“Call people by what they are, not what they are not. We are whatever we are. You need to be comfortable in your skin. Your parents gave you your race — enjoy it,” said Miguel Alemañy, the first Hispanic to be hired by the Proctor & Gamble Corp. in research and development, at NAVAIR’s national Hispanic Heritage Month event in Patuxent River, Md., April 17. Alemañy spoke on the theme of “What is a Hispanic/Latino, and why should we care?” (U.S. Navy photo)

HEADQUARTERS, NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md. — As the Hispanic population continues to grow in the U.S., it’s important to learn how to recruit and retain them, said a Proctor & Gamble Corp. executive at NAVAIR’s national Hispanic Heritage Month event here April 17.

Miguel Alemañy, the director of research and development at Proctor and Gamble, cited statistics to support his theme of “What is a Hispanic/Latino, and why should we care?” Specifically, he said there are 58 million Hispanics living in the U.S. — the second largest group in the nation — and one of every five U.S. residents is Hispanic.

At NAVAIR, Hispanics/Latinos make up 6.9 percent of the civilian workforce and 6.9 percent of the scientists and engineers. Six of NAVAIR’s eight major sites are located in states that had a population of 1 million or more Hispanic residents in 2016: California, Florida and New Jersey.
Alemañy advised managers to learn to recognize the differences between their employees and understand who they are.

For example, he said because the U.S. is mostly Euro-centric, the workplace culture tends to focus more on timeliness and individualism (using the word “I” instead of “we”).

“For Hispanics, time is a renewable resource,” he explained. “You can always, always get more.” Hispanics tend to touch more, communicate in close proximity, and speak in loud and lively tones, he said, contrasting with the Anglo approach of keeping their distance and being more low-key.

He stressed the need to be respectful and train leaders to manage the differences in the workplace. Otherwise, it may be difficult to retain employees.

“Anglos quit companies; Hispanics quit managers,” he said.

Using a slideshow with photos of celebrities, Alemañy illustrated how Hispanics may be visually indistinguishable from other groups in the U.S., underlining his point that Hispanics are not a race; they are an ethnic group.

“Where you are born has nothing to do with your race,” he said. “You have to be comfortable in your own skin. Whatever you are, enjoy it … it’s not going to change. You are who you are.”

This event, which was rescheduled from September 2017 during National Hispanic Heritage Month, was sponsored by the Equal Employment Opportunity Office and the NAVAIR Hispanic Engagement Action Team. The team was established in 2009 and has worked since then to partner with colleges, universities and professional societies to recruit and retain Hispanics.

“The challenge is on us to make them feel welcome, plug them into the organization and give them meaningful work,” said Antonio Miguelez, one of the team’s executive champions.

Erica Pearson, the command’s deputy equal employment opportunity officer, agreed with Miguelez, and cited the Navy’s diversity and inclusion roadmap, which outlines three strategic imperatives to maximize and improve diversity and inclusion programs: recruiting, cultivating an inclusive culture and giving leaders the tools to manage diversity effectively.

“Today’s event focused on the benefits of having a diverse workforce,” Pearson said. “Over time, the population changes. I challenge each of us to make equity, dignity and respect a daily call.”
Business executive makes case for caring about Hispanics/Latinos

Miguel Alemañy, left, the director of research and development at Proctor and Gamble Corp., with NAVAIR Senior Executive Service Member Antonio Miguelez at NAVAIR’s national Hispanic Heritage Month event in Patuxent River, Md., April 17, where Alemañy spoke on the importance of recruiting and retaining Hispanic employees. (U.S. Navy photo)