

# UNIÓN LATIN@

## Unión Latin@ works to inspire students at Jackson-Reed

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On Wednesdays during Lunch in room 316A, you will find a group of students sitting with social studies teacher Dr. Eduardo Canedo, discussing how to make Jackson-Reed a more welcoming space for Hispanic students.

This group, founded by juniors Nicole Franco and Destiny Gonzalez, had its first meeting on May 17. Unión Latin@ was created to “inspire more unity within the Hispanic community and celebrate that culture,” says Dr. Canedo. He went on to say that he hopes the union will “reverse the passivity of students who sometimes feel excluded from the school community.” The club plans to improve the Hispanic experience at Jackson-Reed and call for respect and equity throughout the school community.

“We want to be heard by others,” Franco said. Gonzalez added that they want to eliminate discrimination in the school. “There are groups within the Hispanic community that don’t integrate into the community at large and there has to be a space for them in this school,” Gonzalez continued. Gonzalez went on to explain that Hispanic culture isn’t as well represented or celebrated compared to other minorities at Jackson-Reed.

The union plans to resolve this by creating a space for all students to appreciate Hispanic culture. To start this endeavor, they intend to have events throughout the whole year, which began with their event on June 1, where the union played Latin music and served churros. In order to get one, students had to dance to the corresponding genre of the music that was playing.

However, the union notes that long-term change goes farther than just playing good music and eating good food.

“There needs to be an organization to raise an issue, to take pressure off individual students,” explained Canedo. Part of this means providing support for students who aren’t comfortable advocating for themselves or their community, as well as making school resources more accessible to students who have language and cultural barriers, he added.

In the past year, Jackson-Reed has seen a significant increase in hateful vandalism. Recently, on the wall outside of room 427, someone wrote, “B\*aners” with an apparent response to it on the wall, “ONG!” written just below it. “I believe people need to take racism against Latinos a lot more seriously at Jackson-Reed High School. This type of behavior is always brushed off and never taken into account,” Franco said. Gonzalez emphasized how troubled she was with the fact that it remained there for so long. “Since it’s next to an administrative office, why has no one done or said anything about it? Is it not important to [the] administration?” she said.

Unión Latin@ was created to improve the experience of being a Hispanic student at Jackson-Reed, and this means being inclusive of every person who identifies as Hispanic or Latino. Gonzalez explains, “We want to attract ELL [English Language Learner] students to create an inclusive environment for them.” By doing this, they hope to improve the relationship the administration has with the Hispanic community. Canedo points out, “There is no conscious discrimination, but there needs to be a broader voice for Hispanic students. We want to encourage all types of people to join Unión Latin@.” •

