



Famous Firsts by Hispanic Americans

The first Hispanic-American politicians, baseball players, and more

Government

- **Member of U.S. Congress:** [Joseph Marion Hernández](#), 1822, delegate from the Florida territory.
- **U.S. Representative:** [Romualdo Pacheco](#), a representative from California, was elected in 1876 by a one-vote margin. He served for four months before his opponent succeeded in contesting the results. In 1879 he was again elected to Congress, where he served for two terms.
- **U.S. Senator:** [Octaviano Larrazolo](#) was elected in 1928 to finish the term of New Mexico senator Andieus Jones, who had died in office. He served for six months before falling ill and stepping down; he died in 1930. The first Hispanic senator to serve an entire term (and then some) was [Dennis Chávez](#), of New Mexico, who served from 1935 through 1962.
- **Administrator of the Federal Aviation Agency:** General Elwood "Pete" Quesada helped create this agency to manage the growing aviation field and improve airline safety. He served in this position from 1958 to 1961. The agency became the [Federal Aviation Administration](#) in 1966.
- **U.S. Treasurer:** Romana Acosta Bañuelos, 1971–1974.
- **U.S. cabinet member:** Lauro F. Cavazos, 1988–1990, Secretary of Education.
- **U.S. Surgeon General:** [Antonia Coello Novello](#), 1990–1993. She was also the first woman ever to hold the position.
- **U.S. Secretary of Transportation:** Federico Peña, 1993.
- **U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development:** [Henry Cisneros](#), 1993.
- **U.S. Attorney General:** [Alberto Gonzales](#), 2005.
- **Democrat to run for President:** [Bill Richardson](#), 2008. Though he eventually lost the nomination to [Barack Obama](#), Richardson made history by entering the race.
- **U.S. Supreme Court Justice:** [Sonia Sotomayor](#), 2009. She is also the third woman to hold the position.



[Antonia Coello Novello](#)

Military

- **Flying ace:** Col. Manuel J. Fernández, Jr., who flew 125 combat missions in the Korean War.
- **Medal of Honor recipient:** Philip Bazaar, a Chilean member of the U.S. Navy, for bravery during the Civil War. He received his Congressional Medal of Honor in 1865.
- **Admiral, U.S. Navy:** [David G. Farragut](#). In 1866, he became the first U.S. naval officer ever to be awarded the rank of admiral. The first Hispanic American to become a four-star admiral was Horacio Rivero of Puerto Rico, in 1964.
- **General, U.S. Army:** Richard E. Cavazos, 1976. In 1982, he became the army's first Hispanic four-star general.
- **Secretary of the Navy:** Edward Hidalgo, 1979.



[David G. Farragut](#)

Science and Medicine

- **Astronaut:** [Franklin Chang-Díaz](#), 1986. He flew on a total of seven space-shuttle missions.
- The first female Hispanic astronaut was [Ellen Ochoa](#), whose first of four shuttle missions was in 1991.
- **Nobel Prize in Physics:** [Luiz Walter Alvarez](#), 1968, for discoveries about subatomic particles. Later, he and his son proposed the now-accepted theory that the mass dinosaur extinction was caused by a meteor impact.
- **Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine:** [Severo Ochoa](#), 1959, for the synthesis of ribonucleic acid (RNA).



[Ellen Ochoa](#)

Literature

- **Novel in English, written and published in U.S.:** María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, *Who Would Have Thought It?* (1872). She's better known for her 1885 second novel, *The Squatter and the Don*.
- **Pulitzer Prize for Fiction:** [Oscar Hijuelos](#), 1990, for his novel *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*.
- **Pulitzer Prize for Drama:** Nilo Cruz, 2003, for his play *Anna in the Tropics*.

Music

- **Opera diva:** [Lucrezia Bori](#), who debuted at the Metropolitan Opera in 1912.
- **Rock star:** Richie Valens, 1958.
- **Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee:** [Carlos Santana](#), 1998.

Film

- **Oscar, Best Actor:** [José Ferrer](#), 1950, *Cyrano de Bergerac*.
- **Oscar, Best Supporting Actress:** [Rita Moreno](#), 1961, *West Side Story*.
- **Oscar, Best Supporting Actor:** [Anthony Quinn](#), 1952, *Viva Zapata!*
- **Hollywood director:** Raoul Walsh, 1914, *The Life of General Villa*.
- **Matinee idol:** Ramón Navarro, 1923, *The Prisoner of Zenda*.
- **Leading lady:** [Dolores del Río](#), 1925, *Joanne*.



[Rita Moreno](#)

Drama

- **Tony, Best Director:** [José Quintero](#), 1973.
- **Tony, Best Supporting Actress:** [Rita Moreno](#), 1975, *The Ritz*. In 1977, Moreno became the first Hispanic American (and the second person ever) to have won an Oscar, a Grammy, a Tony, and an Emmy, picking up the last of those for her performance as guest host on *The Muppet Show*.

Television

- **Star of a network television show:** Desi Arnaz, 1952, *I Love Lucy*.
- **Broadcaster of the Year:** [Geraldo Rivera](#), 1971.



Desi Arnaz

Baseball

- **Major league player:** Esteban Bellán, 1871, Troy Haymakers.
- **World Series player:** Adolfo “Dolf” Luque, 1919, relief pitcher for the Cincinnati Reds, against the infamous “Black Sox.” (He later pitched for the New York Giants in the 1933 Series and was credited with the win in the final game.)
- **All-Star Game player:** Alfonso “Chico” Carrasquel, 1951, starting shortstop for the American League.
- **Rookie of the Year:** [Luis Aparicio](#), 1956, shortstop, Chicago White Sox.
- **No-hitter:** [Juan Marichal](#), June 15, 1963, for the San Francisco Giants, against the Houston Colt .45s.

- **Hall of Fame inductee:** [Roberto Clemente](#), 1973. He was also the first Hispanic player to serve on the Players Association Board and to reach 3,000 hits.
- **Team owner:** Arturo “Arte” Moreno bought the Anaheim Angels in 2003, becoming the first Hispanic owner of any major U.S. sports franchise. In 2005, he renamed it the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim.



[Roberto Clemente](#)

Football

- **NFL player:** Ignacio “Lou” Molinet, 1927.
- **NFL draft pick:** Joe Aguirre, 1941.
- **Starting NFL quarterback:** Tom Flores, 1960.
- **#1 NFL draft pick:** [Jim Plunkett](#), 1971.
- **Football Hall of Fame inductee:** Tom Fears, 1970. He also became the first Hispanic American head coach in 1967.

Other Sports

- **Grand Slam championship winner:** Richard “Pancho” González, 1948.
- **LPGA Hall of Fame inductee:** [Nancy López](#), 1987. In 1978, she became the first player to have won the the Rookie of the Year Award, Player of the Year Award, and Vare Trophy in the same season.
- **Heavyweight boxing champ:** [John Ruiz](#), 2001, defeating Evander Holyfield.
- **NHL 1st-round draft pick:** Scott Gomez, 1998.

Other Hispanic-American Firsts

- **Supermodel:** [Christy Turlington](#).
- **Labor leader:** Juan Gómez, 1883. The first female Hispanic labor leader of note was Lucy González Parsons, 1886.
- **Entertainer on the cover of TIME magazine:** [Joan Baez](#), 1962.