

Hispanic Heritage Month 2021 Attorney Spotlight: Monica Wegner

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Editor's Note: Hispanic Heritage Month, September 15 through October 15, recognizes the contributions of Hispanic and Latino Americans. September 15 is significant because it is the anniversary of independence for several Latin American countries. Throughout the month, we will be speaking with a few of our Hispanic and Latino attorneys and sharing their stories.

[Monica Wegner](#), an Atlanta-based Troutman Pepper eMerge Senior Discovery Attorney, discusses appreciating both her American and Mexican backgrounds.

What is important to you about your Hispanic/Latino heritage?

Holding on to my heritage is important to me. Where I grew up, being Mexican was not something to be proud of outside of your immediate family. It was something that belonged to the past, and to others that you left behind. To survive and succeed in this country, we were instructed to assimilate fully and let go of the language and customs. We were even encouraged to hide our Mexican culture and pretend we were of European descent if we could get away with it. My grandparents fought this by constantly reminding me “you are American Mexican, don’t you forget.”

Who do you look up to in the Hispanic/Latino community?

Justice Sonia Sotomayor. She’s remarkable in many ways, but I cannot express how it resonated among Hispanic women to see one of our own become a Supreme Court Justice. To quote a family member: “We can do that now?!”

What would you like people to understand about your culture?

Our culture values working hard and putting our family first. Mexican Americans, or “American Mexicans,” as my grandparents called themselves, are also very proud to be Americans, and are very patriotic.

How can we support the next generation of Latino attorneys currently in law school?

I saw many talented Latinos leave school before graduating from both college and law school. When I’d ask them

why, they often expressed concern that they'd have to give up the family-based life they knew and were comfortable with for a life of success-driven individualism, or they felt they would not fit in where they were going after they graduated. Trying to both assimilate and hold on to the past leaves some in an uncomfortable middle zone where they feel that aren't fully either. To support the next generation of Latino attorneys, we need to address these concerns by showing that they will fit into the broader legal community as they are, that their voices are needed, and their cultures are respected and admired.

Bonus Question – Is there a Latino-owned business you recommend?

When you are in Atlanta, visit El Tesoro. They have the best restaurant-made tamales and mulita I've had outside of Olvera Street in Los Angeles.

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