

THE ROOM

A READING SERIES

via
ZOOM



ALMA

winner of 2019 Blue Ink Playwriting Award

by BENJAMIN BENNE directed by ANA VELAZQUEZ

10.18.20 @ 3PM
10.19.20 @ 7PM

2
shows



BACKSTAGE GUIDE

A publication of **COMMUNITY SERVICE** at
AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

BACKSTAGE CALLBOARD

ALMA

By Benjamin Benne

Directed by Ana Velazquez

STARRING



Jazmín Corona



Keren Diaz De Leon

Working mom Alma has single-handedly raised her daughter, Angel, on tough love, home-cooked comida, and lots of prayers. But on the eve of the all-important SAT, Alma discovers her daughter isn't at home studying. A sacrifice from Alma's past weighs heavy on their present. Will the American Dream cost them a life together?

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DIGITAL LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To create art in a new digital format, we use equipment and high-speed internet not available in many Indigenous communities. This technology, which has now become central to our daily lives, leaves a significant footprint and contributes to changing climates that disproportionately affect Indigenous people. As we make use of this digital format, it is imperative that we recognize the Indigenous Land, regardless of our geographical location. It is land once occupied and inhabited by hundreds of Native tribes and stolen from these Indigenous people by European settlers. The genocide and forced removal of Indigenous people from these lands is a history that must be acknowledged, and the current struggles of Indigenous people must be brought to the forefront, so that their plight is never forgotten.

This digital land acknowledgement is inspired by the work of producer & artist Adrienne Wong. Learn more [here](#).

ABOUT THE ARTISTS



Benjamin Benne



Ana Velazquez



Jazmín Corona



Keren Diaz De Leon



Cara Parrish

BENJAMIN BENNE he/him (playwright) is a Yale School of Drama MFA Candidate in Playwriting and represented by Paradigm Talent Agency. He is American Blues Theater's 2019 Blue Ink Playwriting Award winner, Arizona Theatre Company's 2019 National Latinx Playwriting Award winner, a 2019 Kennedy Center/KCACTF Latinx Playwriting Award recipient, a 2017 Robert Chesley/Victor Bumbalo Playwriting Award winner, and a Playwrights' Center Affiliated Writer. His plays, including *Alma*, *In His Hands*, and *at the very bottom of a body of water*, have been produced/developed by the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's National Playwrights Conference, The Playwrights Realm, The Lark, The Public, Roundabout Theatre Company, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, The Old Globe, Two River Theater, SPACE on Ryder Farm, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Boston Court Pasadena, Pillsbury House Theatre, Teatro Milagro, A Contemporary Theatre, Theatre Battery, Annex Theatre, Forward Flux, Umbrella Project, and Parley, among others. www.benjaminbenne.com

ANA VELAZQUEZ she/her (director) is a Mexican American director and teaching artist in her native Chicago. Her directing experience is deeply tied to new play development and is often in collaboration with playwrights exploring underrepresented stories. Her directing credits include *I Come From Arizona* staged reading for Vittum Theater's grand reopening at Adventure Stage Chicago; *La Ofrenda* at Adventure Stage Chicago; *Alma* for Blue Ink Festival at American Blues Theater; *El Pico* for A Night of New Works at Something Marvelous; *Macha* for Tutterow Fellows Showcase at Chicago Dramatists; *Oak & Pallets* for Peacebook at Collaboration; *Los Frikis* for El Semillero at Victory Gardens Theater; *Meet Juan(ito) Doe* (co-directed) at Free Street Theater; *Everybody Loves Big E* for Our Chicago Project at

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Collaboration; *Art House* and *The Scream* for Scrapbook 2017 at Chicago Dramatists; *Epic Tales* with FEMelanin for Kid's Fringe 2016; and *Raisin Puffs* for Black Lives, Black Words at Black Ensemble Theatre. She received the 2018 Alta Award for Outstanding Director of Play for *Meet Juan(ito) Doe* (co-directed). Ana is a Playmakers Laboratory company member. Her teaching artist experience includes Disney Musicals in Schools and Playbuild Youth Intensive Program with Goodman Theatre; Timeline South Living History Program with Timeline Theatre and Young Playwrights Festival with Pegasus Theatre. She proudly served as the Associate Director for the Chicago August Wilson Monologue Competition. Ana has recently been selected as the residency artist for We the Many with Arts Midwest in Wabash, Indiana. She received her BA in Theatre from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

JAZMÍN CORONA she/her (Alma) Chicago credits include: *Roe* (Goodman Theatre); *Shrew'd* and *Macbeth* (First Folio Theatre); *I'm Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* and *The Compass* (u/s, Steppenwolf Theatre); *1776* (Porchlight Music Theatre); *Women of 4G* (Babes With Blades Theatre Company); *Mariposa Nocturna* (16th St. Theatre and Physical Festival Chicago); *Two Mile Hollow* (First Floor Theater); *Gender Breakdown* (Collaboration); *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Goose* (Raven Theatre). TV credits: *Chicago Fire*.

KEREN DIAZ DE LEON she/her, they/them (Angel) is a first generation Mexican American actor and director from the south side of Chicago.

CARA PARRISH she/her (stage manager) is a proud Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theater where she is also the Human Resources Coordinator. Chicago credits: *Gem of the Ocean*, *Electra*, *Hard Problem*, *Photograph 51*, *Five Guys Named Moe*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, & *Lady From the Sea* (Court Theatre); *WITCH*, *Port Authority*, *Yellow Moon*, *The Letters*, *The Caretaker*, *Death of a Streetcar Named Virginia Woolf*, & *The Blond*, *The Brunette*, and *the Vengeful Redhead* (Writers Theatre); *Too Heavy for Your Pocket* & *The Vibrator Play* (Timeline Theatre Company); *James and the Giant Peach* (Drury Lane Theatre Oakbrook); *Jabari Dreams of Freedom* (Chicago Children's Theatre); *Romeo and Juliet*, & *Emma* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre); *Beauty's Daughter* & *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* (American Blues Theater). Cara is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association.

ABOUT THE **BLUE INK PLAYWRITING AWARD**

Alma was the winner of the 2019 Blue Ink Playwriting Award.

The nationally-renown Blue Ink Playwriting Award was created in 2010 to support new work. Since inception, we've named 10 Award winners, 79 finalists, and 109 semi-finalists.

Other previous winners include Andrea Stolowitz' *Recent Unsettling Events* (2020), Inda Craig-Galván's *Welcome to Matteson!* (2018), Idris Goodwin's *Hype Man* (2017), Nathan Alan Davis's *The Wind and the Breeze* (2016), and Jamie Pachino's *Other Than Honorable* (2015).

Each year American Blues Theater accepts worldwide submissions of original, unpublished full-length plays. The winning play will be selected by Artistic Director Gwendolyn Whiteside and the theater's Ensemble. The playwright receives a monetary prize of \$1,250. Cash prizes are awarded to finalists and semi-finalists too. All proceeds of the administrative fee are distributed for playwrights' cash prizes.



ABOUT IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Everyone living in the U.S. has certain basic rights under the U.S. Constitution, including undocumented immigrants. If you encounter Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or other law enforcement officers at home, on the street, or anywhere else, remember that you have the rights described below. For more information, visit the National Immigration Law Center [website](#).

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REMAIN SILENT. YOU MAY REFUSE TO SPEAK TO IMMIGRATION OFFICERS.

- Don't answer any questions. You may also say that you want to remain silent.
- Don't say anything about where you were born or how you entered the U.S.

DO NOT OPEN YOUR DOOR.

- To be allowed to enter your home, ICE must have a warrant signed by a judge. Do not open your door unless an ICE agent shows you a warrant. (They almost never have one.) If an ICE agent wants to show you a warrant, they can hold it against a window or slide it under the door. To be valid, the warrant must have your correct name and address on it.
- You do not need to open the door to talk with an ICE agent. Once you open the door, it is much harder to refuse to answer questions.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

If you are stopped by immigration or the police:

- ✓ Hand this card to the officer, and remain silent.
- ✓ The card explains that you are exercising your right to refuse to answer any questions until you have talked with a lawyer.

To: Immigration or Other Officer

Right now I am choosing to exercise my legal rights.

- I will remain **silent**, and I refuse to answer your questions.
- If I am detained, I have the right to contact an attorney **immediately**.
- I refuse to sign anything without advice from an attorney.

Thank you.

CARRY A KNOW-YOUR-RIGHTS CARD AND SHOW IT IF AN IMMIGRATION OFFICER STOPS YOU.

- The card above explains that you will remain silent and that you wish to speak with an attorney.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SPEAK TO A LAWYER.

- You can simply say, "I need to speak to my attorney."
- You may have your lawyer with you if ICE or other law enforcement questions you.

BEFORE YOU SIGN ANYTHING, TALK TO A LAWYER.

- ICE may try to get you to sign away your right to see a lawyer or a judge. Be sure you understand what a document actually says before you sign it.

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ICE WILL ARREST YOU, LET THE OFFICER KNOW IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN.

- If you are the parent or primary caregiver of a U.S. citizen or permanent resident who is under age 18, ICE may “exercise discretion” and let you go.

CARRY WITH YOU ANY VALID IMMIGRATION DOCUMENT YOU HAVE.

- If you have a valid work permit or green card, be sure to have it with you in case you need to show it for identification purposes.
- Do not carry papers from another country with you, such as a foreign passport. Such papers could be used against you in the deportation process.

CREATE A SAFETY PLAN.

- Memorize the phone number of a friend, family member, or attorney that you can call if you are arrested.
- If you take care of children or other people, make a plan to have them taken care of if you are detained.
- Keep important documents such as birth certificates and immigration documents in a safe place where a friend or family member can access them if necessary.
- Make sure your loved ones know how to find you if you are detained by ICE. They can use ICE’s online detainee locator to find an adult who is in immigration custody. Or they can call the local ICE office. Make sure they have your alien registration number written down, if you have one.
- You can call the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) hotline number at 240-314-1500 or 1-800-898-7180 (toll-free) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to get information on your case’s status.

U.S. CITIZEN CHILDREN IMPACTED BY IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

The below provides an overview of the children who are impacted by immigration enforcement actions, the challenges and risk factors that these children face, and the existing mechanisms designed to protect children if a parent is detained or deported. It has been edited here for length. Access the full fact sheet, including citations, on the American Immigration Council [website](#).

In the United States today, more than 16.7 million people share a home with at least one family member, often a parent, who is unauthorized. Almost six million of these people are children under the age of 18. Consequently, immigration enforcement actions—and the ever-present threat of enforcement action—have significant physical, emotional, developmental, and economic repercussions for millions of children across the country. Deportations of parents and other family members have serious consequences that affect children – including U.S. Citizen children – and extend to entire communities and the country as a whole.

MILLIONS OF U.S. CITIZEN CHILDREN HAVE UNDOCUMENTED PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS.

- 4.1 million U.S. citizen children under the age of 18 live with at least one undocumented parent.
- 5.9 million U.S. citizen children under the age of 18 live with an undocumented family member.
- Roughly half-a-million U.S. citizen children experienced the apprehension, detention, and deportation of at least one parent in the course of about two years.
- More than 17 million U.S. citizen children have at least one foreign-born parent, including parents who are naturalized citizens, lawfully present immigrants, and unauthorized immigrants.

IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT—AND THE THREAT OF SUCH ACTIONS—CAN NEGATIVELY IMPACT A CHILD’S LONG-TERM HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT.

- A child’s risk of having mental health problems like depression, anxiety, and severe psychological distress increases following the detention and/or deportation of a parent. Since late 2016, doctors and service providers have reported anecdotally that they have seen more children exhibiting stress- and anxiety-related behavioral changes, including symptoms of “toxic-stress,” due to fear that a family member will be deported.
- Children experience toxic stress when they are suddenly separated from their parents, which negatively impacts brain development. They are also at greater risk of developing chronic mental health conditions that include depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as physical conditions such as cancer, stroke, diabetes, and heart disease.
- A 2010 study of immigration-related parental arrests (at home or worksites) found that the majority of children experienced at least four adverse behavioral changes in the six months following a raid or arrest. Compared to the previous six months, children cried or were afraid more often; changed their eating or sleeping habits; and/or were more anxious, withdrawn, clingy, angry, or aggressive.
- Fear and uncertainty among immigrant families leads to decreased participation in the health coverage programs Medicaid and CHIP. In turn, lack of coverage through Medicaid/CHIP can hinder a child’s healthy growth and development and threaten a family’s financial stability. Citizen children are more likely to be uninsured if they have an immigrant parent than children with U.S.-born parents.

CHILDREN WHO RESIDE IN COMMUNITIES THAT PARTNER WITH ICE OR ARE THE FOCUS OF ICE RAIDS EXPERIENCE NEGATIVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES.

- Large-scale ICE enforcement can impact school attendance for students with friends or family members affected by raids. After a mass raid in eastern Tennessee occurred in April 2018, more than 500 students were absent from school the following day.
- Educators surveyed in 2017 and 2018 reported several concerns related to immigration enforcement, including student absences, decline in academic performance, and less involvement from parents. Eighty-four percent of educators said students from immigrant families expressed concerns about enforcement while at school.

U.S. CITIZEN CHILDREN IMPACTED BY IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

THE DETENTION OR DEPORTATION OF A PARENT PUTS CHILDREN AT RISK OF ECONOMIC INSTABILITY.

The deportation, and even the arrest or detention, of a parent or other household family member has significant short- and long-term financial implications. U.S. citizen children and any remaining family members can face substantial economic disadvantages following the removal of a primary provider. In general, increases in immigration enforcement have been linked to higher poverty rates among U.S. citizen children with likely unauthorized parents.

- An analysis of 2014 median family income estimated that a family's income would decrease 50 percent following the deportation of a family member.
- A study of immigration enforcement in six U.S. locations between 2006 and 2009 found that families lost 40 to 90 percent of their income, or an average of 70 percent, within six months of a parent's immigration-related arrest, detention, or deportation.

CHILDREN MAY END UP IN THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM FOLLOWING THE DETENTION OR DEPORTATION OF THEIR PARENT.

Parents—regardless of immigration status, detention, or deportation—have a constitutional right to custody of their children (unless deemed unfit). While the child welfare system generally recognizes that it is in a child's best interest to remain with a parent or family member, the intersection with immigration enforcement can negatively impact parental rights and thus a child's well-being. For example, the lack of coordination between agencies has historically led to prolonged family separation and even termination of parental rights.

To ensure that enforcement activities did not “unnecessarily disrupt the parental rights” of parents or legal guardians of minor children, ICE issued its Parental Interests Directive in 2013. The Parental Interests Directive was replaced in 2017 with a new Detained Parents Directive. The 2017 policy eliminated many aspects of the 2013 directive, including guidance for the use of prosecutorial discretion in cases involving children and all references to parental rights. The 2017 directive instead instructs ICE agents to “remain cognizant of the impact enforcement actions may have” on certain children.



IN THE NEWS: THE PUBLIC CHARGE RULE

The below article, titled “New Trump rule targets poor and could cut legal immigration in half, advocates say” was published by Reuters on August 12, 2019. It has been edited here for length. You can read the full article [here](#).

U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration unveiled a sweeping rule...that some experts say could cut legal immigration in half by denying visas and permanent residency to hundreds of thousands of people for being too poor.

The long-anticipated rule, pushed by Trump’s leading aide on immigration, Stephen Miller, takes effect Oct. 15 [2019]. It would reject applicants for temporary or permanent visas if they fail to meet high enough income standards or if they receive public assistance such as welfare, food stamps, public housing or Medicaid.

“The Trump administration is trying to bypass Congress and implement its own merit based-immigration system. It’s really a backdoor way of prohibiting low-income people from immigrating,” said Charles Wheeler of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc.

The rule is part of Republican Trump’s efforts to curb both legal and illegal immigration, an issue he has made a cornerstone of his presidency.

After the rule was announced, the National Immigration Law Center (NILC) said it would file a lawsuit to stop it from taking effect. The group’s executive director said the rule was racially motivated. The state attorneys general of California and New York threatened to sue.

The 837-page rule, seeking to target those who could become “public charges” in the United States, could be the most drastic of all the Trump administration’s policies targeting the legal immigration system, experts have said. It could deny visas to people for not making enough money or who are drawing public benefits.

The government estimates the status of 382,000 immigrants could immediately be reviewed on those grounds. Immigrant advocates fear the real number could be much higher, especially if the rule is extended to the millions of people who apply for U.S. visas at American consulates around the world.

The State Department already changed its foreign affairs manual in January 2018 to give diplomats wider discretion in deciding visa denials on public charge grounds. In the fiscal year that ended last September, the number of visas denied on those grounds quadrupled compared to the previous year.

“This is an end run around Congress to achieve through executive fiat what the administration cannot get through Congress,” said Doug Rand, co-founder of Boundless, a pro-migrant group that helps families navigate the U.S. immigration system. The rule is intended to scare immigrants away from using public benefits to which they are legally entitled, Rand said, adding that a study by Boundless found it could eliminate more than half of visa applicants.

A 2018 study by the Migration Policy Institute found 69 percent of already established immigrants had at least one negative factor against them under the administration’s wealth test, while just 39 percent had one of the heavily weighed positive factors.

”

**“IT’S REALLY A
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CHARLES WHEELER

CATHOLIC LEGAL IMMIGRATION NETWORK, INC.

IN THE NEWS: THE PUBLIC CHARGE RULE

Other immigrant advocates have expressed concern the rule could negatively affect public health by dissuading immigrants from using health or food aid. The Trump administration estimates its rule will save \$2.47 billion annually in spending on public benefits.

The rule is derived from the Immigration Act of 1882, which allows the U.S. government to deny a visa to anyone likely to become a “public charge.”

Ken Cuccinelli, the acting director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), said at a White House media briefing that the law has always required foreign nationals to rely on their own resources, with help from relatives and sponsors, but the term “public charge” was never clearly defined. “That is what changes today with this rule,” Cuccinelli said.

The new rule defines public charge as an immigrant who receives one or more designated public benefits for more than 12 months within any 36-month period. The definition of public benefits is cash aid including Supplemental Security Income, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), most forms of Medicaid, and a variety of public housing programs, officials said.

“The principle driving it is an old American value and that’s self-sufficiency,” Cuccinelli said in a Fox News interview.

Whether someone is public charge will be determined on a variety of positive and negative factors. A positive factor would be earning 125 percent of the poverty line, which is \$12,490 for an individual and \$25,750 for a family of four, while earning less would be a negative factory.

Critics have decried the effort to limit legal immigration for lower-income people affront to the ideals of the United States highlighted by the inscription on the Statue of Liberty that reads “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.”

Trump aide Miller, asked in 2017 about whether the administration’s policies countered that inscription, said the words were not original to the monument. Cuccinelli was also asked about the inscription at the White House on Monday and said: “I do not think, by any means, we are ready to take anything off the Statue of Liberty.”

In early 2018, Trump rejected a bipartisan effort in Congress to reform the immigration system. The effort became embroiled in controversy over accusations by a Democratic senator that the Republican president disparaged African and Caribbean nations with a vulgarity in regard to their immigrants. Trump was reported to have asked why the United States could not get more immigrants form northern Europe.

Trump has denied using that language and said he wanted immigrants to come the United States from all nations.

UPDATE FROM SEPTEMBER 2020

A federal judge in New York blocked the enforcement of the “public charge” rule during the coronavirus pandemic in late July. However, on September 11, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in New York granted a full stay of the injunction.

The Trump administration will now reimpose the wealth and health “public charge” test for green card applicants in the U.S., according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website.

Anyone in the U.S. who applied, but has not yet been approved for a green card through DHS on or after February 24, 2020 will have to prove they are not likely to rely on certain government benefits in the future.

QUIZ: COULD YOU PASS THE U.S. CITIZENSHIP TEST?

The below quiz and text originally appeared in *The New York Times* on July 3, 2019. It has been edited here for length. You can take the interactive quiz on the *New York Times* website [here](#).

Before taking the oath of allegiance, would-be citizens must pass a civics examination, covering America's history, principles and system of government. For the test, a United States Citizenship and Immigration Services officer randomly selects a set of 10 questions from a list of 100, and reads them in English to the applicant, who must orally answer at least six correctly.

Some, like "Name the president" or "What is the U.S. capital?" are easier than others, raising concerns about whether all applicants have the same shot at passing.

Here we're testing you on some of the questions that the volunteer test-takers most often flubbed.

1. HOW MANY AMENDMENTS DOES THE CONSTITUTION HAVE?

- A) 14
- B) 21
- C) 25
- D) 27

2. WHICH OF THESE IS SOMETHING BENJAMIN FRANKLIN IS KNOWN FOR?

- A) He was the first person to sign the Constitution
- B) He discovered electricity
- C) He was the nation's first postmaster general
- D) He was the nation's second president

3. WHO WAS PRESIDENT DURING WORLD WAR I?

- A) Woodrow Wilson
- B) Warren Harding
- C) Calvin Coolidge
- D) Franklin D. Roosevelt

4. WHICH STATEMENT CORRECTLY DESCRIBES THE "RULE OF LAW"?

- A) The law is what the president says it is
- B) The people who enforce the laws do not have to follow them
- C) No one is above the law
- D) Judges can rewrite laws they disagree with

5. UNDER THE CONSTITUTION, WHICH OF THESE POWERS DOES NOT BELONG TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT?

- A) Ratify amendments to the Constitution
- B) Print money
- C) Make treaties with foreign powers
- D) Declare war

QUIZ: COULD YOU PASS THE U.S. CITIZENSHIP TEST?

6. WE ELECT A U.S. SENATOR FOR HOW MANY YEARS?

- A) Four years
- B) Six years
- C) Eight years
- D) Twelve years

7. WHO IS THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE UNITED STATES NOW?

- A) John G. Roberts Jr.
- B) Elena Kagan
- C) William P. Barr
- D) Brett M. Kavanaugh

8. THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HAS HOW MANY VOTING MEMBERS?

- A) 100
- B) 435
- C) 535
- D) 538

9. THE FEDERALIST PAPERS SUPPORTED THE PASSAGE OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION. WHICH OF THESE MEN WAS NOT ONE OF THE AUTHORS?

- A) James Madison
- B) Alexander Hamilton
- C) John Jay
- D) John Adams

10. WHEN WAS THE CONSTITUTION WRITTEN?

- A) 1492
- B) 1776
- C) 1787
- D) 1865

Answer key: 1) D. 2) C. 3) A. 4) C. 5) A. 6) B. 7) A. 8) B. 9) D. 10) C.

How did you do? One survey found that 64 percent of American citizens would fail the test, even when given the questions in multiple-choice format, as we have here. Immigrants taking the exam as part of their citizenship application tend to fare much better. The combined pass rate for the civics exam and an English evaluation performed in the same interview is 91 percent, U.S.C.I.S. reported in December. Of course, immigrants generally study for the test before taking it, while the survey respondents may not have cracked a history or civics book in decades.

For prospective citizens, one tough question can make all the difference. Paula Winke, a professor at Michigan State University who studies language and language testing, found that the difference between a failing score of five and a passing score of six may have more to do with the choice of questions than with knowledge of the answers.

In the 2011 study, nearly all test-takers knew why the American flag has 50 stars, but fewer than one in 10 knew the date when the Constitution was written, and only about one in 8 could name one of the writers of the Federalist Papers.

Immigrants applying for citizenship are given only two chances to pass the test before they must restart the application process from scratch — and pay the filing fee of at least \$640 again. If they fail at their first interview, they must retake the civics exam at another interview between 60 and 90 days later. •

GROWTH & IMPACT OF THE U.S. LATINX POPULATION

The below shows just a small sample of the growing economic and political impact that the Latinx population has on the United States. For more information on these statistics, visit Pew Research Center's [FactTank](#) and the U.S. Senate Joint Economic Committee's [report on the subject](#).

THE U.S. LATINX POPULATION REACHED 60.6 MILLION IN 2019, UP FROM 50.7 MILLION IN 2010.

This makes Latinx the nation's second-fastest-growing racial or ethnic group after Asian Americans. Latinx made up 18% of the U.S. population in 2019, up from 16% in 2010 and just 5% in 1970.

THE SHARE OF U.S. LATINX POPULATION WITH COLLEGE EXPERIENCE HAS INCREASED.

About 41% of U.S. Latinx adults ages 25 and older had at least some college experience in 2018, up from 36% in 2010. The share who have a bachelor's degree or more education also increased during this period, from 13% to 17%.

4 IN 5 LATINX INDIVIDUALS ARE U.S. CITIZENS.

As of 2018, about 80% of Latinx individuals living in the country are U.S. citizens, up from 74% in 2010. This includes people born in the U.S. and its territories (including Puerto Rico), people born abroad to American parents and immigrants who have become naturalized citizens. Among the origin groups, virtually all Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens. Spaniards (91%), Panamanians (89%) and Mexicans (80%) have some of the highest citizenship rates, while Hondurans (53%) and Venezuelans (51%) have the lowest rates.

A RECORD 32 MILLION LATINX PEOPLE ARE PROJECTED TO BE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE IN 2020, UP FROM 27.3 MILLION IN 2016.

The 2020 election will mark the first time that Latinx will be the largest racial and ethnic minority group in the electorate, accounting for just over 13% of eligible voters.

THE LATINX POPULATION ACCOUNTS FOR \$2.3 TRILLION IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.

A 2019 report found that if the U.S. Latinx gross domestic product (GDP) were its own country, it would rank as the eighth largest GDP in the world. Latinx individuals own more than 4 million businesses in the United States. In five states, including Florida and Texas, Latinx individuals own more than 100,000 business (per state). Nationwide, businesses with majority Latinx ownership provide almost 2.7 million jobs to workers in the U.S.

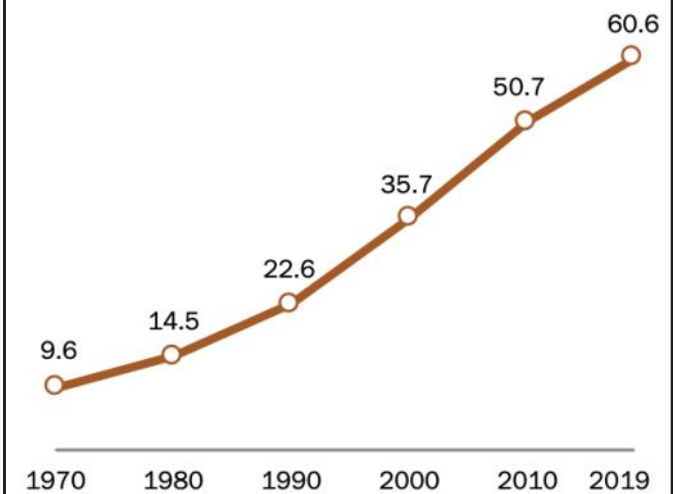
THE NUMBER OF LATINX-OWNED BUSINESSES IN THE U.S. IS GROWING AT A RATE THAT OUTPACES JUST ABOUT EVERY OTHER ETHNIC GROUP.

The Latinx population has grown at a steady clip and now accounts for 18% of the U.S. population. However, a 2017 study from the Stanford Latino Entrepreneurship Initiative found that the rate at which new Latinx firms are being created outpaces Latinx population growth. "Latinos have been starting businesses at an incredible rate over the past decade — a million net new businesses every five years," says Jerry Porras, who is also the cofounder of the Latino Business Action Network.

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT BY 2060 APPROXIMATELY ONE IN FOUR PEOPLE LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES WILL BE LATINX OR OF HISPANIC HERITAGE.

U.S. LATINX POPULATION REACHED NEARLY 61 MILLION IN 2019

In millions



LATINX COMMUNITIES' IMPACT ON U.S. LAW

Throughout American history, Latinx communities have been actively involved in key legal developments related to education, immigration, citizenship, women's rights, and civil rights. Such involvement has increased over the last century as the Latinx population has grown and diversified. Below are a few of those key contributions.

- Before *Brown v. Board of Education*, there was *Mendez v. Westminster*. In the landmark case, a judge decided in 1946 that California could not segregate its school system based on national origin or language ability. During the lawsuit, the school district offered to compromise by allowing the Mendez children to attend the elementary school without any other student of Mexican-American descent. The Mendez family declined the offer and continued the lawsuit. The Mendez family believed in helping out the entire Mexican community, instead of a handful of children.
- In 1954, when the U.S. Supreme Court decided *Hernandez v. Texas* in a unanimous ruling, the court held that Mexican Americans and all other nationality groups in the United States have equal protection under the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution
- The Supreme Court decided two New York cases challenging literacy tests in 1966 pursuant to the Voting Rights Act. New Yorkers who sought to continue to exclude Latinx voters brought *Katzenbach v. Morgan* (1966). In the companion case, *Cardona v. Power* (1966), the Court discarded such tests and secured the voting rights of Puerto Ricans and other language minorities with limited English skills, a ruling that eventually led to bilingual ballots.
- In 1968 the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund opens its doors, becoming the first legal fund to pursue protection of the civil rights of Mexican Americans.
- After non-English speakers testify about the discrimination they face at the polls, Congress votes in 1975 to expand the U.S. Voting Rights Act to require language assistance at polling stations.
- In August 2009, Sonia M. Sotomayor become the first Latinx member of the Supreme Court.

THE CHICANO MOVEMENT

The Chicano Movement was a social and political movement inspired by prior acts of resistance among people of Mexican descent that worked to embrace a Chicano/a identity and worldview that combated structural racism, encouraged cultural revitalization, and achieved community empowerment by rejecting assimilation.

The Chicano Movement was heavily influenced by and entwined with the Black Power movement, and both movements held similar objectives of community empowerment and liberation while also calling for Black-Brown unity. Leaders such as César Chávez, Reies Tijerina, and Rodolfo Gonzales learned strategies of resistance and worked with leaders of the Black Power movement.

Similar to the Black Power movement, the Chicano Movement experienced heavy state surveillance, infiltration, and repression from the U.S. government, which led to the decline of the movement by the mid-1970s.



LATINX AMERICANS WHO MADE HISTORY

There isn't an industry in which Latinx Americans haven't made their mark in history. The below originally appeared on Biography.com and has been edited here for length. The full article, titled "15 Influential Hispanic Americans Who Made History", can be read [here](#).



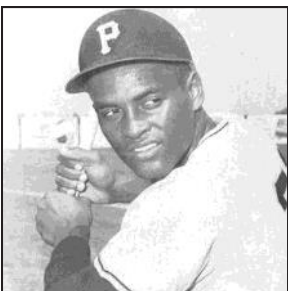
JULIA ALVAREZ

Dominican American writer Julia Alvarez has been enchanting readers with her words since the early 1990s. Alvarez was born in New York City in 1950 before her family moved to the Dominican Republic when she was a baby. They stayed there throughout Alvarez's childhood until her father's involvement in a failed attempt to overthrow the militant dictator forced the family to flee to the United States in 1960. The traumatic event has since made its way into several of Alvarez's works. She went on to become one of the most critically revered Latina writers and has published poems, novels and essays throughout her career.



CESAR CHAVEZ

Born in Arizona to a Mexican American family, Cesar Chavez grew up around the people he later helped through his activism. After receiving an honorable discharge from the Navy, Chavez worked as a lumber handler in San Jose, where he helped set up a chapter of the Community Service Organization, a pivotal civil rights organization for Latinos in California. He and fellow activist Dolores Huerta would go on to found the National Farm Workers Association, later the United Farm Workers labor union, becoming primary figures for Latin American civil rights. Though Chavez later received criticism from within for his singular control of the union, the activist is still regarded as an important civil rights leader and posthumously received the Presidential Medal of Freedom the year after his death in 1993.



ROBERTO CLEMENTE

A pioneer of the game, Roberto Clemente paved the way for Hispanic Americans in Major League Baseball. The prolific right fielder was born in 1934 in Puerto Rico. In 1954, the Pittsburgh Pirates scouted him during training in Richmond, Virginia and Clemente was called up to the majors by November of that year in the rookie draft. Clemente, wearing the iconic number 21, went on to become the first Latin American to win a World Series as a starting player in 1960. The athlete died in a plane crash in 1972 while on his way to Nicaragua to deliver aid to earthquake victims when he was 38. He was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973, making him the first Latin American and Caribbean honoree.



GLORIA ESTEFAN

Singer Gloria Estefan is often synonymous with Latin music in the United States. Born in Cuba in 1957, Estefan's family fled to Miami during the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Her father enlisted in the military shortly after they immigrated and took part in the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion of Cuba, where he was captured by his own cousin and held prisoner for two years. While performing in a church ensemble in 1975, Estefan first met her future husband Emilio Estefan, who had recently formed a band in Miami. She and her cousin were invited to join his band and renamed it Miami Sound Machine, leading to hits like "Conga," "Anything for You," "Rhythm Is Gonna Get You," and "Hot Summer Nights." Her lengthy career has earned her three Grammy Awards and a Presidential Medal of Freedom under President Obama in 2015, as well as the Kennedy Center Honors in 2017. The musical *On Your Feet*, telling the story of her and Emilio's life, premiered on Broadway in 2015.

LATINX AMERICANS WHO MADE HISTORY



DOLORES HUERTA

At 90 years old, Dolores Huerta still stands as a giant in the fight for Hispanic American labor rights. Born in 1930, the New Mexico native of Mexican descent grew up in a farm worker community. She co-founded the Agricultural Workers Association in 1960 and collaborated with Chavez to found the National Farm Workers Association in 1962. Her activism continued in California, where she made a name for herself by supporting and leading various strikes for workers' rights. She later stepped away from the union to focus on women's rights after she was badly beaten by a San Francisco police officer during a peaceful raid, resulting in a long recovery. Huerta now runs the Dolores Huerta Foundation and has received several accolades, including an inaugural Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights in 1998 under President Clinton and the Presidential Medal of Freedom under President Obama in 2012.



RITA MORENO

Rita Moreno has been a household name for decades, ever since she captivated audiences with her fierce portrayal of Anita in 1961's *West Side Story*. Moreno would go on to cement her name in history by winning the Best Supporting Actress Oscar for the role, becoming the first-ever Hispanic American woman to win an Academy Award. Born Rosa Alverio on December 11, 1931 in Humacao, Puerto Rico, the actress later changed her last name to match her stepfather's after she immigrated to New York City with her mom in 1936. Moreno made her Broadway debut in *Skydrift* at age 13, with her career taking off after that. The pioneering actress went on to star in dozens of film, TV and stage shows through her decades-long career. She became only the third person ever to achieve the coveted EGOT, winning an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony Award by 1977. In 2019, she added a P to the achievement with a Peabody Award, one of only three performers to accomplish this feat.



ELLEN OCHOA

Ellen Ochoa made her mark by becoming the first Hispanic American woman to go to space with a nine-day mission in 1993. Ochoa was born in 1958 in Los Angeles, California, years after her paternal grandparents immigrated from Mexico. Through her impressive research work, NASA selected Ochoa in 1991 and she became an astronaut in July of that year. Two years later, Ochoa made history on board the Space Shuttle Discovery on a mission to study the Earth's ozone layer. She later completed three more missions. Ochoa became the first Hispanic American director of the Johnson Space Center in 2013, only the second woman to take the helm. After retiring with 30 years of service, Ochoa continues to advocate for women in STEM.



SYLVIA RIVERA

In addition to being an influential Hispanic American, drag queen Sylvia Rivera is also an iconic figure in the gay and transgender rights movement. Rivera, born in New York City in 1951 of Puerto Rican and Venezuelan descent. Rivera was forced to leave home when she was 10, making her way through the rough streets of New York City. She often faced discrimination and violence, compelling her to begin her transgender and gay rights activism. Rivera and her friend Marsha P. Johnson, both sex workers, made an indelible mark in the advancement of LGBTQ rights. Both are credited with forming the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), later changed to Transgender, which helped house and support LGBTQ youth and sex workers in Manhattan. They also worked with the Gay Liberation Front, founded after the Stonewall Riot in 1969. Rivera died in February 2002 due to complications of liver cancer.

IMPORTANT VOTING RESOURCES

All of the registration, vote by mail, and early voting information below is from the [Chicago Board of Elections website](#). For voters outside of the Chicago area, visit [Vote.org](#) to find the appropriate, up-to-date information for your state.

REGISTER TO VOTE

WHEN, WHERE & HOW TO REGISTER TO VOTE, FILE A NAME CHANGE, OR FILE AN ADDRESS CHANGE

- **ONLINE:** Use your IL driver's license or state ID card to register to vote or to change your name or address. Deadline: 11:59 pm, Sun., Oct. 18. *(Yes, you may register online at your new address using an IL state ID and/or IL driver's license that still has your old address.)*
- **IN PERSON AT EARLY VOTING:** You must show two (2) forms of ID. At least one (1) ID must list your current address. At all Early Voting sites through close of polls Nov. 3.
- **AT YOUR PRECINCT POLLING PLACE ON ELECTION DAY ON NOV. 3.** You must show (2) forms of ID. At least one (1) ID must list your current address.

TO REGISTER TO VOTE, YOU MUST:

- be a U.S. citizen, and
- be born on or before Nov. 3, 2002, and
- live in your precinct at least 30 days before the election, and
- not claim the right to vote elsewhere; and
- not be in prison/jail serving time for a conviction. (Note: Ex-convicts who have been released from prison/jail and who meet all other requirements listed above are eligible to register and vote in Illinois. Ex-convicts who have been released and are on parole/probation ARE eligible to vote in Illinois.)

[CLICK HERE TO CHECK THE STATUS OF YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION.](#)

VOTE BY MAIL

1. APPLY TO VOTE BY MAIL. Any Chicago voter may apply online now to vote by mail ahead of the Nov. 3, 2020 Election. No reason or excuse is needed to vote by mail.

2. MARK YOUR BALLOT. Follow all instructions that come with your ballot and be sure to vote in secret. When marking your ballot, use a black or blue ballpoint pen or a felt-tip pen. Do NOT use a red pen, because red ink cannot be read by the ballot scanners.

3. RETURN YOUR BALLOT. The Board supplies all Vote By Mail voters with postage-paid Ballot Return Envelopes to return the ballots.

The signed and sealed Ballot Return Envelope may be returned:

- through the U.S. Postal Service or a licensed courier, OR
- by personal delivery to the Election Board at 69 W. Washington, Sixth Floor, OR
- **NEW:** at any of the [Secured Drop Boxes](#) which will be available at 69 W. Washington St., the Loop Super Site at Clark & Lake, and at every Early Voting site in Chicago.

Especially in the two weeks before Election Day, Chicago voters are encouraged to use a Secured Drop Box at any Chicago Early Voting site to return the signed and sealed Ballot Return Envelope.

IMPORTANT VOTING RESOURCES

EARLY VOTING

NEW THIS FALL: Secured Drop Boxes will be available at every Early Voting site for any Chicago Vote By Mail voter to submit the signed and sealed Ballot Return Envelope.

For the Nov. 3 General Election, Chicago voters may use any Early Voting & Registration location in the city, starting Oct. 1 at the Loop Super Site, and then starting from Oct. 14 at the 50 Ward sites. Chicago voters may use any Early Voting location in the city.

Any ballots that voters cast in Early Voting are final. After casting ballots in Early Voting, voters may not return to amend, change or undo a ballot for any reason. It is a felony to vote more than once—or to attempt to vote more than once—in the same election.

[VIEW LOCATIONS & HOURS FOR EARLY VOTING & SECURE DROP BOXES HERE.](#)

Every voter is encouraged to wear a facemask that covers the mouth and nose, whether visiting to use in-person Early Voting or to use a Secured Drop Box. Voters in line must practice social distancing with 6 feet (2 meters) of space between persons in line.

VOTING RIGHTS

FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF VOTING RIGHTS VISIT THE [ACLU WEBSITE](#).

- If the polls close while you're still in line, stay in line – you have the right to vote.
- If you make a mistake on your ballot, ask for a new one.
- If the machines are down at your polling place, ask for a paper ballot.
- Under federal law, voters who have difficulty reading or writing English may receive in-person assistance at the polls from the person of their choice. This person cannot be the voter's employer, an agent of the voter's employer, or an agent or officer of the voter's union.
- It's illegal to intimidate voters and a federal crime to "intimidate, threaten, [or] coerce ... any other person for the purpose of interfering with the right of [that] other person to vote or to vote as he may choose."
- Under federal law, all polling places for federal elections must be fully accessible to older adults and voters with disabilities. Simply allowing curbside voting is not enough to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements.
- In federal elections, every polling place must have at least one voting system that allows voters with disabilities to vote privately and independently.
- If you have difficulty using the materials provided to make your ballot selections, review, or cast your ballot, let a poll worker know and ask for the help you need. Accessibility is the law.
- If you run into any problems or have questions on Election Day, call the Election Protection Hotline:
 - English: 1-866-OUR-VOTE / 1-866-687-8683
 - Spanish: 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA / 1-888-839-8682
 - Arabic: 1-844-YALLA-US / 1-844-925-5287
 - For Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Urdu, Korean, Mandarin, Tagalog, or Vietnamese: 1-888-274-8683

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Chicago Votes](#)

A non-partisan, non-profit organization building a more inclusive democracy by putting power in the hands of young Chicagoans.

[Hana Center](#)

Empowers multiethnic immigrant communities through social services, education, culture, and community organizing to advance human rights.

[Illinois Coalition for Immigrant Refugee & Rights](#)

Educates and organizes immigrant and refugee communities to assert their rights.

[Immigration Advocates Network](#)

An organization dedicated to expanding access to immigration legal resources and information through collaboration and technology.

RESOURCES FOR EMOTIONAL AND RACIAL TRAUMA

For those looking for or needing counseling or a safe space to heal from emotional or racial trauma, below are some resources that can help provide you with the tools and information that you may need.

[Anxiety & Depression Association of America—Latinx/Hispanic Communities](#)

Information & resources on seeking mental health care.

[Enlace Chicago](#)

A local organization dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of Little Village residents by fostering a safe and healthy environment.

[Informed Immigrant—Resource Library](#)

A collection of mental health resources, as well as legal resources and information.

[Mental Health America](#)

Information & resources on supporting the mental health of immigrant communities.

[National Alliance on Mental Health](#)

Information & resources on seeking culturally competent mental health care.

[National Hispanic & Latino Mental Health & Technology Transfer Center Network](#)

An organization working to provide high-quality training and technical assistance to improve the capacity of those serving Hispanic and Latinx communities in behavioral health prevention, treatment, and recovery.

[Palo Alto University—Psychology & Counseling](#)

A collection of Latinx resources for therapy and self-care.

TRANSLATION & LANGUAGE RESOURCES

For those looking for a translator, looking to learn Spanish, or looking to learn English as a second language, below are some resources that may provide you with the tools and information you may need.

[American Translator Association—Directory](#)

Online directory of freelance translators and interpreters offering services in more than 573 language combinations.

[Chicago Public Library—Learning English](#)

Online & in-person resources for learning English as a second language.

[Instituto Cervantes—Chicago](#)

Online & in-person classes for learning Spanish.

[New York Magazine—At-Home Language Learning Programs and Tools](#)

A collection of at-home language learning programs.

ABOUT AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

Winner of American Theatre Wing's prestigious National Theatre Company Award, American Blues Theater is a premier arts organization with an intimate environment that patrons, artists, and all Chicagoans call home. American Blues Theater explores the American identity through the plays it produces and communities it serves.

We believe in cooperative collaborations both on and off-stage. We provide community service for many not-for-profits, such as the Chicago Public Schools, The Night Ministry, Chicago House, Suits for Success, Misericordia, and the USO. Since 2009, we've held food, book, & clothing drives, distributed promotional tickets, and raised awareness for children's surgeries and health needs. We donate proceeds from "Pediatric Previews" to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

We are Chicago's second-oldest AEA Ensemble theater. As of 2020, our theater and artists have 221 Joseph Jefferson Awards and nominations that celebrate excellence in Chicago theater and 40 Black Theater Alliance Awards. Our artists are honored with Pulitzer Prize nominations, Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards, Emmy Awards, and numerous other accolades.

American Blues Theater is committed to developing the classic plays and musicals of tomorrow. More than half of our mainstage productions are world and Chicago premieres. Our new play development consists of a variety of programs – including world and Chicago premieres, the nationally-recognized *Blue Ink Playwriting Award*, *Blueprint* play development, and annual *Ripped: the Living Newspaper Festival* of new short-plays. •

THE ROOM

A READING SERIES

via
ZOOM



Upcoming *The Room* readings include:

OCTOBER 18 & 19

Alma by Benjamin Benne

NOVEMBER 1 & 2

Days of Decision by Zachary Stevenson

Songs by Phil Ochs

DECEMBER 9

Red Bike by Caridad Svich

More to be announced soon!



Join us in getting out the vote
(in a comfortable & stylish way)!

American Blues Theater is currently selling civic merchandise, with a portion of the proceeds going to Chicago Votes.

[Click here](#) to learn more & purchase.