

By: Natalie Kates

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Panel Discussion Addresses Disparities between Hispanics

On March 28, Florida State University held a panel discussion about disunity among Latinos at 7:30 p.m. in room 250 at the Student Life Building.

The discussion was hosted by the Hispanic Latino Student Union (HLSU), the Oscar Arias Sanchez Hispanic Honor Society, Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, and the Columbian Student Association (COLSA).

The panel consisted of a Hispanic attorney, Christina Velez, a Hispanic Clinical Psychologist at the FSU College of Medicine, Dr. Elena Reyes, and two Hispanic FSU students, Juan David Pardo and Danielle Martin.

A variety of topics were discussed about why there is disunity among Hispanics and what steps should be taken in order to unite Hispanics. "We want to motivate Hispanics to unify as a community and to bring about a positive change," said COLSA President Maria Escobar.

Escobar and Oscar Arias Sanchez Hispanic Honor Society Vice-President Ricardo Rivera opened up the discussion and introduced the panelists. "At our discussion we will address some of the issues that are dividing Hispanics as a people," explained Rivera. "Since there are so many kinds of Hispanics with different religions and cultures, this tears us as a race apart."

The discussion began with debate between the panelists. "I would consider that we are most divided culturally," said Pardo. "Just because we speak the same language doesn't mean that we are the same people." Reyes agreed and mentioned, "There are huge disparities between Hispanics from different

countries.” Velez added, “As a diverse people, Hispanics tend to be divided into Latinos who have lived here for awhile and new waves of Hispanics who have just immigrated here.”

Next, Reyes brought up the issue of Hispanics not having a specific color of skin. “Something like color of skin shouldn’t define Hispanics since there are so many Hispanics from different nationalities with various colors of skin,” said Reyes.

Martin pointed out that “If we’re going to work on unifying Hispanics one of the first things we have to address is the racism within Hispanics.” According to Velez, much of the racism between Hispanics is socioeconomic, based on how much money a person has or doesn’t have. “Race is excused if you have money,” said Velez. “It’s like you have bought yourself into a level of acceptability.”

Currently there are over 40 million Hispanics in the U.S. and Latino influence is starting to be seen more often in mainstream American culture. “America is becoming more ‘Latinified’ just as Latinos are becoming more Americanized,” said Reyes.

The Hispanic influence is starting to become so prominent that FSU has even started a Hispanic Marketing Communication program to teach students how to cater to the large U.S. Hispanic Market. Rivera considers, “It’s good that people are noticing we are a buying power and are starting to market towards us.”

Suggestions were addressed for what Hispanics can do in order to unify as a community. “When trying to relate with other Hispanics, even if they are different from your own culture, it is important to remember what we have in common with the other person,” suggested Reyes. “People can relate to each other based on how

much they have in common whether this is by their common experiences, language, or culture.”

After a question and answer segment from the audience, Rivera closed the discussion. “We can’t kid ourselves by saying Hispanics have more common experiences than differences,” said Rivera. “We are united because we are all Hispanic so we should use this as an avenue to learn about other Hispanic cultures. The best way to break down walls is to learn more about each other by finding out about different Hispanic cultures and experiences.”

After the debate between the panelists, Rivera opened up the discussion for a question and answer segment that allowed the audience to share their opinions and knowledge about some of the subjects discussed.

Article References

- **Maria Escobar**
Columbian Student Association, President
✉ fsucolsa@yahoo.com
- **Juan David Pardo**
Hispanic FSU Student on Discussion Panel
✉ jdpardo@gmail.com
- **Dr. Elena Reyes**
FSU College of Medicine, Hispanic Clinical Psychologist
✉ Elena.reyes@med.fsu.edu
- **Ricardo Rivera**
Oscar Arias Sanchez Hispanic Honor Society, Vice-President
✉ Rar02f@fsu.edu ☎ (813) 610-5602
- **Christina Velez**
Hispanic Attorney
✉ Cvelez@alumwellesley.edu
☎ Work- (850)681-1968 ☎ Cell- (917)664-2110