

## "OUR HERITAGE"

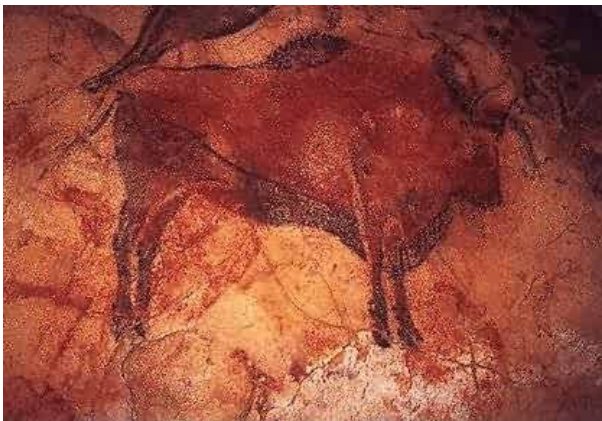
I remember my father's words vividly; "...if you want anything out of this life you have to get an education!" I can still see his eyes filled with pride as if his mission to communicate this to me perpetuated a legacy of many generations. "...You need to have good work ethics and do your very best every time". This was basic language at home and I remember hearing the same echo while visiting with many of my immigrant friends as well. We came to the US from Cuba by way of Spain...my parents and my younger sister...this was forty two years ago.

It was part of our cultural tradition for our parents to drill into us the concept of hard work, impeccable work ethics, family values, and individual freedom. "...be free to choose and be your own man...be a good citizen and take care of your family...be a good son, husband and father...respect others, be kind, believe in God and don't forget...ladies first." These were words that to this day I treasure for they forged my character into adulthood and sealed the manner in which my life's actions would unfold.

This is my heritage. I carry it with me wherever I go paired with the wisdom that it embraces which has evolved through the ages from a date far back in human recorded activities. We who share the Spanish culture have a unique history. Hispanics, as we are called today on this continent, share a common origin as old as man himself. The caves of "*Altamira*" in Spain carbon dated



to 15,500 years ago show the hands of our ancestors, frozen in time, depicting their desire to record on stone episodes of interest in their lives showing their artistic talents appreciated even today.



permanent, and valuable.

Our language is a derivative of Latin, rich with history and spoken by a very large percentage of people today. Our music beats sounds that invite the human spirit to celebrate the joys of being alive. Our cuisine, rich in diversity is eaten today by the populous as if it is a "new cultural discovery" even though for us it is the food of many generations...indeed this is our heritage and it is strong,

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Every young Hispanic must understand the value of this heritage. We are an emerging force in this country...much as we have been through out history across other continents. Our influence is enormous, visible, and well recognized by the prevailing political figures of our times. We are well educated because of our inherent wish to succeed and because we are our parent's children. We speak for the most part, two languages...our fathers' tongue and that of our adopted country. We have fought valiantly in the war against terrorism and held high post in military campaigns. We have been elected into public service at the local, state and federal levels. We have been appointed by presidents to high places of national service. We are educators, policemen, firemen, engineers, lawyers, doctors, nurses. We have taken our place in this society with the same strong, enthusiastic posture of our ancestors, carrying with us our history and a fervor for family and country perhaps not unique to us but unique comparatively within our society today.

Our success story continues to unfold. New generations are preparing for the future and they must know that the torch they carry is precious and that its strength draws from countless generations of highly creative and hard working men and women who only wanted the best for their children. So to my fellow Hispanic friends I say march on, hold your heads up high and smile...be proud of who you are and pass the torch on into the pages of history for our legacy lives on.



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