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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:06,359

As a Hispanic Latino working at NASA, I do offer a unique perspective that may

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00:00:06,359 --> 00:00:10,920

not always be readily apparent to my other colleagues. People on your team, if

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00:00:10,920 --> 00:00:12,870

they all look alike if they all think alike,

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00:00:12,870 --> 00:00:16,480

you're not going to innovate.

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00:00:17,040 --> 00:00:18,940

[music]

6  
00:00:23,820 --> 00:00:29,920

My mother crossed over from Mexico into the United States when she was four

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00:00:29,930 --> 00:00:33,950

years old, and she tells me the story of remembering being carried on her

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00:00:33,950 --> 00:00:37,580

father's shoulders as he crossed the Rio Grande.

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00:00:37,740 --> 00:00:42,860

I am 100% Salvadorian, born in El Salvador actually.

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00:00:43,180 --> 00:00:48,920

My family and I moved to Florida in the 1980s during the civil war in El Salvador.

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00:00:48,980 --> 00:00:51,020

Well I was born in Ecuador.

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00:00:51,020 --> 00:00:53,980  
when I was four years old a little  
younger even my family and I we moved to

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00:00:53,989 --> 00:00:58,370  
South Florida so I identify as Ecuadorian,  
although I do have American citizenship.

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00:00:58,370 --> 00:01:03,820  
And I try to go down there every two  
years just to keep reconnected with my roots.

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00:01:04,140 --> 00:01:10,260  
I'm Mexican American and my  
father is from Chihuahua, Mexico and came

16  
00:01:10,280 --> 00:01:14,900  
to the United States when he was a  
teenager. My mom's side of the family is actually Spanish.

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00:01:14,909 --> 00:01:20,039  
I appreciate in my parents, specifically  
my father, because when he came here he

18  
00:01:20,039 --> 00:01:25,649  
didn't know English, and the jobs that he was able to get at that time were with his hands.

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00:01:25,649 --> 00:01:31,980  
Labor, and that kind of instilled in me that I had opportunities that he never did.

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00:01:31,980 --> 00:01:35,900  
My grandfather so he used to live  
in a trailer outside of my aunt's house.

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00:01:36,000 --> 00:01:40,280  
We would go there on the weekends. I was  
always -- my mom always told me bring two

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00:01:40,289 --> 00:01:44,340

or three cans of soup, and so I would  
take my little cans of soup and I would

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00:01:44,340 --> 00:01:48,180

knock on his trailer door. And I would hand him the soup. And he would always say

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00:01:48,180 --> 00:01:52,180

“Tenga una peseta, mija.” And he'd give me a quarter.

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00:01:52,320 --> 00:01:56,620

No matter where I am in the world, I always make it home for Christmas.

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00:01:56,620 --> 00:02:01,240

My sister you know spends hours and hours making tamales

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00:02:01,460 --> 00:02:06,840

and she does that once a year. And it's when I come home for Christmas, she always says she does it for me.

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00:02:07,060 --> 00:02:10,880

My mom and dad took me to Kennedy Space Center and there's a picture of us

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00:02:10,890 --> 00:02:16,230

standing next to a F-1 engine and a Saturn V engine. I know looking at that picture

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00:02:16,230 --> 00:02:21,630

that moment built upon other moments  
that put it in my in my head that I have

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00:02:21,630 --> 00:02:25,079

to work here one day or do something  
like related to NASA one day. When I

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00:02:25,079 --> 00:02:31,049

moved to DC, I applied for an internship  
with Marshall Space Flight Center. But I

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00:02:31,049 --> 00:02:35,819

almost didn't apply for it. The reason I  
waited is because I said, why would anyone

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00:02:35,819 --> 00:02:38,530

choose me, why would NASA want someone like me?

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00:02:38,530 --> 00:02:43,240

And someone close to me told me, let them tell you 'no,' don't tell yourself 'no.'

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00:02:43,240 --> 00:02:50,470

I actually got to take my seven-year-old niece Johenni to sit in in this session

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00:02:50,470 --> 00:02:55,510

and then actually get to meet Joe Acaba. The minute he got on stage, her face

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00:02:55,510 --> 00:03:01,030

just lit up and next thing I know she gets up and goes to the mic and actually

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00:03:01,030 --> 00:03:06,520

asked a question. This is all that I work for, to motivate and inspire the

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00:03:06,520 --> 00:03:12,340

next generation and so at that moment I said yeah this is awesome.

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00:03:12,560 --> 00:03:17,800

I'm thankful to be here at NASA because most people just think of NASA as an agency that

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00:03:17,800 --> 00:03:20,260

has engineers and scientists, which they

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00:03:20,260 --> 00:03:24,000

have great people that do those types of jobs every day, or astronauts, obviously.

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00:03:24,000 --> 00:03:28,860

But as an attorney, I really hope to leave a legacy that shows that I

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00:03:28,860 --> 00:03:32,400  
contributed to NASA in some meaningful way.

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00:03:32,580 --> 00:03:38,480  
I've had the great fortune of being  
selected to be a flight director, part of

47  
00:03:38,490 --> 00:03:42,840  
a very elite group, even more elite  
than the astronauts. We've had over 500

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00:03:42,840 --> 00:03:46,950  
astronauts in the history of NASA's  
space flight program, but we have had

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00:03:46,950 --> 00:03:54,480  
only 96 flight directors. And of those 96,  
we've only had 16 women. I'd like to see

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00:03:54,480 --> 00:03:59,550  
that 16 number increase two, threefold over the next 10 years.

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00:03:59,550 --> 00:04:06,930  
Being a migrant Latina at NASA, there's a  
lot of responsibility on your shoulders.

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00:04:06,930 --> 00:04:11,840  
And so I just hope that future  
generations understand that.

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00:04:11,840 --> 00:04:16,079  
You had a lot of people that paved the way. And it takes a lot of hard work