



# What is la hispanidad? (Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture)

*Ilan Stavans, Iván Jaksic*

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Natives of the Iberian Peninsula and the twenty countries of Latin America, as well as their kinsfolk who've immigrated to the United States and around the world, share a common quality or identity characterized as la hispanidad. Or do they? In this lively, provocative book, two distinguished intellectuals, a cultural critic and a historian, engage in a series of probing conversations in which they try to discern the nature of la hispanidad and debate whether any such shared identity binds the world's nearly half billion people who are "Hispanic." Their conversations range from La Reconquista and Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, who united the Spanish nation while expelling its remaining Moors and Jews, to the fervor for el fútbol (soccer) that has swept much of Latin America today. Along the way, they discuss a series of intriguing topics, including the complicated relationship between Latin America and the United States, Spanish language and the uses of Spanglish, complexities of race and ethnicity, nineteenth-century struggles for nationhood and twentieth-century identity politics, and popular culture from literary novels to telenovelas. Woven throughout are the authors' own enlightening experiences of crossing borders and cultures in Mexico and Chile and the United States. Sure to provoke animated conversations among its readers, *What is la hispanidad?* makes a convincing case that "our hispanidad is rooted in a changing tradition, flexible enough to persist beyond boundaries and circumstances. Let us not fix it with a definition, but allow it instead to travel, always."

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