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Cervantes Society hosts 20th annual Hispanic Heritage Month celebration



Members of the Kings County Supreme Court and the Cervantes Society celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month at the 20th annual Opening Ceremony on Wednesday. Pictured from left: Hon. Mark Partnow, Ariadne Sigault, Hon. Matthew D'Emic, Hon. David B. Vaughan, Haydee Camacho, Hon. Francois Rivera, Hon. Lawrence Knipel and Major Luz G. Bryan. Eagle photos by Rob Abruzzese

By Rob Abruzzese
Brooklyn Daily Eagle

The Cervantes Society of the Courts of the State of New York hosted its 20th annual Hispanic Heritage Month Opening Ceremony at the Kings County Supreme Court in Downtown Brooklyn on Wednesday.

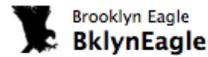
“More than 55 million Americans today, some 17 percent of our population, are of Hispanic heritage,” administrative Judge Lawrence Knipel said. “People of Hispanic heritage are woven into every fabric of our society. The life of our city, our state and our nation is greatly invigorated and enriched by both Hispanic people and Hispanic cultures. This is what we are here to celebrate today.”

As it was the 20th anniversary of the event, Major Luz G. Bryan, president of the Cervantes Society, took a moment to thank the court’s administration who helped to initially host the event as well as the current administrators who have been so supportive.

“I appreciate the support and the initiatives that the administrators of the Brooklyn Supreme Court have done throughout the decades,” Bryan said. “The current administrators, Judge D’Emic, Judge Knipel, Chief Clerk Charles Small, Chief Clerk Daniel Alessandrino and Deputy Chief Clerk Donna Farrell. Throughout the years they have given us support and inspiration and we appreciate that.”

In keeping with the Hispanic Heritage Month’s national theme, “Honoring Our Heritage: Building Our Future,” the court hosted award-winning journalist and researcher Haydee Camacho as the keynote speaker. She read an article about her father’s time fighting in the Korean War as a member of the U.S. Army’s 65th Infantry Division, a group of Puerto Rican soldiers who have had little written about them.

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Keynote speaker Haydee Camacho with Hon. Francois Rivera and Major Luz G. Bryan.

"Her father, Juan Hernandez Ramos, she knew that he went to war, knew that he participated in the armed services, but she also knew that he can't vote for president even though he's Puerto Rican, and that's a little confusing," said Hon. Francois Rivera, the master of ceremonies for the event.

"This is probably the most valiant group of soldiers that you'll ever hear about," Rivera continued. "The heroism that they displayed under fire is mindboggling. What an incredible group of people who eventually got their due."

The event also featured a pair of high schoolers, Ariella and Esther Reyes from Achievement First Brooklyn High School. The pair gave speeches on what it means for them to be Hispanic. Ariella spoke about the movie "The Little Mermaid" and said that it taught a dangerous moral about "covering" and Esther said that she avoids "covering" by excelling academically.

"Although Ariel completely changed her mermaid tail to human legs, it isn't that easy for people to just change who they are, but it doesn't mean that they don't try," Ariella said.



High school students Esther (left) and Ariella Reyes from Achievement First in Brooklyn gave speeches on what it means for them to grow up Latina.

The event was wrapped up with a dance performance by court officer Carmelo Correa and his wife Elizabeth Correa.

“The theme is ‘Honoring Our Heritage and Building our Future,’ but honoring our heritage doesn’t mean that we aren’t a part of the American Dream or the American system,” Justice Rivera said in closing. “We are Americans, we’re a part of this fabric and we’re proud of our culture and history.”



Chief Clerk for Civil Matters Charles Small, Chief Clerk for Criminal Matters Daniel Alessandrino and Deputy Chief Clerk Donna Farrell.



From left: Hon. Margarita Lopez Torres, Hon. Evelyn J. Laporte and Hon. Joanne Quinones.

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