my tongue , people do not ask where I am from,

But wonder what school taught me to pronounce Óye primito, que lo que

But see i’m not the only one.

Although small, this section of the poem emphasizes an important aspect of hispanic heritage. See with the amount of diversity within the hispanic culture, it’s hard to forget that being hispanic is not about what you look like or how you sound, but it’s about how your community and how the people express their culture and pride. Each country, family or even individual within the hispanic culture focuses on different aspects like music, food or language. However, much like Priory, at the end of the day we bring home all the individual experiences to a larger community of people who share similar values and vision for the future. Today we will share individual aspects of Latino culture that all create an overarching community. Brenda will begin with a poem illustrating the diverse individuality of our culture, Alondra will show this through examples of food and music and finally Mr. LaValle will conclude with his experiences about balancing his American and Latino identity.

**Brenda**

The name of this poems is

Nosotros Somos…

Vivimos en los Estados Unidos

Nacimos en los Estados Unidos

Nuestras actas de nacimiento enseña que somos estadounidense

Pero… No enseña que somos latinos

Si… parecemos Americanos

Pero… míranos… también parecemos latinos

Venimos de fondos que gritan país mio

Venimos de abuelas que son como madres y primos que son como hermanos

Vivimos como nuestros padres nos enseñaron

Amar cada aspecto de nuestras identidades

Somos Dominicanos

Y Salvadorenos

Somos Venezolanos

Y Chilenos

Somos Peruanos

Y Colombianos

Somos Puertorriquenos

Y Espanoles

Somos Guatemaltecos

Y Costarricense

Somos Argentinos

Y Hondurenos

Somos Cubanos

Y Mexicanos

Somos paises de personas diversas

Somos America Latina

Los que sostenemos nuestras banderas por las esquinas

Somos mucho más de lo que te imaginas

Decimos con orgullo

El nombre que nos une

Latinos!

De pie a pie, uno por uno

Nos paramos unidos para lo que nos hace únicos

Nuestras actas de nacimiento no enseñan que somos latinos

Pero.. No importa porque nuestros corazones lo gritan

We live in the United States
We were born in the United States
Our birth certificates show that we are American
But ... It does not show that we are Latino

Yea... we look American
But... look at us… we also look latino

We come from backgrounds that scream my country

We come from grandmothers who are like mothers and cousins that are like siblings

We act the way our parents taught us to
Love each and every part of our identities

We are Dominican
And Salvadorian

We are Venezuelan
And Chilean

We are Peruvian
And Colombian

We are Puertorican
And Spaniard

We are Guatemalan
And Costarican

We are Argentine
And Honduran

We are Cuban

And Mexican

We are countries of diverse people

We are Latin America
Those who hold up our flags for the world to see
We are much more than you can imagine

We say with pride
The name that unites us all

Latino!

One by one, step by step

We stand united for what makes us unique

Our birth certificates may not show that we are Latinos

But it's okay because our hearts scream it

**Alondra**

Latino culture is a culture of Latin America, and also a culture of the United States: it is a pan-American culture. It is a transnational culture because it is forged by people who cross national borders and nourish it with elements from more than one place. Latin American cultural practices come to the United States where they are transformed and then they travel back to Latin America where they are transformed again in a continuous cycle. The conviction that Latino culture is a pan-American culture made with elements from both Latin and Anglo America is illustrated by the fact that there is no such thing as one Latino food culture because Latin American food traditions are very diverse.

We have taken another latin country’s known dish and have put our own flavor to it.  For example, my cousin’s family debates all the time over who’s tamales are better.  My cousin is half Mexican and half Venezuelan.  You see tamales in Venezuela are actually called hallacas and taste differently.  Her Venezuelan family argue that the Mexican tamale is too spicy while her other half argues that wrapping the hallaca with banana leaves is strange and gives it a weird flavor.

Another example is ceviche: obviously each country thinks their version of the dish is better and according to Peru, they have the best since it originated from there.  From my own personal experience, I’ll take spicy food over any sweet food.  As I was growing up, my parents would purposely put chile in my food in order to get used to it when I get older.  I remember when I was about 6 or 7 years old crying and running around hoping the burning sensation in my mouth would stop but my parents would tell me it was for my own good.  Therefore I’ll take Colombian arepas over Venezuelan arepas, Peru’s arroz con pollo over Cuba’s arroz con pollo, and Mexican ceviche over Peruvian ceviche.

In the United States, however, Mexicans, Central and South Americans live side by side with people from the Caribbean and beyond. Latino food is increasingly accepted as mainstream food in the United States.  All of us Latin Americans can argue all day about who’s food is better but they are missing the point: it is a Latino feast, it doesn’t just belongs in a country.  And Latino food is also going global.

Music is an area in which the creation of a pan-American Latino culture is even more clearly evident. Take for example reggaeton music.  It is a mixture of reggae, rap, hip hop and has a Spanish influence.  Reggaeton music's origin is most closely associated with Puerto Rico where it first gained momentum. However, it has spread across to other countries in the Americas where reggaeton artists have exported a blend of different Caribbean and urban Latin musical forms to the whole world. One particularly famous artist is, J Balvin who’s from Colombia.  Many people believed he wouldn’t make it as a reggaeton artist since he wasn’t from the Caribbean. However, his input of urban pop into the Caribbean flow has made him into one of the biggest reggaeton artist with hits like “Ay Vamos” and “Ginza”.  He has inspired other non- caribbean artists such as Maluma, to spread reggaeton music across the world.  The first reggaeton song I’ve ever heard, like most of you, was “Gasolina” by Daddy Yankee.  Believe it or not, that song came out 12 years ago and it still very popular.  I know we all enjoy that unique hip-hop and Caribbean rhythm that will have you all dancing at Homecoming this Friday.  Reggaeton has become staple music in many parties and events that has paved a huge fan base in the United States and across the world. Reggaeton was formed from hip-hop and reggae, and has helped Latin-Americans contribute to the urban American culture while still keeping many aspects of their Hispanic heritage. The music relates to many of the socio-economic issues happening in America including gender and race which has set a huge popularity in the United States because it highly connects to hip-hop in America today.

Us Latinos can argue all day about who’s food, music and dancing is better but at the end of the day, we enjoy each other’s different cultures.We may have our differences but we are one: We’re the people who hold up our flags up high, always cherish our families in our heart, and take pride in our identity no matter where we are.  Just like at Priory where we’re all from different backgrounds, ethnicities and so on but we come together as a community to share our similar values and visions for our future.

**LaValle**

Hispanic Heritage month has always been special to me, it allows me to reflect on my own identity as an Argentine. It’s not just about arguing with say...Armando over who is the best soccer player of all time because we all know it’s always an Argentine..even though it isn’t much of an argument because Priory students like Joseph, Morgan and my very own son would all agree that Messi is essentially a Soccer God and has a place reserved atop Mount Olympus right next to Zeus. As you can tell soccer is a big part of my identity as it is for most Argentines.

After being born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, I moved across the world as a wee one to the Latino/Hispanic hot spot of Ann Arbor, Michigan (not really).   I always had to find my balance and ways to connect with my heritage because Michigan had very few Latinos at that time.  Spanish was my first language and my identity was always mixed and bipolar. It was mixed between BBQ and tailgates at Michigan stadium alongside of asados and soccer when I was living for periods of time in Argentina. Family and friends being over at my house all the time in Argentina without invitation compared to planned events 2 weeks out with American friends. It was hard because I didn't have anyone to identify with on the Latino side but a ton of people on the American side. As you can imagine it became hard to find my Argentina outlet unless I was actually in Argentina. Luckily, I found my community of peeps from several Latino countries through of course…..soccer!! There was Jose from Colombia, Tomas from Chile and Miguel from Venezuela. While we had differences in terms of distinct Latino cultural between our countries, we found unity in the pieces of broader Hispanic culture that we were missing on a daily basis thus creating a unified Latino culture within the larger community. I was able to enjoy my personal identity and have my American and Latino communities side by side. It was an interesting dynamic to slide between identities and feel so deeply connected to being both American and Latino. Like our experiences at Priory and life, we are trying to find the identities that fit our experience and sometimes it’s more than just one thing and other times we just want to enjoy the greater feel of the community that surrounds us and be a part of it.  Both are important and relevant to making up our life long experiences and defining us at our core.  It would be amazing if we could all embrace who we are as people first without denying our own identity and then appreciate and accept those around us.  I think Hispanic Awareness Month is about this reality for Latinos in the US as they are identifying in so many unique ways and just want to be recognized for who they are while also being seen as American.