

# Skadden Celebrates National Hispanic Heritage Month

Skadden colleagues reflect on how their Latinx culture and community have inspired them.



**Mayra Aguilera**  
Associate, Litigation / Los Angeles

My family, nuclear and extended, has always been very close and supportive — 23 relatives attended my law school graduation! The things we do, like work and school, are not just for ourselves but for each other and our community. Since becoming a mother in the past year, I've learned to appreciate this on a new level; I'm so inspired to see everyone come together for each other. They have been behind me, cheering me on, since I was a kid.

I grew up in Southern California hearing about people like Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, who organized farmworkers to get higher pay and benefits. My family was very involved in activism, and I learned that change is possible with a few engaged and passionate people. I am inspired by my parents, who risked so much coming to the United States from Mexico and Venezuela for better economic prospects, for themselves and their families. I hope I never have to take such a risk out of necessity, but I would love to do something as courageous out of passion and hope for the future.



**Shirley Diaz**  
Associate, Litigation / Washington, D.C.



**René H. DuBois**  
Associate, Litigation / Boston

Coming from a family in which few people attend college, I was influenced by the perseverance of my cousin, the first member of our extended family to attend graduate school. He went to a top-tier medical school, worked hard and was matched with a top-tier hospital, where he's now a cardiologist. I drew inspiration from him, seeing how underrepresented folks in fact have a chance in professional fields, and decided to go to law school. Even among racially diverse populations, Latinos are still underrepresented in the legal profession compared with their presence in the U.S. population, but I made it. I hope I can be a similar inspiration for others.

I'm a first-generation American and the first in my family to graduate from college. My parents always stressed the importance of that status and the pressures I would face because of it. They also filled me with pride in our Latinx culture. Growing up, we often welcomed migrants from our family and community, who stayed with us in NYC until they were able to begin building their lives in the United States. This inspires me in my job, where I'm helping others reach their goals and building the community to help reach mine.



**Annie Flores**  
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion  
Supervisor, Attorney Recruiting  
/ New York



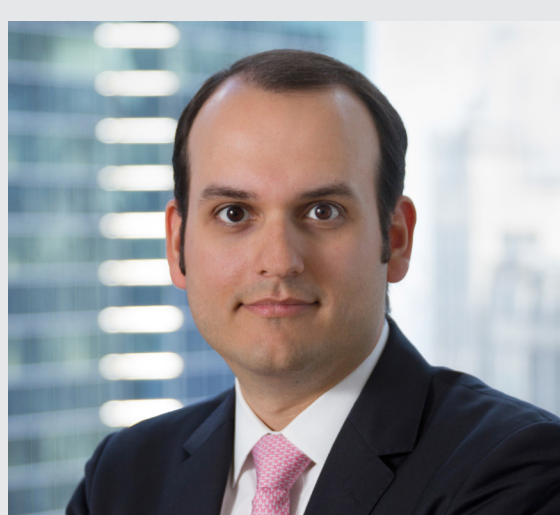
**Alejandro Guadarrama**  
Counsel, Tax Controversy and  
Litigation / Washington, D.C.

I joined Skadden in 2007, and, except for one partner, was the only Hispanic lawyer I knew of in the D.C. office. I attended one meeting of the Black-Hispanic affinity group early on but didn't go back. Then, when I made counsel in 2017, several Latinx associates reached out to congratulate me. By that point, there were at least seven or eight Latinx lawyers in the office, and they invited me to celebrate with cake at a Latinx affinity group lunch. I immediately felt at home. It was inspiring to see my Latinx community show up for me and to see myself as part of something bigger.

While I'm a first-generation New Yorker — my parents migrated here from Puerto Rico — Spanish was my first language. I grew up in a predominantly Spanish-speaking Brooklyn neighborhood with over 30 aunts and uncles and more cousins than I can count. We've always pushed each other to do bigger and better things. My parents, for example, assured me and my brothers that we had the support to take our education as far as we wanted. That's why I continually come back to my Latin base and this tight-knit community of friends and family that will forever strengthen each other.



**Luis Melendez**  
Senior Project Coordinator,  
Knowledge Strategy / New York



**Ralph E. Pérez**  
Counsel, Mergers and Acquisitions /  
Chicago

My mother is from Colombia and my father is from Puerto Rico, where I was born and raised. Latinx culture and community does not just inspire me — it's a key part of me. Being Latinx, I feel a strong personal connection to the region, especially Puerto Rico right now because of the devastation caused by Hurricane Fiona. This Hispanic Heritage Month, I hope we also focus on relief for the people of Puerto Rico.

My heritage has pushed me to seek opportunities and open doors for people in my community, particularly as an attorney. When I meet with a Spanish-speaking client, they immediately connect with me on a different level than they might with an attorney who doesn't share their language or their culture. It's been invaluable for building trust, especially with my *pro bono* clients, many of whom have faced unimaginable hardships.



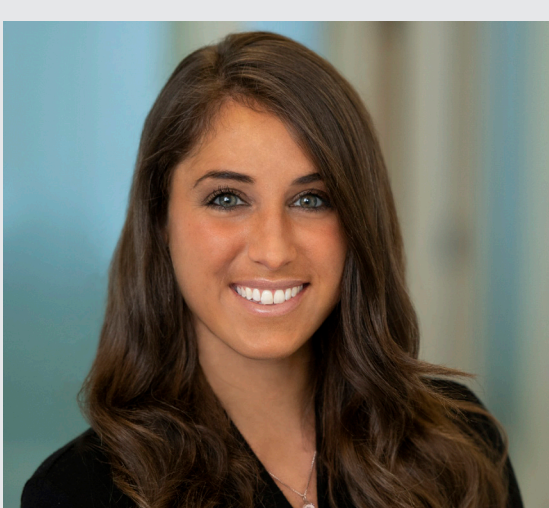
**Mayté Quinn Salazar**  
Associate, Tax / Washington, D.C.



**Mayra C. Suárez**  
Counsel, Litigation; Government  
Enforcement and White Collar Crime /  
Washington, D.C.

Latinx culture values family, community, hard work and respect for others. I bring this with me to Skadden every day — the importance of honoring our differences, working in teams and being proud of each other's accomplishments. It is why I mentor young Latinx attorneys at the firm; we all are a family and rise together. From a more practical perspective, being bilingual has directly impacted my work, helping me develop expertise in cross-border investigations. From early on, my being Latinx and speaking Spanish has appealed to clients.

My grandparents, father and uncle immigrated here from Cuba with nothing and built good lives for themselves in the United States, with a stable income. Inspired by my family's example, I focused on working hard and excelling as much as I could in school. My education and family support helped me to achieve my professional goals.



**Anne E. Villanueva**  
Partner, Labor and Employment  
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