



# Hispanic community receives recognition from heritage month library display

Clara Martinez | Editor-in-Chief

For Asad Ahmed ('24), Hispanic Heritage Month has only really been celebrated at home, or when he is around his Dominican family members. At the school, he said Latin American culture is not celebrated to the same extent as other expressions of identity.

"A lot of times, you kind of have to focus on more of the dominant culture," Ahmed said.

This year, the library had a display of books by Hispanic and Latin American authors for the Heritage Month, lasting from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15.

Library Administrative Assistant Stephen Reed said exhibiting the cultural display created an opportunity to "raise the profile" of books and authors that students may otherwise never encounter.

"Even if they just walk by and see it, and even if they don't consciously register it, I think it makes them more aware of Latin American writers, Latin American voices, Latin American titles," Reed said. "That serves a purpose."

The U.S. Congress created Hispanic Heritage Week in 1968 to celebrate Latin culture, and extended it to Hispanic Heritage Month in 1988. The Heritage Month begins in the middle of September because it commemorates the independence days in multiple Latin American countries such as Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica, according to Pew Research Center.

Throughout the month, government agencies like the Library of Congress, National Park Service and Smithsonian Institution host galleries and events to commemorate influential Hispanic figures in U.S. history and encourage the public to join in celebration with Latin food and dance, advertised by HispanicHeritageMonth.gov.

As a student who identifies as part-Mexican, Justin Shaya ('26) said he appreciated that the school was starting to bring Latin culture to the forefront of student life, like with the library display.

"We can bond over something, and that's important during this month," Shaya said. "It creates more friendships."

Ahmed noted the wide participation and organizational efforts for events like South Asia Night and Middle East Night with no comparable opportunities to connect with Latin culture.

However, he said the disparity between the celebrations of different cultures could result from the vast differences between students from Spanish-speaking countries that make it "hard to connect" within the community.

"Latin America, as a whole, is geographically very large, and also ethnically, very diverse," Ahmed said. "You have people who are coming straight from who have lived in those countries and then you also have people who might be third generation, something like that in the U.S."

*Even if [students] don't consciously register it, I think it makes them more aware of Latin American writers.*

Likewise, Shaya said he wishes more people took the opportunity to learn about Latin and Hispanic culture as it would "bring the school together." He said the High School could bring heritage celebrations into advisory time or host activities during grade meetings.

"It's important for not just people who are from Latin America to know about it," Shaya said.

And, within the community of Latinos at the school, Ahmed said it would be impactful to have more who were willing to connect with each other and

put on events.

"It would be nice to have a larger group of people who were wanting to celebrate this," Ahmed said.

To decide which heritage commemorations to display, Reed said the Director of Institutional and Community Equity Mirangela Buggs gives the library a sheet with the dates of major cultural celebrations, and the library varies which they choose to commemorate year-to-year.

"We want to try to, you know, make sure that people are aware of a broader range of books that we have for any group," Reed said.

Two parents, Nadia Anderson and Clementine Drackett, create the monthly displays. To decorate the shelves for Hispanic Heritage Month, they hung colorful tissue paper from the ceiling and arranged printed quotes around the books from popular writers.

Then, the librarians pulled a selection of books by Latin American authors and poets to exhibit. Reed said the librarians pulled a variety of work, from popular authors like Sandra Cisneros and Gabriel García Márquez to lesser-known writers like Octavio Paz, in order to broaden students' reading.

"Putting up these displays, sort of feeds that desire that some teachers have to kind of broaden the curriculum to include writers of various backgrounds," Reed said.

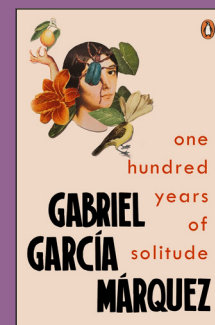
As a result of the library's spotlight on Hispanic and Latin American literature, Ahmed said he is glad that more attention is being given to a community he identifies with and the value of the Heritage Month for students to reconnect with their culture.

"When you're in a society where a lot of times you kind of have to forget that part of your identity," Ahmed said, "[Hispanic Heritage Month] is a good opportunity to honor that and become closer with your heritage and culture."

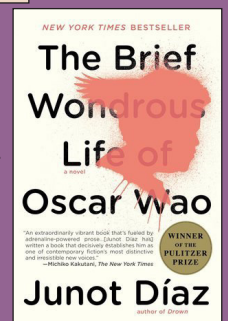
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## Reed's Top Reads From the Heritage Month display

### Best Novels

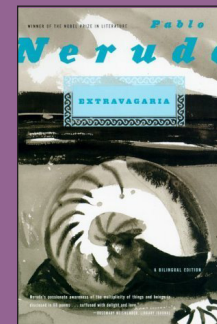


One Hundred Years of Solitude  
by Gabriel García Márquez



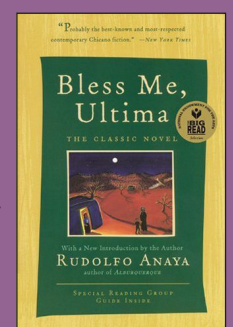
The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao  
by Junot Díaz

### Best Poetry



Extravagaria  
by Pablo Neruda

### Most Underrated



Bless Me, Ultima  
by Rodolfo Anaya

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