

rights around the globe. I was troubled to hear that the State Department declined to react to Musharraf's comments. When asked about the interview by a member of the press, a Government spokesman skirted the issue by stating that "The United States Government speaks out very clearly that violence against women, wherever it may occur, is unacceptable. And around the world, where this is a problem, we make a point of speaking out against it."

Unfortunately, the administration is not practicing what it preaches. The administration missed an important opportunity to speak out against a reprehensible allegation that women are using rape in order to make money and emigrate. In his inaugural address last year, the President stated that "all who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you." I urge President Bush to live up to his promise to promote democracy and advance human rights and to not ignore the women of Pakistan.●

IN HONOR OF HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH, SEPTEMBER 15–OCTOBER 15, 2005

● Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise today to say a few words in honor of the Latino communities of the United States. As my colleagues know, September 15 to October 15 each year marks Hispanic Heritage Month. Throughout this month, the United States celebrates the history, culture, and traditions of Latinos as well as their contributions to the United States. September 15 was selected as the first day for this special month because it marks the anniversary of independence for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Mexico and Chile also commemorate their independence days during the month, on September 16 and September 18, respectively.

As we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, we must also acknowledge the challenges faced by this community. The Latino population is extremely vulnerable to economic downturns and experience high poverty rates, particularly among working families with children. We must work to continue providing the infrastructure to assist families by strengthening job training, child care, child nutrition, and transportation. Furthermore, we must continue to lift the barriers on education. Only 12 percent of Latinos have graduated from college. As nearly half of the Latino population is under age 25, it is crucial that we provide access to higher educational opportunities. The Latino community in the United States strives to succeed in all realms. Providing a solid educational foundation for the younger generation will ensure continued growth and accomplishments by the community.

Today, there are 39.9 million Latinos in the United States, which is nearly 14 percent of the total population. Latinos live in every State and are vital contributors to every aspect of the future of our Nation. My State of Washington is home to the 10th largest Latino population in the United States. Fourteen percent of Latinos work in managerial and professional occupations. Twenty-one percent work as operators and laborers, and another 22 percent work in service occupations. Not only are Latinos the fastest growing population in the United States, they are also the fastest growing group amongst small business owners. In the past two decades, the number of Latino-owned businesses has grown by over 600 percent.

Such facts about the achievements about the Latino community should not be surprising, as contributions by Latinos can be traced back through the history of the United States. On March 27, 1513, Juan Ponce de Leon's travels led him to a land he named "La Florida." In 1541, Hernando de Soto became the first European to discover the Mississippi River. Mexican and Spanish voyagers explored the Pacific Northwest as early as 1774. Joseph Marion Hernandez, a member of the Whig party, served as the first Latino Congressman between 1822 and 1823. In 1962, Cesar Chávez established the National Farm Workers Association, which later became the United Farm Workers. These examples further evidence that the history of the Latinos in the United States is an integral part of our history as a Nation.

I am pleased to have this opportunity of Hispanic Heritage Month to give thanks to and honor the Latino community. The accomplishments by Latinos throughout the centuries and their significant influence on our Nation today are cause for celebration.●

IN RECOGNITION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH, OCTOBER 2005

● Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. As we mark the 11th anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act, VAWA, which has given a voice to the thousands of women and children who had silently suffered the effects of domestic violence, we must continue to build on these protections for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

The enactment of the 1994 Violence Against Women Act symbolized a significant Federal response to the problem of violence against women. The original act rewrote Federal criminal law in several respects, including creating penalties for interstate stalking or domestic abuse, strengthening penalties and requiring restitution for repeat sexual offenders, rendering a victim's past sexual behavior inadmissible in Federal cases, and allowing a Federal judge to order HIV testing of al-

leged rapists. VAWA also created a grant program to improve law enforcement in cases of violent crimes against women, rape prevention and education programs, and funds for battered women's shelters. Earlier this year, my home State of Washington received a grant of over \$2.3 million through this program to help victims of domestic violence get access to needed services and to enhance the partnership between criminal justice agencies, victim services providers, and community organizations which respond to domestic violence.

Since passing VAWA, local communities around the United States have made significant strides toward eradicating domestic violence. Between 1993 and 2001, the rate of nonfatal domestic violence dropped 49 percent. States have passed over 660 laws pertaining to domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault. Yet, despite our progress, a woman in the United States is still more likely to be assaulted, injured, raped, or killed by a male partner than by any other assailant. Three to four million American women continue to be battered by their husbands or partners every single year. At least a third of all female emergency room patients are battered women. A third of all homeless women and children in the U.S. are fleeing domestic violence. At least 5,000 women are beaten to death each year. This is unacceptable and we need to continue our efforts to eradicate domestic violence.

As we consider all issues of domestic abuse, we need to also be aware of the advent of for-profit international marriage brokers—companies that operate solely to connect men and women of different nations with the intent of getting married. Today, experts put the number of international marriage brokers at nearly 500 worldwide. Based on the 1999 statistics, there are between 20,000 and 30,000 women who have entered the U.S. using an international marriage broker in the past 5 years. While many of these matches result in long, happy unions, there is an unfortunate growing epidemic of domestic abuse among couples who meet through a broker. The risk of foreign women being abused and in some cases murdered by men they meet through these mail-order bride agencies is heightened greatly when they do not have access to vital information about their potential husbands or their rights in the United States. In my home State of Washington, we know of at least 3 cases of serious domestic violence, including 2 murders of women who met their husbands through Internet-based brokers.

On October 4, my colleagues unanimously passed legislation to reauthorize and improve the Violence Against Women Act once again. This legislation includes language I authored that will make information available to foreign women about the marital and violent criminal history of their prospective American husbands, in addition to