

Latinxs and Hispanics in the Mathematical Sciences



Alejandra Castillo

PhD Student, Oregon State University

Alejandra and her family have roots in Guadalajara, Guanajuato, and Zacatecas, Mexico. Raised in a working-class community of immigrants within the San Gabriel Valley of California, she was fortunate to have a supportive family who encouraged her academic aspirations. In primary school, she found math to be a subject where she didn't need to speak English to understand and solve problems. Although math was not something that came easily to her, she recognized that it was an area where she was willing to exercise the most patience. She was a recipient of the QuestBridge National College Match Scholarship, which allowed her to attend Pomona College and was also selected as a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow.

Alejandra has worked with Computing Sciences at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory to develop scalable inference algorithms that are efficient and effective for computationally expensive models. In the field of unsupervised learning, Alejandra works in clustering for feature selection. Alejandra is also interested in closing gaps in retention that exist among students from backgrounds that have not been historically represented in the fields of mathematics and statistics.

As an alum of the Pomona College Academy for Youth Success (PAYS) program, Alejandra has returned to the program in various capacities to support high school youth as they prepare for college and beyond. She has continuously worked to support undocumented students in high school, college, and graduate school as they navigate prohibitive policies and changing immigration policies. Alejandra has been involved with the Chicano Latino Youth Leadership Project (CLYLP) and the California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) organizations as an alum, organizer, and panelist. Alejandra encourages students not to isolate themselves, "Creating a community when there isn't one can be challenging, but it is powerful to be able to create a place of belonging for you and others."

"This time provides visibility for the achievements of the Latinx communities in the mathematical sciences and society. It's an opportunity to reflect on the doors opened by those who came before us. It's also important to invite young mathematicians into the community by showcasing the diverse lived experiences people have in math and statistics. We can continuously challenge notions of what a mathematician looks like or comes from. It can be a time to reflect on the work that is yet to be done. I also hope these types of recognitions, reflections, and efforts are not limited to this month."

Lathisms was founded in 2016 in order to showcase the contributions of Latinx and Hispanic mathematicians during Hispanic Heritage Month, which is celebrated in the United States from September 15 and October 15 every year. During this time, we feature/reveal a prominent Latinx/Hispanic mathematician daily. See all the featured mathematical scientists at [LATHISMS.ORG](https://lathisms.org).

Thanks to the American Mathematical Society and the Mathematical Association of America for support of Lathisms.