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Spanish music is playing, people are talking and laughing, and the smell of Latino food wafts around the room. I take a look around, and I'm surrounded by the mesmerizing sense of the Latino culture.

This lovely scenery and energetic atmosphere took place at the Hispanic Heritage Month Dinner; where Latino individuals and welcoming allies could converse about sensitive topics and commemorate the diversity that is at Radford.

However, the affair held more than food and hoorahs as open-minded people had a message for the community and the university as a whole.

The event held a variety of speakers and presenters that had exciting topics to speak on.

Talking with one of the speakers before dinner even started, Ana Portillo spoke about the importance of this event. She stated, "It's important to educate our community especially since the Latino [population] is small on campus - I've attended all [dinners] for the past four years."

Portillo is the type of person who is driven by the cause of diversity and inclusion, a person who has no intention of backing down from her beliefs. However, she wasn't the only person to speak on the importance of the event as many others had thoughts to share.

People from various organizations such as Michelle Acosta, Cecilia Carreon, and even former board member of the Inter-American Foundation, Luis A. Viada, had different topics to speak on.

However, they all had one similar theme in common: the concept of struggle and trials, but having the ability to stand back up no matter how grave the situation.

This, perhaps, was the most important message to take away from the banquet as a whole:

not to let doubts, fears, and hate cloud our path to success and freedom; to have the strength to continue ever-forward in this unforgiving world, because we are the generation of change and ideas.

The president of the Latino Student Alliance (LSA), Luisa Cutting was one of the people who spearheaded the event from the beginning until the end; making sure that every minute detail was perfect for this banquet. As she wanted for the people of Radford to realize why Hispanic Heritage month was so crucial for the Latino Community, as it represents “unity and inclusion” at both a micro and macro level.

Also, Cutting did have one final message for the students, faculty, and alumni of Radford:

“This event just proved how much of a success [cooperation] is; Many Hispanic organizations came together to pull off the task of teaching the university and students the meaning of Hispanic Heritage Month ... I hope you all come to more events in the future, as we plan to hold many more.”

Thoughts of progression and unity were the theme of the night; Various Latino and non-Latino communities came together for the sole purpose to learn more about culture and its wonders.

However, more was discovered because of that. Speeches of motivation and the strength of determination were also told - To always stare at the abyss of hate and prejudice and never blink - for Radford is filled with influential individuals.

If you would like to join the LSA or send messages of support, feel free to contact them:

Twitter: @RU_LSA1

Snapchat: @LSA_RADFORD

Instagram: @LSA_RADFORD

Photo Credit: (Hispanic Heritage Club)