

PROUD SERVICE:

The Hispanic American Men and Women of the U.S. Coast Guard



Since the 1820s, Hispanic Americans have faithfully served in the Lighthouse Service, Revenue Cutter Service, Lifesaving Service and today's modern Coast Guard.

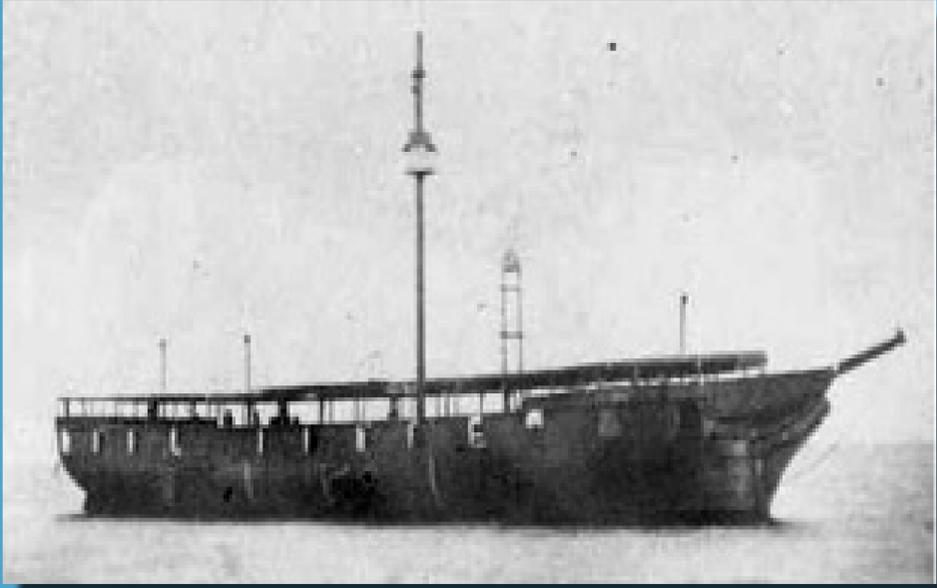
These men and women traced their ethnic heritage to various parts of Spain, the Caribbean and South and Central America.



THE FIRST KNOWN

In 1821, Florida became a U.S. territory, one of several Spanish territories that became part of the United States during the 19th century.

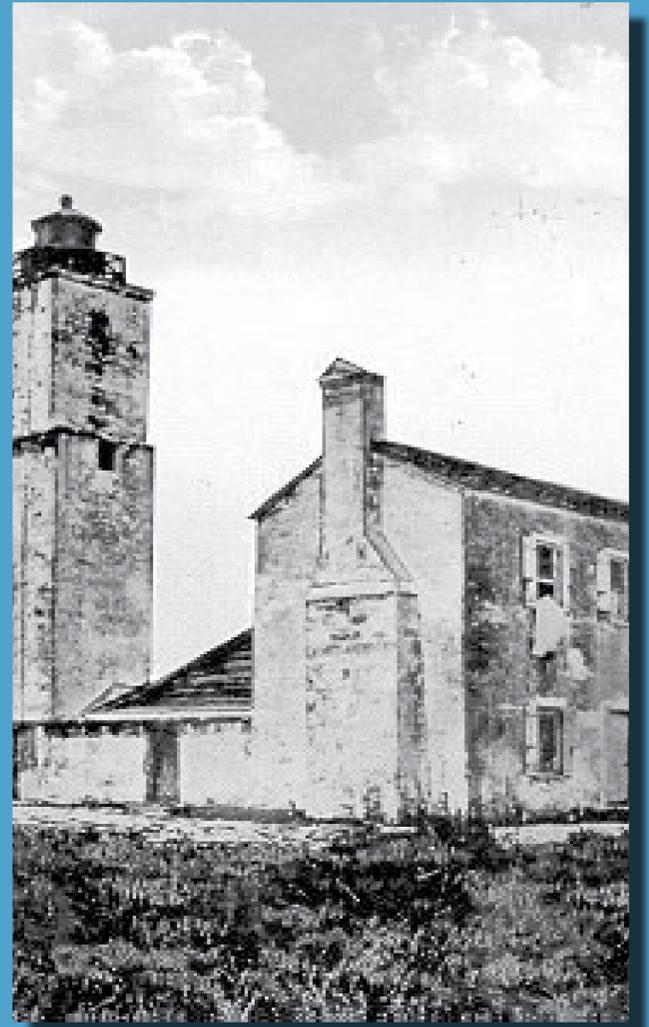
Ship similar to the Carysfort Reef Lightship



During the 1800s, Hispanic Americans commonly served as light keepers at installations throughout Florida. In 1843, Joseph Ximenez of Key West assumed control of the Carysfort Reef Lightship, making him the first Hispanic American to oversee a Coast Guard vessel.

From 1824 to 1855, Juan Andreu served as the keeper of the St. Augustine Lighthouse. Of Minorcan ancestry, he was the first known Hispanic to serve in the Coast Guard and the first Hispanic to oversee a federal land installation of any kind. Andreu fell from the lighthouse tower while painting the upper structure, making him the first Hispanic American to die in the line of duty.

The old St. Augustine Lighthouse



Minorcan American lighthouse keeper Siladonia Pellicer and his family at St. Augustine, Florida



THE GULF COAST & CARRIBEAN

Hispanic Americans also manned lighthouses in Mississippi and Louisiana. For example, Manuel Moreno, keeper of Southwest Pass Light, in Louisiana, was employed not only by the U.S. Lighthouse Service, but in 1861 he tended the light for the Confederate Lighthouse Service until it was extinguished early in the Civil War.

Wars can alter a military service's ethnic make-up. In 1898, the Spanish American War resulted in U.S. oversight of lights in Cuba and fifteen lighthouses in Puerto Rico. These installations brought more Hispanic keepers into the U.S. Lighthouse Service.



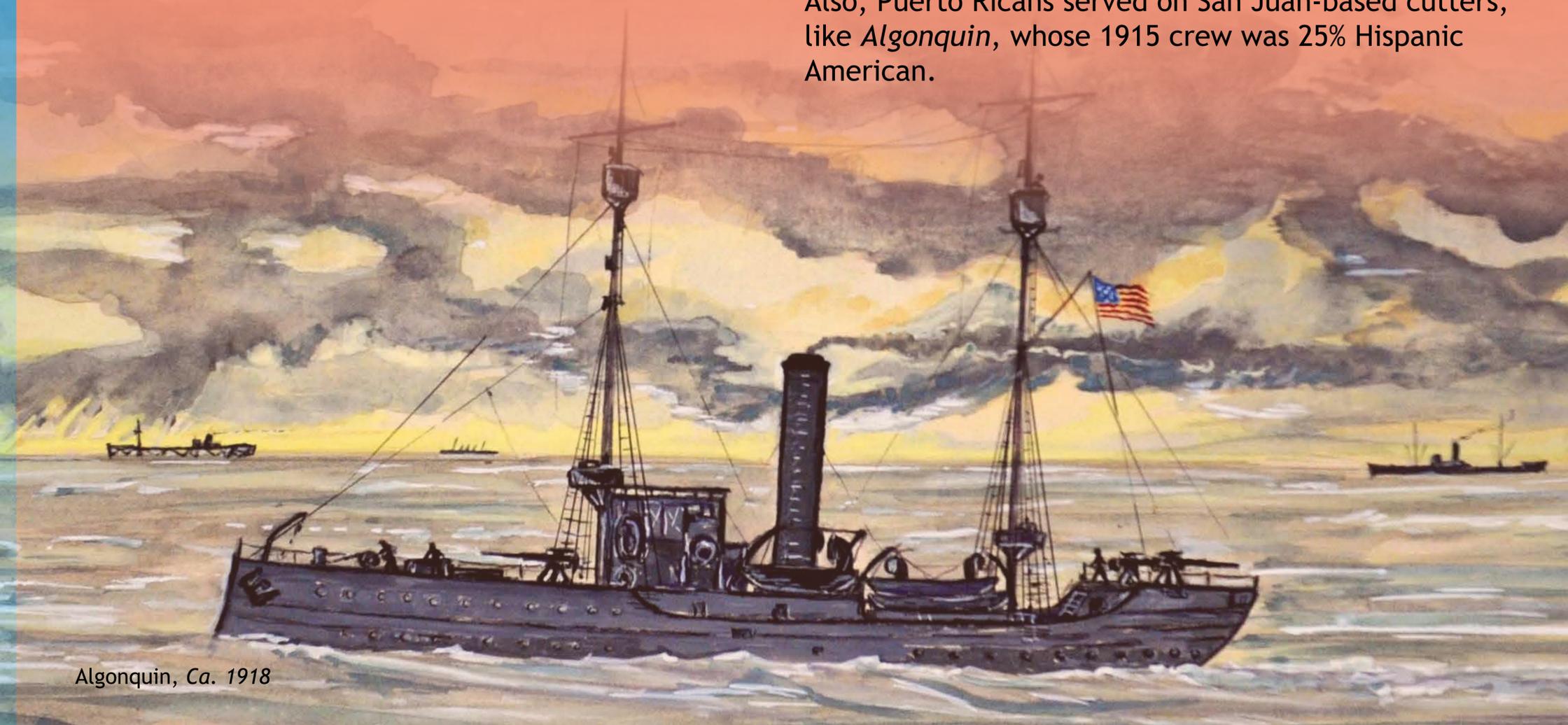
Mona Island Light, Puerto Rico



Cabo Rojo Lighthouse, Puerto Rico

Hispanic Americans also staffed Gulf Coast lifesaving stations, like the Brazos station, where Mexican American surfmen Telesford Pena and Ramon Delgado served.

Beginning in the mid-19th century, the Revenue Cutter Service saw Mexican Americans enlist in California, where cutters were home-ported in San Francisco. Also, Puerto Ricans served on San Juan-based cutters, like *Algonquin*, whose 1915 crew was 25% Hispanic American.



Algonquin, Ca. 1918

HISPANIC AMERICAN ENLISTED FIRSTS

By World War I, Hispanic Americans began to fill enlisted positions.



Crew of the Tampa

During the war, Richard Cordova was lost in the Cutter *Tampa*, the war's greatest naval loss. Cordova was the first Hispanic American Coast Guardsman to die in combat and he posthumously received the Purple Heart Medal.



Chief Pablo Valent

On 16 September 1919, Brazos (Texas) Life-Saving Station members BM1 Pablo Valent, and surfmen Indalecio Lopez and Mariano Holland helped save the crew of the foundering schooner *Cape Horn*. For their heroism, the men received the Coast Guard's Silver Lifesaving Medal and the prestigious Grand Cross Medal of the American Cross of Honor Society. They were the first Hispanic Americans to receive such honors. In 1935, Chief Boatswain Valent took command of Port Isabel Boat Station, becoming the first Hispanic American to command a station

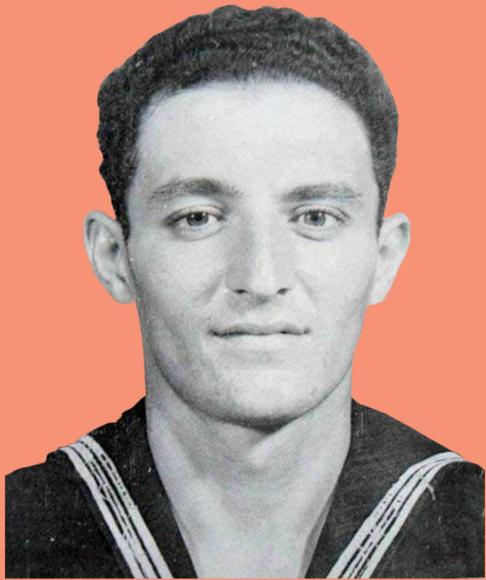
In 1925, Chief Gunner's Mate Joseph B. Aviles transferred from the navy to the Coast Guard. Born in Puerto Rico, Aviles was the first known Hispanic-American chief petty officer in the Coast Guard. In March 1943, he received a war-time promotion to chief warrant officer, becoming the first Hispanic American to reach that level.

CWO Joseph B. Aviles



WORLD WAR II AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

During World War II, enlisted rates were opened to all minorities and Hispanic Americans served with distinction in every theater of operations. These men earned honors such as the Silver Lifesaving Medal, Navy Commendation Medal, Purple Heart Medal and Navy & Marine Corps Medal. They were among the first Hispanic servicemen to receive such recognition.



Valentin Fernandez at enlistment

In May 1944, Gunner's Mate Joseph Tezanos was awarded the Navy & Marine Corps Medal for aiding over 40 survivors of the catastrophic West Loch explosion in Pearl Harbor. Later that year, Tezanos received assignment to Reserve Officer Training, and became one of the first Hispanic Americans to complete that training at the Academy.



Joseph Tezanos at enlistment

Valentin Fernandez was an expert coxswain. He received the Silver Lifesaving Medal for "maneuvering a Marine landing party ashore under constant Japanese attack during the invasion of Saipan" and the Navy Commendation Medal with combat distinguishing device for his skillful landing of Marines at Lingayen Gulf, in the Philippines. He landed Marines at many hotly contested amphibious operations, including Tinian, in the Marianas, and Leyte Gulf in the Philippines.

In 1943, Fireman Daniel Esparza took part in the epic battle for Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands. He participated in the amphibious landings at Japanese strongholds on Bougainville and received the Purple Heart Medal for wounds received at New Georgia, where he landed troops with a Higgins boat.

During the war, many Hispanic Americans went in harm's way and some, such as Philip Cervantez, Carlos Lopez, Emelio Gonzales and Joaquin Calderon made the ultimate sacrifice on board damaged or lost Coast Guard ships, such as the *Muskeget*, torpedoed with all hands lost, and the *Serpens*, an ammo ship destroyed at Guadalcanal and the largest single loss of Coast Guardsmen in the war.



Daniel Esparza at enlistment



William Goadsby Lawrence, Ca. 1943

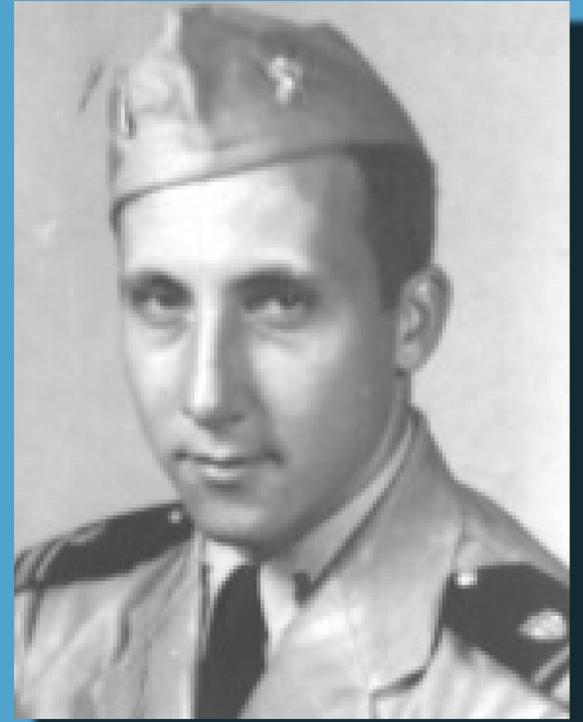
THE FIRST HISPANIC AMERICAN OFFICERS

A former midshipman at the Naval Academy, Henry Garcia received a Coast Guard commission in 1928, becoming the first recognized minority officer in the Coast Guard and, in 1938, he became the first Hispanic American commander of a cutter, as captain of the *Morris*.



Left: LT Henry Garcia
Above: Garcia on board the cutter Shoshone in 1936

In 1942, Juan Del Castillo (*at right*) completed Reserve Officer Training at the Academy, becoming the first Hispanic American known to do so. He left active duty after the war, but served in the Reserves for nearly 40 years.



During the war, many Hispanic Americans received “Temporary Reserve” commissions, such as LCDR Juan Ceballos, who commanded the mounted beach patrol division in Charleston, South Carolina.



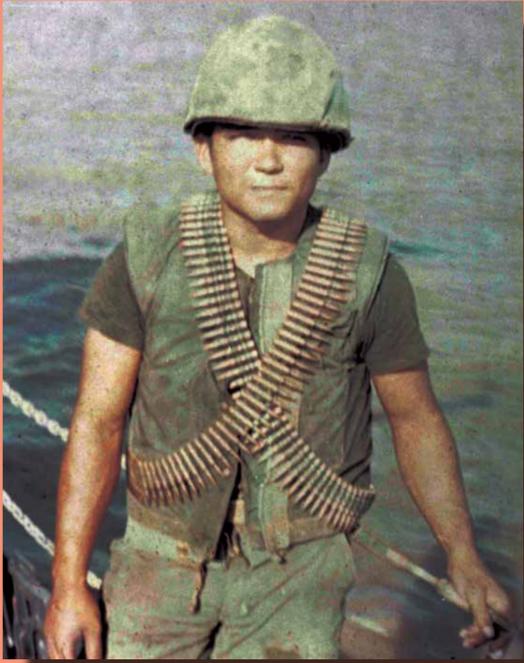
Adalberto Flores (*at left*) of Zapata, Texas, enlisted as an able-bodied seaman, but in less than a year he became the second Hispanic American to receive Reserve Officer Training at the Academy. As an officer, he served as a beachmaster on the *USS Callaway*, helping establish beachheads in fiercely contested amphibious landings at Kwajalein, Saipan, Leyte Gulf and Iwo Jima.



William Goadsby Lawrence, Ca. 1943

HISPANIC AMERICAN HEROES

Since World War II, numerous Hispanic Americans have received awards for heroism, including the Bronze Star, Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal and Coast Guard Medal.



Heriberto Hernandez (*at left*), a fireman on Vietnam-based cutter *Point Cypress*, volunteered for small boat reconnaissance missions, which provided valuable information about enemy operations. Hernandez was mortally wounded during a 1968 mission. For his actions he posthumously received a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star with a "V" for valor. Hernandez was the first Hispanic American to be so recognized and a new Fast Response Cutter has been named in his honor.



In 1969, Larry Villarreal (*above*), an engineman on *Point Banks*, received a Silver Star for "courage and gallantry in action while engaged in armed conflict against North Vietnamese and Viet Cong aggressors." He is the first Hispanic American serviceman to receive a Silver Star.

In 2005, AMT2 Eddie Jimenez (*at right*) received the Air Medal for rescue operations in Hurricane Katrina in which he helped save over 40 storm victims in extremely dangerous conditions.



In 1980, 19-year-old Seaman William Flores (*at left*), less than a year out of boot camp, stayed on board the buoy tender *Blackthorn* to assist shipmates attempting to escape the sinking ship after it collided with a freighter. He sacrificed his life for his shipmates and received a posthumous Coast Guard Medal in recognition of his selfless act. Flores is also a namesake for a new Fast Response Cutter.



PIONEERS IN RECENT HISTORY

By the middle of the 20th century, Hispanic Americans began to fill higher ranks in the service.



In 1951, after serving two years in World War II as an enlisted man, John Martinez became the first recognized Hispanic American to graduate from the Coast Guard Academy. The rest of the 1950s and 1960s saw a gradual increase in the number of Hispanic American Academy graduates

*Right: LCDR Joe Rodriguez
Left: John Martinez
Below: CDR Jose Saliceti*



As a prior enlisted man, LCDR Joe Rodriguez was the first Hispanic American to become a Coast Guard rescue swimmer when he graduated from the school in 1987.



In early 2008 CDR Jose Saliceti became the Coast Guard's first qualified Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) pilot.

In May 1975, Alberto Gastón received his aviator wings, becoming the first Hispanic American to become a Coast Guard pilot. During his career Gaston accumulated 7,500 flying hours, including 2,400 in the Army.

Alberto Gaston



HH-65 flying past Makapuu Light, Hawaii

HISPANIC AMERICAN SERVICE WOMEN

In 1859, Maria Mestre de los Dolores became keeper of the St. Augustine Light and tended it until the start of the Civil War in 1861. She was the first Hispanic-American woman to serve in the Coast Guard and the first to oversee a federal installation.

In World War II, Hispanic American women like Cuban American Mary Rivero, were among 10,000 SPARs that served during the war. These SPARs were the first Hispanic American women to serve as military personnel in the Coast Guard.

SPARs, Ca. 1943



*Jacqueline Ball
(far left) and
Deborah Winnie*

In 1983, Jacqueline Ball and Deborah Winnie were the first Hispanic women to graduate from the Coast Guard Academy.

1991 saw many pioneering events for Hispanic American women. LTJG Katherine Faverey (now Tiongson) took command of the *Bainbridge Island*, making her the first Hispanic American female to command a cutter. She later became the service's first Hispanic American female intelligence officer. Also in 1991, Marilyn Melendez Dykman became the first Hispanic American female Coast Guard aviator. That same year, YN Grisel Hollis was the first Hispanic American female advanced to Master Chief. Hollis went on to receive a promotion to Chief Warrant Officer, making her the first Hispanic American woman to reach that rank.

These individuals led the way for minority women in the service.

*Left: Marilyn
Melendez Dykman.*

*Right: Katherine
Faverey Tiongson
taking command of
the Bainbridge Island*



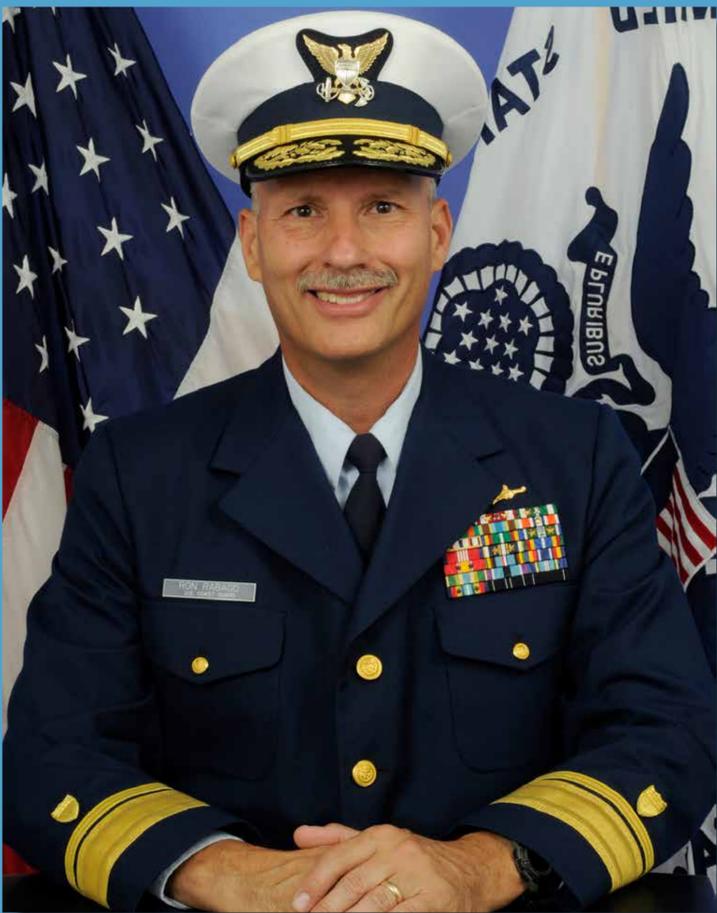
MODERN HISPANIC AMERICAN LEADERS

Over the past 200 years, the number of Hispanic Americans in the Coast Guard has grown to over eleven percent of the service. Today, they serve at every level of the enlisted and officer ranks, including four flag officers.

In 1990, YNCM David Ojeda became Command Master Chief for the Coast Guard's Eleventh District, becoming the first Hispanic American enlisted personnel to reach that level. And, in 1998, George Ingraham became Master Chief Petty Officer of the Reserve Force.

In 2006, Rear Admiral Ronald Rábago became the first Hispanic American flag officer and, in July 2009, RADM Joseph "Pepe" Castillo assumed command of District 11. He was the first Hispanic American commander of a Coast Guard district and, later, the first deputy area commander.

Hispanic Americans have made great advances since the early 1800s and their pioneering efforts have benefited all who serve in the U.S. military, federal government, and the nation as a whole.



Clockwise from top left: Rear Admiral Ronald Rabago, Rear Admiral Joseph "Pepe" Castillo, Rear Admiral Vincent B. Atkins, and Rear Admiral James Rendon with his family.

