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Option 3

What does literacy mean to the Hispanic community?

I am a minority. On November 30, 2001, I became the daughter of two Mexican citizens who migrated to New York City for a better opportunity at life. What exactly is a minority you may ask? A minority is a culturally, ethnically, or racially distinct group that coexists with but is subordinate to a more dominant group. Over the past few months, we have evaluated different minority groups and the way they have been affected by literacy practices in schools and outside of it. For this essay I was drawn to the minority group that I pertain to which is Latino/Hispanic because it hits so close to home. As for my research, I was pleasantly surprised to learn something new about my minority group and what literacy means to us.

As in many common minority groups, most parents and children believe that the key to becoming successful is obtaining a degree and having an education. Growing up in a Hispanic household you were always encouraged to work hard towards your goals so that you would not end up working the hardship hours that your parents had to go through to keep the family well fed. Despite having high educational hopes, the Hispanic population is among the least educated group in the United States with only 11 percent of those over the age of 25 have earned a bachelor's degree or higher. Having an education and obtaining a degree is often seen as the "way out" of ending generational trauma. For many Hispanic children they often carry a load of

pressure to become the first to attend university but with the barriers to educational opportunities for Hispanic children in the United States that goal is sometimes difficult to pursue.

As in any minority group, the Hispanic community has faced some tough challenges in literacy. The Hispanic population in the United States is a bilingual one and often times your first language is most likely going to be Spanish. Growing up my family always had the mentality that Spanish should always be your kid's first language because eventually they will learn English in school. This sort of mentality is often frowned upon because although there is no official language in the United States, many believe that in order to live in America you must learn how to speak and write proper English. What many do not seem to understand is that the upbringing of a Hispanic child is not easy. In the book "Hispanics and the future of America" by Marta Tienda, she says that "However, parents who speak only Spanish in the home are more likely to be recent immigrants, live in disadvantaged communities, be unfamiliar with American cultural and educational practices, and have lower levels of education and less income. Taken together, this confluence of language, nativity, and environment creates obstacles for young children as they prepare to enter school." Another common challenge that the Hispanic community has faced and still faces today is that quite frequently many Hispanic children come from undocumented guardians which also affect a child's education and their parent's school-based involvement. In the article "Latino Immigrant Students' School Experiences in the United States: The Importance of Family-School-Community Collaborations" By Erin Sibley and Kalina Brabeck, they say "Thus, immigrant parents care deeply about their children's education and want to be involved in their education, but likely face barriers to school involvement, such as language, transportation, racism, childcare, or intimidation, often based on legal status." Many undocumented Hispanics live in fear of deportation and often keep their guard up especially in places like their child's school where they most likely will be asked about their legal status.

Although the Hispanic population has a low academic achievement including the highest dropout rates in the nation, we often forget to mention the accomplishments of the Hispanic community in literature. Literature is a principal factor in Hispanic culture and there has been many successful Latin American authors who have influenced the world of writing with their creativity and talent. Some of the authors who have received worldwide recognition and admiration is Gabriela Mistral. She is a Chilean writer and is known for becoming the only woman from a Spanish speaking country to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1945. Her work consists of a variety of topics such as love, death, and motherhood. Another influential author goes by the name of Jorge Luis Borges. He is an Argentinean essayist, storyteller, and poet. He received the Nobel Prize in Literature 32 years even after his death. His works range from a variety of short stories, novels, studies, and essays on history to literature and politics. Although I only named two Hispanic authors who have influenced the world of writing, there is still yet more iconic authors to name who have opened the doors to many more to come and have shown the world the culture richness of the Latin community.

One of the most valued opportunities this country has been able to offer us is the ability to apply for a scholarship. A scholarship is a grant or payment awarded to support a student's education based on academic achievement or another criteria. Anyone can obtain a scholarship whether it is for your academic achievement or for simply being Hispanic it is helpful to know that there is many distinct types and random scholarships you can apply for. One of the most helpful websites where you can apply for a scholarship is "Fastweb". I was first introduced to Fastweb when I was a senior in high school and was applying for college and figuring out how I was going to pay off the tuition. Luckily in my situation I was able to receive financial help from

the government that paid off my tuition. Paying for college can be incredibly stressful and complicated especially when you're a first-generation student going into your first semester however with a scholarship in the bag it can make things run a lot smoother. Some of the top scholarships for Hispanic students in 2021 are "Make the U" Scholarships, Generation Google Scholarship, Jackie Robinson Foundation Scholarship, McDonald's HACER National Scholarship, Goldman Sachs MBA Fellowship.

While doing my research on the Hispanic community I have realized that like all minority groups we all encounter many difficulties along the way. The Hispanic community is known to be the least educated out of all the minority groups but what people tend to forget is that our upbringing is not a walk in the park. Others have the advantage of growing up in a home where both guardians are educated and can give a helping hand to their kids when needed whereas in my situation both of my parents were not able to finish high school due to the circumstances of their financial situation. Although my parents' do not have a diploma or a degree, they always encouraged me to be better than them so that I would not have to worry about how my rent is going to be paid or how I'm going to feed my family. Growing up as minority has it's obstacles but one thing it has showed me is to always work hard and to encourage others as well. For this research I was pleasantly surprised to learn something new about the Hispanic minority group and what literacy means to us.

Sources

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