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Hispanic Heritage Month 2021 Attorney Spotlight: V́ctor Noriega

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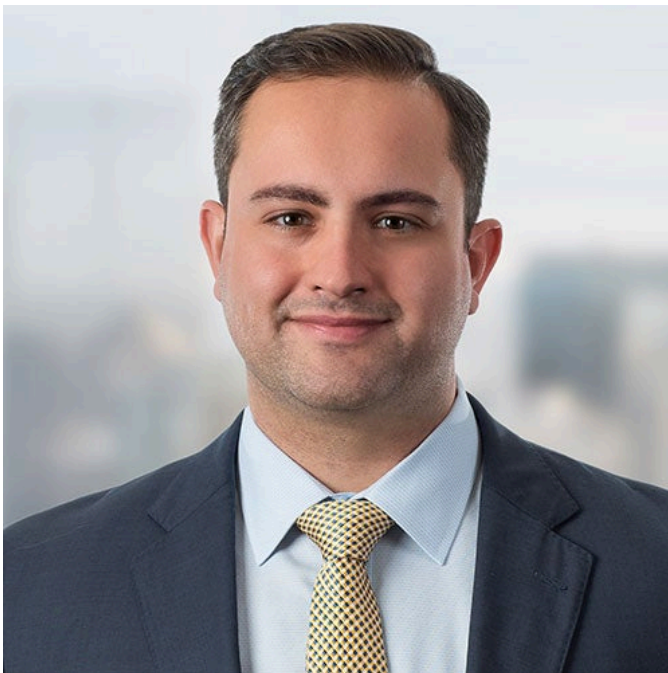
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Editor's Note: Hispanic Heritage Month, September 15 through October 15, recognizes the contributions of Hispanic and Latino Americans. September 15 is significant because it is the anniversary of independence for several Latin American countries.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

[V́ctor Noriega](#), an associate in Troutman Pepper's Atlanta office, discusses his family's journey as Cuban immigrants and how the challenges they faced have impacted his personal and professional outlook today.



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

My grandparents were born in Spain during the early 20th Century. At the age of 17, my grandfather was conscripted into the Spanish Civil War. After the war, my grandparents fled Spain to Cuba. My parents fled to the United States in the early 1980s, and for two generations, my family's homelands were destroyed by inane and extreme political ideologies.

In short, what is important to me about my Hispanic/Latino heritage is the lesson that it provides to all Americans: Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are never assured. Peace, freedom, and democracy are not passively enjoyed but strenuously fought for. There is nowhere else for a third generation of my family to flee. There is no other nation in the position to defend democracy. To meet the challenges before us today, we must be willing to fight for freedom — together.

What would you like people to understand about your culture?

Despite the hardships and trauma of leaving their homeland, my parents (like many Cubans and other immigrant groups who arrive in this country) are joyous and content people. My parents came to this country where they worked as janitors, dishwashers, and factory workers. Although never having an abundant source of income, they lived their lives with no resentment of the past but are grateful for the blessings of the present — the blessing to live in this country where they can breathe freely.

How do you support the Hispanic/Latino community?

I make a point to include pro bono asylum cases in my practice. I am honored and proud to help others from around Latin America apply for asylum in the United States and help individuals come to this nation in search of a better life.

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

I think the most effective way to help support the next generation of Latino law students is to show them that others have been in their shoes. We must do our best to demonstrate to the next generation of Latino attorneys that they not only belong in this profession, but they can excel and leave this profession better off than how they found it. My 1L summer was the first time I was in the interior of a large office building. For a brief moment, I thought, “do I belong here? Is this a mistake?” This is a sentiment no law student of any background should feel. Providing future Latino attorneys the confidence and the understanding that they can be successful at the highest levels of the legal profession will create more Latino attorneys for generations to come.

What is a challenge you faced growing up as a Latino?

The most challenging part of growing up as a Latino was not having my grandparents live in the United States. I remember from a young age my parents would buy costly international phone call cards just so that their parents and children could speak to each other for those few precious moments. I eventually had the opportunity to meet all of my surviving grandparents once between the ages of five and seven years old. However, when I was thirteen, my paternal grandparents' health began to deteriorate rapidly. My father and our family were unable to travel to Cuba to see them one last time. My parents once again obtained an international phone card to speak to them before they passed. I still remember my grandparents and that call very well.

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