

Latinxs and Hispanics in the Mathematical Sciences



Cristina Runnalls

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Cristina is a first-generation Mexican American and proud daughter of immigrants. She was raised in the Central Valley in California, in a small town surrounded by vineyards and orchards as far as the eye could see. She grew up visiting those vineyards while her parents worked as seasonal farm laborers. One message she heard time and time again was the importance of education to provide a better life—one that did not require backbreaking labor in the harsh sun—and she took that to heart. Cristina's love of mathematics throughout grade school eventually led her to pursue a mathematics degree at California State University, Fresno. Ultimately, Cristina attended the Mathematics PhD program at the University of Iowa. She earned her Master's in 2013, but shortly thereafter felt uncertainty in her path. Mathematics education was ultimately a far better fit, and she completed her PhD in Mathematics Education in 2018.

Cristina's research focuses broadly on addressing issues of access and opportunity for culturally and linguistically diverse students in mathematics, grounded within a framework that acknowledges the powerful social, cultural, and political influences in the classroom. Within this thread, she works extensively with both pre-service and in-service teachers to help support their math classrooms towards becoming a more socially just and rehumanizing space. Cristina also supports in-service teachers through her role as Director of the California Mathematics Project at Cal Poly Pomona.

For students, Cristina recommends first and foremost to seek out mentorship—from everyone possible. While it is impossible to take every piece of advice ever received, listening to diverse perspectives can help inform and guide your decisions. Additionally, she tells students, "mentors are invaluable assets in helping you find research and teaching opportunities, interesting programs, funding sources, and more."

"One of my favorite quotes is by Gloria Anzaldúa: 'They'd like to think I have melted in the pot. But I haven't. We haven't.' This month is a time when we can come together to share our unique stories, complex lives, and amazing contributions, all while celebrating wholeheartedly the most important pieces of ourselves: our heritage, our languages, and our cultures. These have not melted and they have not disappeared—they remain a part of us, now and always."

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).

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