



## Top 10 Reasons for Latino/Chicano Students to Study Abroad

Hispanic cultures have always had a major influence on shaping of the United States, especially with increased immigration from Latin America in recent decades. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2002, more than one in eight people in the United States were of Hispanic origin. The Census Bureau also predicts that by the year 2100, ethnic minority groups in the United States will make up 60 percent of our country's population, with the vast majority being Latino.

Just as the face of America is rapidly changing, it is becoming increasingly important for students in the U.S. to travel and study in other countries. Gaddi Vasquez, the first Hispanic Director of the Peace Corps, described an experience he had in Morocco when a man told him he didn't look like an American because of "...the color of your skin. You don't look like an American." Vasquez said that encounter "gave me the opportunity to talk about how my grandparents had come to the United States from Mexico, and how we had become part of the great fabric that makes our nation strong." Studying abroad is an amazing opportunity to showcase the great diversity that makes up the United States.

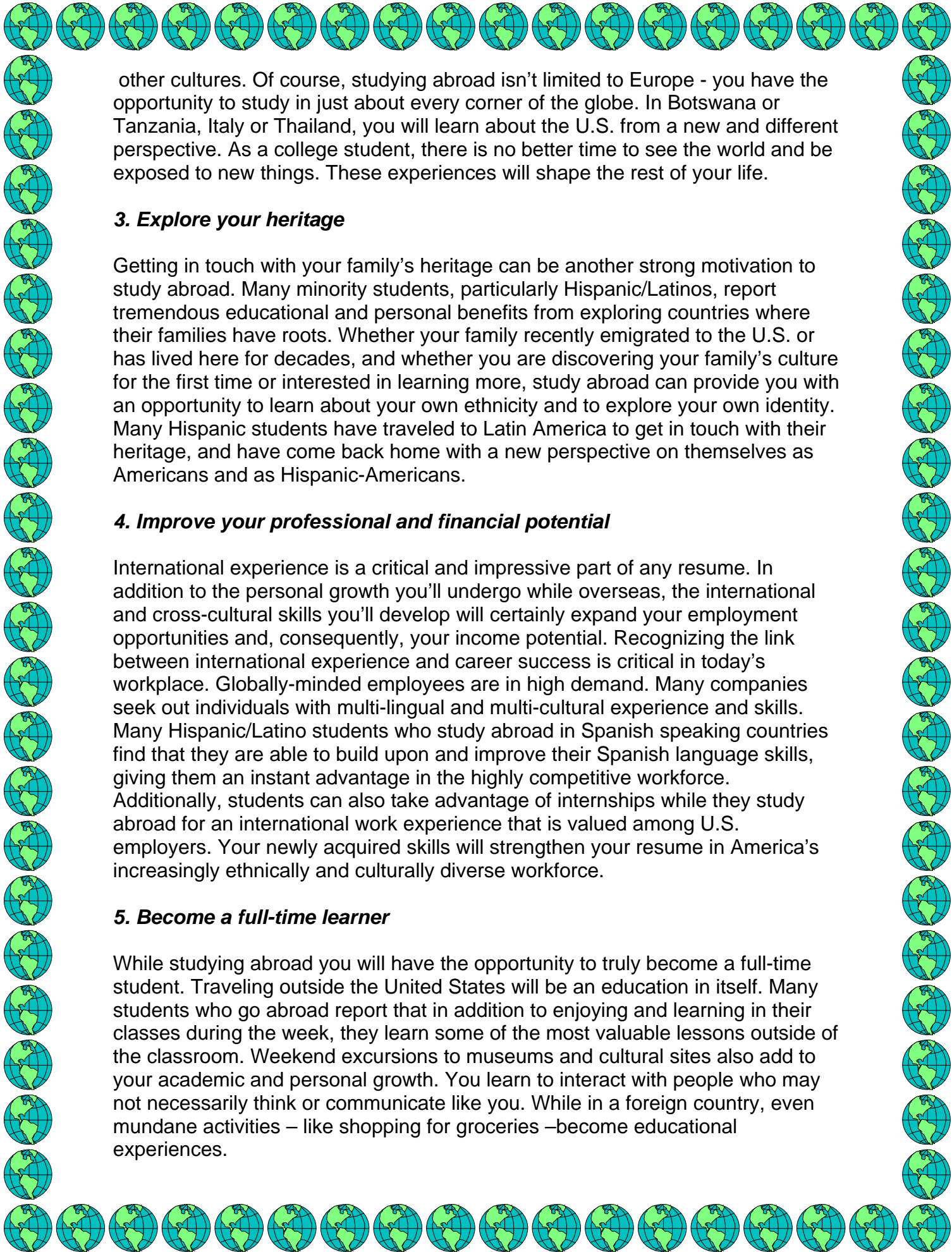
Additionally, the chance to live and study in another culture will provide you with the ultimate learning experience, as well as the perfect opportunity for you to get out and explore the world. With the realities of globalization today, the options Hispanic students have for studying abroad are endless. Whether you decide on Paris or Paraguay, Berlin or Bangladesh, Guatemala or Ghana, there are countless reasons why you should participate in a study abroad program. Here are our top ten....

### **1. See the world and broaden your experience**

There are so many amazing things to experience around the world. You can see different natural landscapes and climates that do not exist in America. There are historical landmarks in every country that helped shape the history of the globe. You can expand your knowledge of the world by actually being there, seeing it, touching it, and experiencing it. Pictures in text books simply do not do justice to standing under the Eiffel Tower or on the Great Wall of China. Is there a place or landmark you have always wanted to see? This is how you can understand the world in a direct, all-encompassing way.

### **2. Gain a new perspective on your own country**

In 1949, James Baldwin, the renowned African-American writer, wrote in *Notes of a Native Son*, "From the vantage point of Europe [the American student] discovers his own country." Learning about your own country by living abroad remains extremely relevant today as we continue to further our understanding of



other cultures. Of course, studying abroad isn't limited to Europe - you have the opportunity to study in just about every corner of the globe. In Botswana or Tanzania, Italy or Thailand, you will learn about the U.S. from a new and different perspective. As a college student, there is no better time to see the world and be exposed to new things. These experiences will shape the rest of your life.

### ***3. Explore your heritage***

Getting in touch with your family's heritage can be another strong motivation to study abroad. Many minority students, particularly Hispanic/Latinos, report tremendous educational and personal benefits from exploring countries where their families have roots. Whether your family recently emigrated to the U.S. or has lived here for decades, and whether you are discovering your family's culture for the first time or interested in learning more, study abroad can provide you with an opportunity to learn about your own ethnicity and to explore your own identity. Many Hispanic students have traveled to Latin America to get in touch with their heritage, and have come back home with a new perspective on themselves as Americans and as Hispanic-Americans.

### ***4. Improve your professional and financial potential***

International experience is a critical and impressive part of any resume. In addition to the personal growth you'll undergo while overseas, the international and cross-cultural skills you'll develop will certainly expand your employment opportunities and, consequently, your income potential. Recognizing the link between international experience and career success is critical in today's workplace. Globally-minded employees are in high demand. Many companies seek out individuals with multi-lingual and multi-cultural experience and skills. Many Hispanic/Latino students who study abroad in Spanish speaking countries find that they are able to build upon and improve their Spanish language skills, giving them an instant advantage in the highly competitive workforce. Additionally, students can also take advantage of internships while they study abroad for an international work experience that is valued among U.S. employers. Your newly acquired skills will strengthen your resume in America's increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse workforce.

### ***5. Become a full-time learner***

While studying abroad you will have the opportunity to truly become a full-time student. Traveling outside the United States will be an education in itself. Many students who go abroad report that in addition to enjoying and learning in their classes during the week, they learn some of the most valuable lessons outside of the classroom. Weekend excursions to museums and cultural sites also add to your academic and personal growth. You learn to interact with people who may not necessarily think or communicate like you. While in a foreign country, even mundane activities – like shopping for groceries – become educational experiences.



## **6. Gain new insights and outlooks through new relationships**

The relationships formed while studying abroad might become some of the deepest friendships you will ever develop. You will have the opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds and cultures, and some of these people may even become life-long friends. Study abroad returnees often report meeting others with whom they expected to have no common ground, and then discovering that, despite being from different parts of the globe, they have much in common and much to learn from one another. As a Hispanic student, you may also meet other minority students similar to yourself who can share with you their experiences and give you the support you need while living abroad. These relationships, insights, and outlooks are a critical part of the study abroad experience.

## **7. Fight stereotypes by educating others**

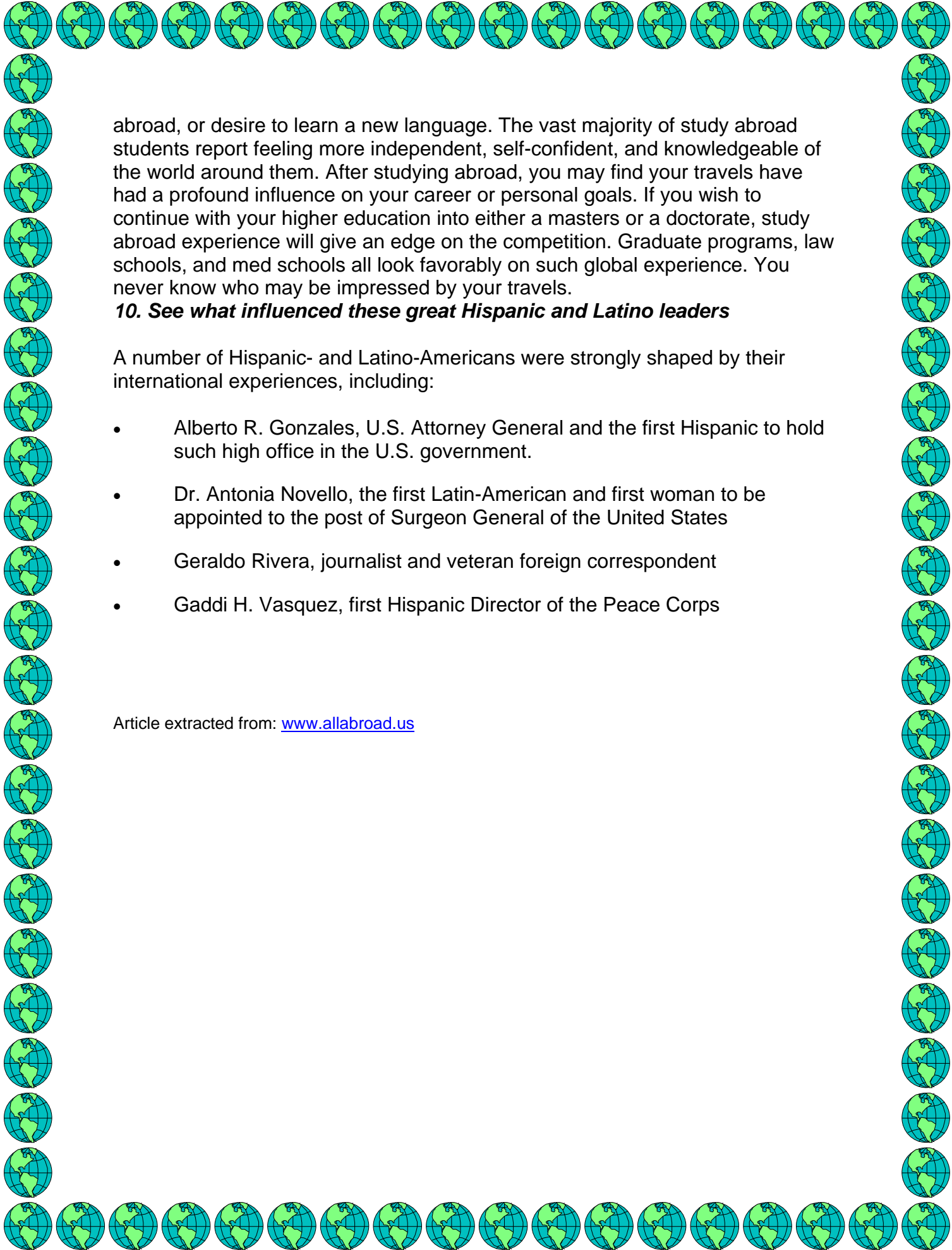
There is a challenge that many Hispanic students face abroad. Many other cultures only have experience with Hispanics through the media (i.e. music, movies, television, etc.). Hispanic-American students may become frustrated when the same stereotypes from home follow them overseas. However, this is also a unique opportunity to educate others about who you are as an individual and as a group. You can illustrate your own experiences in the United States in comparison to what others see and hear. This is your chance to be an individual, as well as a representative of your culture, and to encourage positive understanding of global diversity.

## **8. Dispel your own stereotypes**

Frederick Douglass, the renowned abolitionist of the 19th century, once said “Men who travel should leave their prejudices at home.” In addition to serving as a cultural ambassador to dispel other’s misconceptions, studying abroad gives you a chance to break down some of your own stereotypes about other countries and peoples. Not only will you have the chance to immerse yourself in another culture, you will also meet people from different backgrounds and make personal connections with people whom you may have never expected. If traveling to your family’s native country, you may be surprised to find that you don’t in fact know everything about your own culture – stereotypes you have about yourself and your culture might be inaccurate!

## **9. Take control of your future**

During your time abroad, you will be exposed to countless different experiences that may influence the rest of your life. Some students even end up changing their major or career path as a result of the new things they learn from being abroad. Others discover a newfound passion for travel, decide they want to work



abroad, or desire to learn a new language. The vast majority of study abroad students report feeling more independent, self-confident, and knowledgeable of the world around them. After studying abroad, you may find your travels have had a profound influence on your career or personal goals. If you wish to continue with your higher education into either a masters or a doctorate, study abroad experience will give an edge on the competition. Graduate programs, law schools, and med schools all look favorably on such global experience. You never know who may be impressed by your travels.

**10. See what influenced these great Hispanic and Latino leaders**

A number of Hispanic- and Latino-Americans were strongly shaped by their international experiences, including:

- Alberto R. Gonzales, U.S. Attorney General and the first Hispanic to hold such high office in the U.S. government.
- Dr. Antonia Novello, the first Latin-American and first woman to be appointed to the post of Surgeon General of the United States
- Geraldo Rivera, journalist and veteran foreign correspondent
- Gaddi H. Vasquez, first Hispanic Director of the Peace Corps

Article extracted from: [www.allabroad.us](http://www.allabroad.us)