

Women's History Month: Honoring Latina's Resilience

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Introduction

This mini e-book was developed to provide information and resources to prevention professionals, providers, and community members on Latina Mental Health, prevalent alcohol use data, Feminism, and the impact of COVID-19 on women's lives.

At the end of the document, you will find resources from trusted sources, action and prevention tips to better support women and strengthen resilience for those who identify as women.

In honor of Women's History Month, we are also taking this opportunity to honor and celebrate some Latina women who have paved the way for us, such as Josie T. Romero, Dolores Huerta, and Antonieta de Barros.

We hope this resource is useful for you and we hope you can share the information with your family, friends, and colleagues.

Inclusivity Statement: the National Hispanic and Latino PTTC understands that there is a lot of important discussion focusing on the terminology individuals choose to use for racial, ethnic, heritage, and cultural identification. There are different terms such as Latinos, Latinas, Hispanics, Latinx, Latine, Chicano, and others, all equally valuable. We advocate for self-identification for every person. For purposes of this resource and additional materials, our Center will be using the term Latina and Hispanic.



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The facts

Each year in March, we celebrate Women's History Month and International Women's Day.

According to the United Nations, International Women's Day is a day when women are recognized for their achievements without regard to differences, whether national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political. This day is celebrated in many countries around the world ¹.

Although this is a day to remind us that we are still fighting to achieve gender equality, it is important to celebrate how far we have come: In 1920, the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted American women the right to vote. 100 years later, Kamala Harris reached the highest political position that a woman has ever attained in the United States, as the Vice President of the country.

Women's History Month is an annual declared month that seeks to spotlight the contributions of women both historical and contemporary.

Challenges

What is hardest about being a woman?

When you ask yourself this question, what is the answer that comes to mind? Being a woman, in any context, is a challenge in many ways. However, in certain circumstances it may be more difficult:

- if we are poor
- if we are immigrants
- if we are not white
- if we have a disability
- if we are the sole caretaker in our family system

When we don't have access to quality education, civil rights, access to health and physical integrity, everything becomes an additional obstacle to maintaining a healthy balance in life.

In March, around the world, we look at these issues more carefully (which is great), but it's important that we can talk about it throughout the year – especially about the consequences that difficulties have on us, for instance, according to the National Women's Law Center (NWLC), up until the year 2020 Latinas are still the lowest paid group in the U.S. ²



Feminism

Even with various disparities to contend with, it is also in the United States that feminism is very strong, with famous artists reinforcing the importance of equality and policies that seek to reduce the gap compared to men.

But do you know what feminism is?

Feminism, is often misconstrued as being a movement against men, or about not shaving armpits, or angry women getting together, is actually something very simple: a movement that JUST believes and advocates that women and men should be treated as equals, not only socially, but also politically and economically, and that involves A LOT.

More specifically, Feminism focuses on creating equality in these main areas:

- Political rights
- Right to education
- Civil liberties
- Labor rights
- Reproductive rights
- Physical integrity

In other words, it is not about being superior to men, but instead a focus on occupying places of equality so that access is possible for all!

Women and COVID-19

Unfortunately, the ongoing pandemic has impacted our communities beyond morbidity and mortality rates.

The Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) Women's Health Survey reported that since the beginning of the ongoing pandemic: [3](#)

- 1 in 10 women report quitting a job due to a pandemic related reason
- School closures had a substantial effect on working mothers' ability to fulfill work obligations
- In addition to juggling new, increased home and work responsibilities, many women went without pay due to school closures. Almost half (47%) of working mothers said they took unpaid sick leave because their child's school or daycare was closed
- Family caregiving responsibilities before and after the pandemic have largely fallen on women

Latina Women and Alcohol Use

As stated by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), Hispanic women had one of the highest increases in alcohol consumption in 2020. [4](#)



The data contrasts with a historical trend in which Latinas women report more alcohol abstinence than their white non-Hispanic counterparts. [5](#)

The increase in alcohol consumption is likely as a response to increased stress and caregiving responsibilities from the pandemic. The socialization such as virtual happy hours may also have had an impact on increasing alcohol consumption, specifically for women.

Women and Mental Health

Each year, 1 in 5 women in the United States has a mental health problem such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or an eating disorder. [6](#)

Additionally, the American Psychological Association (APA) reported that:

- The most common mental health problem in women is depression. In fact, twice as many women experience depression in their lifetime when compared to men
- Women are twice as likely as men to experience a generalized anxiety disorder or panic disorder
- Although men are four times more likely to die by suicide, women attempt suicide more often than men
- Approximately 85%-95% of people with anorexia nervosa or bulimia and 65% of people with a binge eating disorder are women

The KFF Women's Health Survey [3](#) reported that since the beginning of the ongoing pandemic, over half of mothers with school age children said that the stress and worry of the pandemic has affected their mental health, with one in five characterizing the impact as "major." However, only 16% of mothers have sought mental health care.

Given that the mental health effects are likely to persist, access to mental health care will be an important issue to watch, particularly for mothers.

Latina Women and Mental Health

The National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) found that one in five (1 in 5) Latina women suffer from some type of mental illness. [7](#)

Reinforcing what was reported by the APA (above), Latina women are twice as likely to develop depression as compared to Latino men, white populations or African-American counterparts. [7](#)



Prevention and Hope

During Women’s History Month and throughout the entire year, we want to celebrate and honor the powerful women around us, our mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, cousins, friends and colleagues.

Women play an important role in society and they act as protective factors in their families and communities.

They are one of the main pillars that support our growth, self-love, and acceptance. As natural healers, they have the power to make us feel embraced, loved, nourished and they are extremely important in our journey of prevention, recovery, growth and mental health.

Below are some strategies suggested by the APA to help women strengthening their resilience: [8](#)

Take care of yourself: As a woman, you likely nurture people around you. It is also important to nurture and take care of yourself. When possible, daily physical activity, healthy eating, sufficient sleep, mindfulness and taking time to recover from exhaustion are essential for both short-term and long-term resilience. Ask for help or space before you need it. Learn to find meaning and purpose in your life. For some, meaning and purpose comes from religion or family, while others engage in service projects, volunteer work, or hobbies.

Set and Keep Boundaries: Boundaries are the limits we set within our relationships that allow for safe and appropriate connections. Be assertive in your approach and communication and learn to say “no.”

Gratitude and Journaling: Spend time regularly thinking about what you are grateful for and then express that gratitude to colleagues, friends, and family. Regular journaling can foster resilience. The process of writing and reflection creates self-awareness, encourages learning and improves adaptability.

Social Support: A strong social network provides support to get you through life’s challenges. Nurture relationships with your family, friends and colleagues. Seek mentorship. If you are an introvert, resist the urge to isolate yourself when feeling down. Instead, spend time with a close friend who will not drain you of energy. If you identify as an extrovert, resist the urge to be at all places, all things, for everyone around you.

Are you feeling alone? We encourage you to search for professional help, prioritize your health, look for support centers, talk about your challenges with someone you trust, and know that you are not alone.

You are worthy!



Honoring Latina Women

We want to take this opportunity to honor and celebrate some Latina Women who have paved the way for us. We stand on their shoulders.



Josie T. Romero

Josie was the first President of NLBHA. She had enormous dedication and love for our Latino community and through her work, helped improve the services of the country's mental health, social service and child welfare. She has been praised as one of the early pioneers of social work education in San Jose and as a staunch supporter and advocate for preparing culturally competent social work students to work effectively in communities of color.



Antonieta de Barros

She was born in the Santa Catarina, Brazil in 1901. Antonieta was a journalist, teacher and a politician. An inspiration to the Black Movement who was erased from the history books, she was an active defender of women's emancipation, of everyone's right to a quality education, and for the recognition of Black culture. As the first woman and the first Black Brazilian to win a popular election, she became a State Representative.



Selena

Born Selena Quintanilla on April 16, 1971, in Texas, the artist known as 'Selena' was a pop superstar who brought Mexican Tejano music to the masses. She was also much more than a talented musician. A fashionista and trendsetter, she often designed and created entire outfits for her performance wardrobe. In her free time, she was also active in community service, including being a strong advocate for education. Selena became a beacon of inspiration and hope for the Latino, immigrant, and bicultural communities around the globe. Her story of embracing and celebrating all parts of her cultural heritage and persevering in the face of adversity forged an emotional connection with millions.



Margarita Alegría, PhD

She is the Chief of the Disparities Research Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital and the Mongan Institute, the Harry G. Lehnert, Jr. and Lucille F. Cyr Lehnert Endowed Chair at the Mass General Research Institute and a Professor in the Departments of Medicine and Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. Her research focuses on the improvement of health care services delivery for diverse racial/ethnic groups, conceptual and methodological issues with multicultural populations, and ways to bring the community's perspective into the design and implementation of health services. Dr. Alegría is the PI of four National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded research studies.



Dolores Huerta

Doing back-breaking work under the unforgiving sun, sleeping in rough shacks with dozens of men to a room, all for below-poverty-level wages; farm workers in the early Twentieth Century, most of whom were immigrants from Central America, had a hard, painful, unjust life. That is, until Dolores Huerta and others like her, came along. In 1965, Huerta created the United Farm Workers, an organization that worked tirelessly to improve the working conditions for farm workers. By leading boycotts, picketing, protesting and lobbying, Huerta was instrumental in bringing about legislation that protects some of the most vulnerable people in our society.



Nelba Chavez, PhD

Dr. Nelba Chavez had an early and significant impact on the social work profession. Before earning her PhD, Chavez spent 17 years as executive director and chief operating officer at Tucson's La Frontera Center. In 1994, she was appointed by President Bill Clinton to the post of administrator of SAMHSA. She was the first Hispanic/Latina to head a public health agency in the 200-year history of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dr. Nelba Chavez consulted for the U.S. State Department on mental health and substance abuse issues and has received numerous awards and national recognition from the American Medical Association and the U.S. secretary of Health and Human Services.



Maria da Penha

Maria da Penha Maia Fernandes is a Brazilian biopharmacist and women human rights defender. She advocates for women's rights, particularly against domestic violence. Born in 1945 in Fortaleza, in the Brazilian state of Ceará, Maria da Penha is a survivor of domestic violence by her husband. In 2006, a law was sanctioned in Brazil with the specific goal of reducing domestic violence in the country. The name of the law is an homage to Maria da Penha Maia. The law established special courts to hear domestic violence cases and set harsher punishments for offenders. It also called on authorities to provide shelters for people experiencing abuse.



Additional Resources

You can visit the following websites for additional support and information.

SAMHSA's National Helpline

Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP

24/7/365 Treatment Referral Information Service in English and Español

Website: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

SAMHSA's Disaster Distress Helpline

Toll Free: 1-800-985-5990 (español e inglés)

Text in Spanish: Envíe "Háblanos" al 66746

Text in English: "TalkWithUs" al 66746 (TTY): 1-800-846-8517 English

English: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>

Spanish: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline/espanol>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Toll Free: 1-888-628-9454 English: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) (TTY): 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

Spanish: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/en-espanol/>

English: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator: <https://findtreatment.gov>

Learn more about the authors:

Ana Tomazelli is an Executive in Human Resources and has over 20 years of experience leading HR restructurings within and outside the country. She has worked at the startup B2Mamy and traditional and consolidated companies such as United HealthGroup, Solera Holdings, KPMG e *Diagnósticos da América S/A* (Delboni, Lavoisier), Ana is also the founder of Ipefem – Institute for Research and Studies on the Feminine and Multiple Existences, a non-profit focused on mental health and research for women and the LGBTQIA+ population.

Graduated in Journalism from Laureate - Anhembi Morumbi, postgraduated in Human Resources from FIA-USP and in Business from IBMEC-RJ, Ana is a postgraduate systemic therapist at Hellinger Schule in Brazil and a Psychoanalyst in training at the Brazilian Institute of Science and Psychoanalysis.

Click here to access [Ana's LinkedIn Profile](#) and the [Ipefem Instagram Page](#).

Priscila Giamassi was born in Sao Paulo; Brazil and she is living in the US since 2018. She uses the pronouns she/her/hers. Priscila joined the Behavioral Health world in 2019, working for the National Hispanic and Latino PTTC, housed at NLBHA, funded by SAMHSA.

Her background is in Business Administration and Project Management.

Currently, she is working as the Project Coordinator for the National Hispanic and Latino PTTC; she is a Bilingual Certified Prevention Specialist (CPS).

As a Latina, woman, an immigrant living in the USA, Priscila strongly believes that it is her duty to use her voice and resources to advocate for mental health and substance abuse prevention, and she is committed to the improvement and enhancement of behavioral health service delivery for Latinx and other underserved communities.



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11. [Selena](#)
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13. [Nelba Chavez, PhD](#)
14. [Dolores Huerta](#)
15. [Maria da Penha](#)



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