

Nicholas Aguirre Zafiro

Writing Example #1

Families and guests gathered around to celebrate the beginnings of Latin Heritage Month as the Museum of the American Latino held its annual Latin Heritage Festival this past Saturday.

The festival has been celebrated for 25 years and was held in the National Museum of American History. The festival showcased everything from Latino art, history and music via exhibits and presentations throughout the National Museum of American History. Each presentation and display discussed themes of Latinidad in the United States as the country has become home to many Latinx families throughout the generations. Latinidad refers to the complexities and intersecting identities that make up different Latino cultures.

“Opportunities like this festival are really to focus in on some of the narratives that are central to American history but don't get enough attention and certainly don't have visibility for the average person in this country,” said Ashley Oliva Mayor, a curatorial assistant at the National Museum of American History.



The event concluded with performances by Latino and Latina artists. The group was DC Cuban All Stars, followed by urban Latino artist JChris and concluded with a performance by the all-women Los Angeles group, Mariachi Reyna de Los Angeles. The musicians paid tribute to their respective cultures and played their compositions and classics from their respective genres.

“The performers were amazing. Mariachi Reyna de Los Angeles really just killed it, they are such a phenomenal group of amazingly talented female musicians, and I, they, they brought down the house at the end,” Ashley Said.

Mayor is a Miami native and is of Cuban descent. She said this year’s festival served a double purpose as it celebrated and inaugurated the Molina Family Latino Gallery as a new museum installation. The exhibit is the first dedicated space to represent Latino history and will be the first installation of the National Museum of the American Latino once the building is completed.

Angie Garcia, a Latina mother, flew out from Uvalde, Texas, after a previously scheduled trip. Her husband was asked to share his drone footage of the murals commemorating the Uvalde

shooting victims to display on the Smithsonian website. Garcia and her family then attended the Latin Heritage Festival.

“It's neat because it, you know it, spreads the word. It educates everyone on their different nationalities and everything that's around, and you don't realize how much diversity there is,” Garcia said.

Garcia also said she was surprised at how large and diverse the Latino population in DC and the East Coast is. She was interested in the museum within the museum, referring to the Molina Family Gallery exhibit.

“Hopefully, you know, one opens up for the Latinos, you know. Their own stand-alone museum somewhere here in D.C.,” she said.

Ofelia Montelongo Valencia is from Ciudad Obregón, Sonora, México and is a professor at George Washington University. She said it seemed the organizers were not expecting as many people because they needed to bring more chairs.

Valencia also said she was disappointed because she felt the event needed more promotion and a larger venue to host more people.

“ I didn't know there was a month, like, for Latinos in the United States until after, probably like six years I was here and I was like, ‘Why would we have a month like that, like we are Latinos all the time?’” She said.

She said she would like for future events to have more representation of more Latino countries as there are many identities within Latinidad.

“I would wonder that, like, what kind of people or audience are we driving to Latinx Heritage Month. Is it really us celebrating us, or– I don’t know.”

Valencia said she was confused about who was attending the event and wondered if the festival was for performative purposes on the Smithsonian’s part.

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Writing Example #2

The president of the Committee to Protect Journalists gave sobering remarks regarding the different ways journalists are silenced and placed in dangerous situations for students at The George Washington University this past Tuesday.

Jodie Ginsberg, 44, a British and South African national, spoke on Tuesday about her role as [president](#) of The Committee to Protect Journalists and the safety issues journalists face worldwide. CPJ is a nonprofit organization that defends journalists around the world, promotes press freedom and provides protection to reporters facing dangerous situations. Ginsberg presented as a guest lecturer at the Institute of Public Diplomacy and Global Communication's annual Walter Roberts Endowment Lecture at GW's Lehman Auditorium.

“Figures that CPJ will publish next week will show this is the worst year on record for journalists' imprisonment with over 300 journalists in jail. Iran, China, Myanmar and Turkey are among the worst offenders,” Ginsberg said.



Some GW students said they are increasingly aware of the violence journalists face today globally.

“It’s not surprising. You see those things happen again and again, it’s become so commonplace that it feels like it's every week or another story. It’s been, I don’t know how many years since Jamal Khashoggi, but it’s been long enough,” Andrew Keller said.

Keller, 20, a sophomore at GW and resident of Atlanta, Georgia also said he enjoyed Ginsberg’s optimistic concluding sentiments. He said he wished more “young people had attended the event” to learn about the resources CPJ offers.

“I think the key things we took from this event are that, you know, freedom and protection of journalists is important regardless. And I think there is an importance having these at universities whereas a lot of students who are going into this and like they said at the very end, having those resources available to be able to know where to go for safety,” Keller said.

Other students shared similar sentiments about the examples Ginsberg said.

“I wouldn’t say it shocked me, with the current state of the world, it doesn’t shock me. I know numbers are rising. It’s definitely something sad and something to be aware of,” Carly Shaffer said.

Shaffer, 22, a senior at GW and resident of San Diego, California said she would have liked to have seen more than just journalism students attend.

“But while killing is the ultimate form of censorship, those in power or with significant financial means do not need to resort to murder or even threats of violence to silence their critics,”

Ginsberg said in her lecture. “One hallmark of the threats facing journalists in recent years is the growing use, or rather misuse, of the law to target journalists,” Ginsberg said

Ginsberg said governments often used financial crimes to distract and dismiss journalists' critiques of different regimes.

“It is a very effective mechanism for organizations like CPJ and others to bring cases to the governments and have a direct dialogue with diplomats about what is happening in individual countries,” Ginsberg said.

After the lecture concluded, she answered questions from the audience. Ginsberg said journalists have access to CPJ’s legal assistance [network](#) and the WhatsApp safety bot initiatives as resources they have created and made available. Ginsberg also answered questions regarding The Committee to Protect Journalists’ current partnerships. She said communication with diplomats from governmental initiatives like the Media Freedom [Coalition](#) has been helpful for CPJ.