



Office of Commissioner  
Alvaro M. Bedoya

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
**Federal Trade Commission**  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20580

**A Letter to a Latino Public Servant:  
A Statement in Honor of Hispanic Heritage Month**

**Commissioner Alvaro M. Bedoya  
Federal Trade Commission**

**October 15, 2024  
Washington, D.C.**

I.

Like most presidential appointees, I remember the moment I got the call from the White House. It was a little before 5pm on a Friday, and my wife Sima and I were sitting on the couch with our kids. The vetting process had been long. Yet the entire time I had a strange certainty that, regardless of the ongoing process, I ultimately would not be selected.

When the call came I looked at my phone, looked at Sima, and dismissively said as I stood to take the call something to the effect of, “Ah. This is them saying it isn’t me – this is when you do that kind of thing.” And what’s funny that is that, until the precise moment the words came out of the speaker – “the president is going to nominate you on Monday” – I *remained* convinced that it was never going to happen.

And then, of course, it did.

I’ve had the chance to meet with other Latino appointees at various functions over the course of Hispanic Heritage Month. Many of them had the same story: At the very moment we were convinced it *wasn’t* us, the President of the United States was convinced it was.

I think a lot of us feel a measure of that self-doubt. And I don’t think it’s limited to presidential appointees. Maybe it’s a certain dissonance we feel between our professional titles and the people we think ourselves to be. Maybe we hesitate to speak first in a big meeting. However it comes up, I think it’s important to talk about that self-doubt, how we push past it, and where we go from there.

II.

Thirty-seven years ago this month, my mother, brother and I landed at John F. Kennedy airport on a late-night Lufthansa flight. It was 1987. I was five. My brother Pablo was seven. It was a Saturday night. That Tuesday we started school – Monday was a holiday.

I remember a few things very clearly about our mornings before school.

I remember how we were dressed. Our new home was in Vestal, New York. But they didn't sell winter coats in Lima. They definitely didn't sell 1987 winter coats in Lima. So my mother had us wear these little wool overcoats that she'd had made out of my great-grandfather's old suit jackets. *That* is what we wore to the bus stop.

I remember that we didn't speak much English. So every morning, my father would sit down and translate the cafeteria menu for us so we would know what to ask for. We thought the word "ketchup" was hilarious. "Catch?" "Up?" For *tomato sauce*? We chased our dad around the living room, jumping on him and yelling "KETCHUP!" "KETCHUP!"

I remember this kid on the bus who inexplicably knew every single Spanish swearword – and would scream them at the top of his lungs for the whole bus ride. This was *pre-Internet*... and this child was *not* Latino. We never quite figured it out. In any event, Pablo and I decided to call him "*mier*"

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For so long, we have been asking for a seat at the table. The activists of today say “we built that seat, we built that table, so sit down and listen.” They say *somos más y no tenemos miedo*. Everywhere you look, young people are saying *somos más y no tenemos miedo*.

You are from a culture as complex and sophisticated as any you’ll read about in history books. Today, in 2024, that culture is not the one you think it is. It is a culture that has been shaped by a long and complex history of struggle and resistance. It is a culture that has been shaped by the experiences of its people, and it is a culture that is constantly evolving and changing. It is a culture that is proud of its heritage and its traditions, but it is also a culture that is open to new ideas and new ways of thinking. It is a culture that is resilient and strong, and it is a culture that is full of life and hope.

have too much need. We are too much in danger of becoming an underclass. We are still shockingly absent and even invisible from so many of the places we should be.

So give yourself that permission. But what can we give each other?

I think we need to be immodest *for each other*. I think we need to dream big *for each other*. Because whatever endeavor you embark on, if that endeavor is worth it, it will be exhausting.

You should not bear that burden alone. We should bear it for each other. We should be the ones who ensure opportunities reach out to *you*, we should be the ones bragging about *you*, we should be helping you *without* you asking for it.

There will always be self-doubt. There will always be uncertainty. My hope is that over time, around that self-doubt will grow an enveloping *certainty*: In yourself; in your family; in us, your brothers and sisters; in the fact that you are from an old, beautiful culture that goes back thousands of years – *y que ya no tiene miedo*.