

CULTURAL
AWARENESS

OBSERVANCE



SEPT 15 - OCT 15

NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

PIONEERS OF CHANGE:

SHAPING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

National Hispanic Heritage Month (NHHM) commemorates the many achievements and cultures of Hispanic Americans. Celebrated from September 15th through October 15th, it is the only Department of Defense special observance to span multiple months, coinciding with Independence Day celebrations for several Latin American countries.

During this time of year, the Department of Defense (DoD) honors the Hispanic Americans who have sacrificed for, contributed to, and served our great nation.

The 2024 NHHM theme is "Pioneers of Change: Shaping the Future Together." This theme emphasizes the Hispanic Americans who have sacrificed to create a better future for the Nation and all Americans.

The future is impacted by leaders of bravery, humanitarianism, and selflessness. One such person was Roberto Clemente.

Clemente was a legendary Puerto Rican baseball player who faced adversity, served his country, became a champion, and sacrificed everything to help others.

Born in 1934 in Carolina, Puerto Rico, he spent his young life playing track and field sports as well as baseball. At just 17 years old, he began playing for the Santurce Crabbers. By 1954, he was scouted and signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers.

The following year, he joined the Pittsburgh Pirates, an organization upon which he would leave an indelible mark. While there, he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1958, as a Reserve infantryman. For the following 6 years, he spent his offseasons serving his country.

With his iconic "21" jersey, Clemente dominated with the Pirates starting in 1960, when they defeated the New York Yankees in the World Series.

He is noted as one of the best right fielders in baseball history. When the Pirates won the World Series again in 1971, Clemente won the Most Valuable Player Award.

In the early 1970s, he secured sponsorships for baseball clinics in Puerto Rico, coached an amateur baseball team in Nicaragua, and worked on plans to build a sports complex for underprivileged children.

In 1972, a devastating earthquake struck Nicaragua. Clemente raised over \$150,000 and 26 tons of food, clothing, and medicine to help. On his way to transport supplies to those impacted, his plane crashed, and he tragically died. However, his legacy of humanitarianism lives on.

Clemente said, *"Any time you have an opportunity to make a difference in this world and you don't, then you are wasting your time on Earth."*

Through selfless service, helping others, and sacrifice, Clemente shaped the future for countless others.

