

Latino History in Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA HISTORY CENTER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



Capitol Hill Hispanic parade (*Tierra de mi Familia: Oklahoma* exhibit at the Oklahoma History Center, 2008, OHS).

Latino history is woven into the wider story of Oklahoma from the beginning. European explorers from Mexico were the first non-**indigenous** people to explore the inhabitants and land that would one day be Oklahoma. From the 1830s to the 1880s, the cattle trails that ran throughout Indian Territory were populated with a significant number of **vaqueros** and cowboys who were either Mexican themselves or were influenced by the Mexican way of managing cattle. Then, as Indian Territory opened to non-tribal settlement, developing industries employed Mexicans in large numbers. After statehood, the Mexican Revolution spurred migration and permanent settlement in Oklahoma. The Latino population, almost exclusively Mexican, grew rapidly in these early days of statehood. The Great Depression reversed this trend. World War II ushered in permanent Puerto Rican communities in the state around military bases, while the next two decades slowly restored the Mexican population.

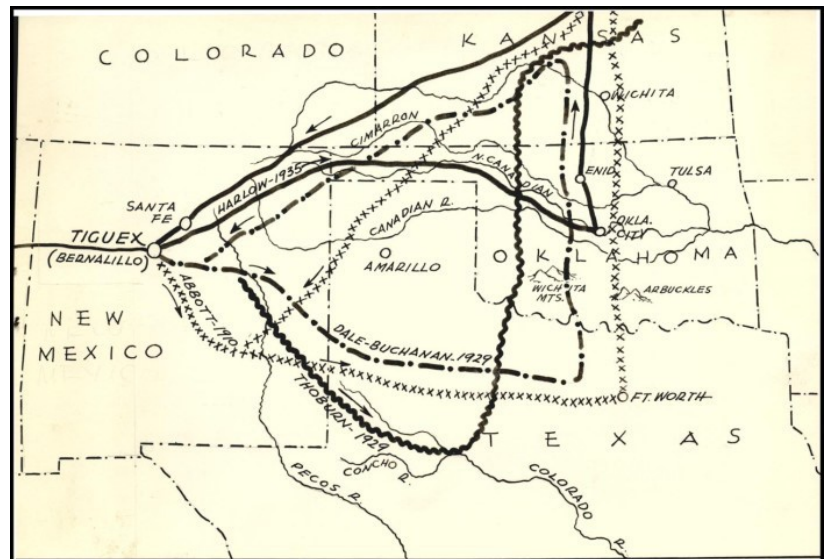
In the 1960s, Oklahoma became a destination for Cuban refugees. In the 1970s, the booming petroleum industry invited the migration of Venezuelans to Tulsa because of the relocation of the CITGO headquarters there. At the same time, Guatemalan communities began emerging in Oklahoma in the wake of a devastating earthquake in that country in 1976. Changes in immigration policy in the 1980s and 1990s encouraged the growth of Latino communities. From the 1990s on, Latino communities in Oklahoma expanded the reach of their businesses, institutions, and power.

Expeditions into Oklahoma



Coronado's March by Frederic Remington (image courtesy of the Library of Congress).

Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, governor of a province in New Spain (present Mexico), set off on an **expedition** to locate the golden city of Cibola. In his search, he traveled through the land that would become Oklahoma. Later explorers, traveling northward from Mexico, attempted to find rumored cities of gold and establish religious **missions** to the indigenous people of Oklahoma, the Wichita. None of the expeditions resulted in permanent settlement, but they did provide early written historical records for the people living in the **interior** of North America in the century after Columbus.



1939 map speculating about the routes of the Coronado Expedition (2012.201.B0144.0285, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

Vaqueros and the Cattle Trails

Livestock raising in the West originated on the **ran-cheros** of colonial Mexico. The indigenous people of Mexico were tied to a specific estate, called an **enco-mienda**. These huge land grants were awarded to the Spanish **conquistadores** who helped conquer the previous rulers, the Aztecs. The Indians were forced to provide labor to the *encomendero*, or owner of the land. One economic activity they engaged in was collecting the wild cattle and killing them for their hides and **tal-low**. The Spanish landowners refused to perform manual labor, so they forced the Indians living on their *encomienda* to do it. These cattle herders were called *vaqueros*.



Mexican Vaqueros, artist unknown, 1830 (image courtesy Bullock Museum).

Although the *encomienda* system came to an end in the 1660s, livestock raising and the culture surrounding it did not. As **Anglo** populations increased in northern Mexico (present-day Texas) in the 1830s, they, too, wanted to take advantage of the wild cattle and sell their products to buyers on the coasts. Because they lacked the knowledge to manage large numbers of cattle, they frequently hired *vaqueros* to do so.



As the railroads reached the interior, the demand for beef increased to the point where moving live cattle to **railheads** in Kansas and Missouri became too **lucrative** to ignore. A longhorn might sell for \$2 in Texas, but it earned \$40 in Abilene. Increasing populations, advanced food preservation techniques, and **urbanization** all contributed to the market for cattle. Texas ranchers began paying groups of herders to walk hundreds of cattle along trails through Indian Territory to railroads. These trails, such as the Chisholm and Shawnee Trails, remain famous today.

The cattle trails ran through Indian Territory (map courtesy National Ag in the Classroom).

These cowboys followed the tradition of the vaqueros in the tools they used, the animal management techniques they employed, and the way they decorated their possessions. The long **lariat** used by cowboys is based on the vaquero's **reata**. The saddle most frequently used in the west, with the large **saddle horn** on a raised **pommel**, is Mexican in style. The method for roping calves and horses is rooted in vaquero traditions. The shape, style, and decoration of American and Mexican **quirts**, **spurs**, and boots are closely related.

The words they used on the trails were frequently Spanish—the stable of horses that traveled for the use of the cowboys was called a **remuda**. Cattle roundups were called rodeos and the loop at the end of the cowboy's most important tool, the rope, was called a *lazo*, or lasso.

This work remained available for vaqueros throughout the western United States until the early 1900s. In many western states, Mexican and **Tejano** workers made up over half the workforce on ranches. They, and the Black cowboys they rode and worked alongside, were paid half the wage of an Anglo cowboy. Vaqueros seldom received promotions in these organizations. On Texas's King Ranch, most of the lower-paid ranch hands were Mexican-Americans while the foremen, or boss, were Anglo.



Mike Marcellus places a saddle horn on a pommel in Oklahoma City; photo by Jim Argo, August 8, 2008 (23389.456.146, Jim Argo Collection, OHS).



Bell Remuda, oil painting by Robert Bougheed (2012.201.B0146.0630, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).



A Mexican-style cowboy boot (image courtesy Vaquero Bronco).

1880s–1929

Population Pushes and Pulls

Few Mexicans lived in Indian Territory before the 1900s. As Indian Territory opened up to settlement, it became an attractive destination for immigrants from around the world. Railroads came to Indian Territory in the 1870s. The Choctaw developed coal mines in southern Oklahoma and imported workers from many different places to work in the mines. This included a number of Mexicans. The expanding railroad industry also called for many workers willing to work long hours in dangerous conditions for relatively low pay. These two industries spurred a small Mexican migration to the state. The 1900 census records 134 Mexicans in Oklahoma and Indian territories, clustered in coal-mining communities in Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations. By the 1930 census, the population of Mexicans in Oklahoma reached 7,345.

The flow increased dramatically as changes in Mexico unfolded. The president of the country, Porfirio Díaz, changed the laws on land and agriculture. Many farmers lost the land they worked. Four railroads connecting the interior of Mexico to the border were completed by 1912. This allowed people to move more easily from their villages in Mexico to other places to find work. Many chose to try to find work in the United States. A lack of jobs kept many Mexican desperate for solutions. Farmworkers made the equivalent of 10–15¢ and a daily corn ration for a twelve-hour day. In other jobs, the wages in the United States were often 4–5 times higher than what a person could make doing the same job in Mexico. Then, in 1910, the **Mexican Revolution** began. In ten years, over ten percent of the population fled the country and most moved northward.

At this time, there were few or no restrictions on immigration from elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere while there were increasing limitations on immigrants from most other places. The **Chinese Exclusion Act**, passed in 1882, blocked the Chinese from immigrating to the US. The Chinese have served as a primary pool of labor for early Western industries such as railroads and mining. After passage of the act, they were no longer allowed entry. Other laws attempted to prevent people who might be poor or who were promised a job from immigrating to the United States. During parts of the first two decades of the twentieth century, these laws were seldom enforced for Mexicans. At other times, employers within the US pushed the government to officially waive the rules. During World War I, Mexicans were actively recruited, and the US government supported these efforts.



Mexican Independence Celebration in Anadarko, 1901 (image courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma).

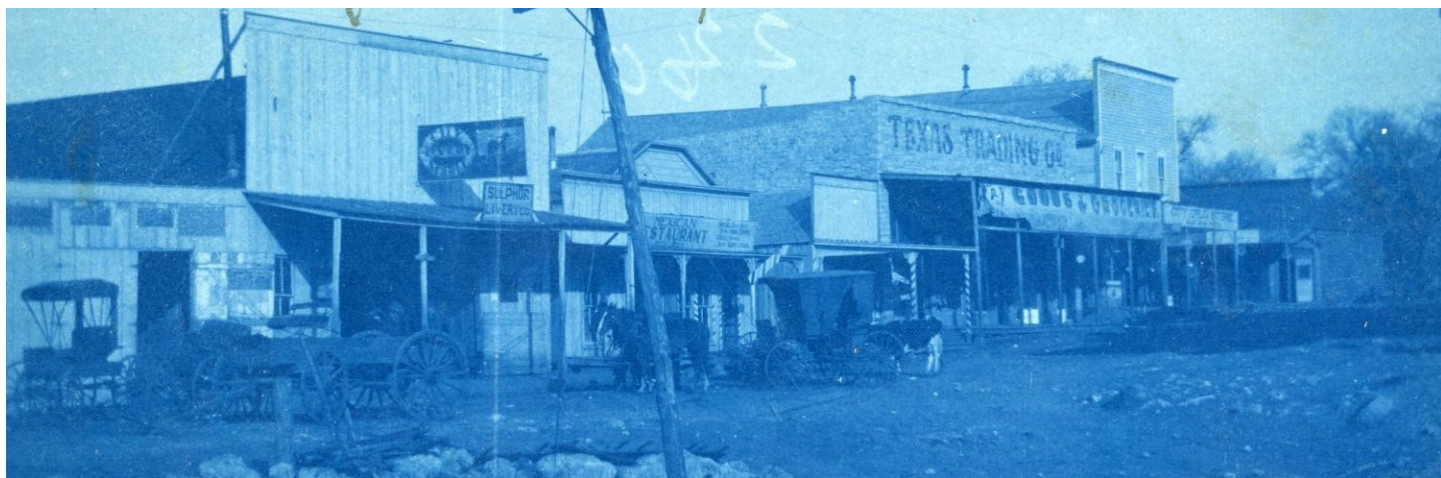
Work

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the southwestern United States offered easy employment to many as there were several booming industries seeking laborers. The work available was extremely physical and dangerous. There were more jobs than there were people willing to work in those jobs. Employers in this area regularly used a dual wage system, offering better pay to white workers. Because they could pay non-white workers less, employers were willing to hire people from all backgrounds. Mining, railroad work, and farm work employed many of the Mexicans and Tejanos moving to Oklahoma. Meat-packing plants, as they became established in the state in the 1910s, joined this list.

These jobs offered pay significantly higher than the wages offered elsewhere. Strong English-speaking skills were not required. Many of the jobs were seasonal, allowing individuals and families to travel to visit family without fearing the loss of a job. Mining and railroad work offered the opportunity to work with relatives or close friends. Railroad maintenance crews, often made up of non-English speakers, worked in teams that shared a language. In coal mines, miners worked in two-person teams, and the miner could select his partner. In 1929, this benefit contributed to a major tragedy. In McAlester, at the Old Town coal mine, an explosion occurred, killing 61 people. Half of those killed were Mexican workers, including five sets of brothers.

McALESTER, Okla., Dec. 18.—(LP)
The casualty list of the Old Town coal mine blast stood today at 60 dead.
The dead:
White: John Arch Robert Cross, O. M. MacKay, Claude Dodson, Samuel Phillips, H. C. Davidson, Walter Murdock, Leonard Davis, Ray Welch, Frank Parker, Irvin Graves, W. Cunningham, and Glen Duval.
Mexicans: Frank Morenio, Charles Gallardo, Tony Toures, Nick Cisneros, Henrique Band, L. McKanney, Juan Villareal, Pontilo Hayuela, N. Perez, Mahuel Buerta, Raphael Salazar, Tony Castino, Irvin Castino, E. Meridina, Frank Meridina, John Chavez, A. Chavez, and Y. Costello.
Negroes: Amos Kemp, Henry Skaggs, Pete Tillard, George Walker, Green Brown and Harry Kidd.
Eighteen had not been identified.
Four remained in the shaft at 10 a. m.

Casualty list published in the *Sapulpa Herald* on December 18, 1929 (1522731, OHS).



Mexican restaurant in Sulphur, 1900 (2153.16, Oklahoma Historical Society Photograph Collection, OHS).

Culture

Generally, many Mexican-born individuals living in Oklahoma planned on returning to Mexico at some point in the future. The revolution brought more women and children. Men worked outside of the home, and women expected to work within the home. Celebrations included the entire Spanish-speaking neighborhood. These celebrations included food, games, dancing, and music like **mariachi** and **ranchera**. The biggest celebrations in the Mexican community were Mexican Independence Day on September 16 and the celebration of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Religion played a very important role in the lives of Mexicans in Oklahoma, most of whom were members of the Roman Catholic church. In 1914, during the Revolution, four **monks** were forced to leave Mexico. They were assigned to establish a mission for a large number of Spanish-speaking Catholics in Oklahoma. The monks first set up a mission in the coal-mining areas of southeastern Oklahoma but relocated to Oklahoma City in 1921. These monks began fundraising for a church, which held its first service in 1927. This church is named Little Flower Catholic church and is a landmark in Oklahoma City today.



Nestor and Paz Cervantes in Dow, Oklahoma, 1910 (*Tierra de mi Familia: Oklahoma* exhibit at the Oklahoma History Center, 2008, OHS).



Little Flower men's group in 1927 (image courtesy of *The Oklahoman*).

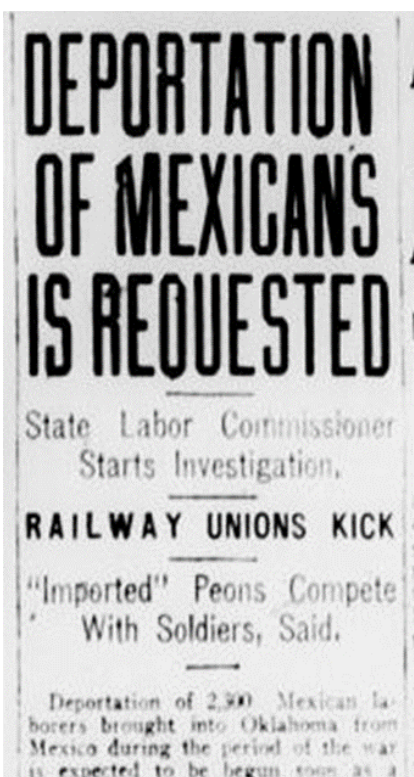
Wider Community

A large number of immigrants from all over the world called Oklahoma “home” during the Territorial and early Statehood periods. It was common for a town to be subdivided into neighborhoods of individuals who shared a culture, language, or nationality. Outside of the neighborhood, Mexican residents interacted with people from other backgrounds frequently when working, shopping, or traveling. Often, non-Mexican **patrons** frequented a favored restaurant owned by a Mexican person or family. Some people and groups in the wider community tried to make sure that families, including those from Mexico, had what they needed and offered support. Mexicans living in Oklahoma also faced regular **discrimination** and **prejudice**. Sometimes, other residents would use their greater power or violence to force Oklahomans from Mexico to move or quit their job.

Little Flower Catholic Church operated a school, a community center, and a health clinic for people living in the primarily Mexican neighborhoods surrounding it. The Goodwill Center in Oklahoma City, operated by the Baptist Missionary Society, focused much of their efforts on the Mexican residents of “Packingtown” a neighborhood near the stockyards. They offered a health clinic, ran a daycare for working mothers, and English classes. They organized holiday gift baskets every December.



Francisco Zamudio fled the Mexican Revolution and settled in Ada, Oklahoma, where he began with a tamale cart. Eventually, he and his family would own several restaurants (image courtesy of the Western History Collection).



Oklahoma City Times, April 15, 1919.

Hostility defined many interactions between Mexican residents and other Oklahomans. Little Flower Catholic Church toned down the design of their church because they feared being targeted by the Ku Klux Klan if they built the **elaborate** structure originally planned. Law enforcement officials frequently made claims about crime in Mexican neighborhoods that were false. In Oklahoma City, after police arrested several Mexican men, the judge ordered them to leave the city. During World War I and the early 1920s, newspapers and telegrams document several threats of **lynching** or forcing entire Mexican neighborhoods to leave the towns where they lived and worked. In 1914, people in Bartlesville reportedly succeeded in forcing the Mexican population of the town onto trains and made them leave. In 1919, a public debate emerged about how competitive Mexican workers were to white workers. Some people argued for the deportation of all Mexicans living in Oklahoma, and the state employment office studied this issue. Rumors of lynching sometimes reached the Mexican consul who compelled the governor of Oklahoma to investigate.

The Great Depression

Mass Exodus

In Oklahoma, families experienced significant unemployment as a result of the Great Depression, and some faced the environmental **catastrophe** of the Dust Bowl. Support from the government during the early part of the Depression was minimal. The state provided \$3-\$6, about two days' worth of wages, a month. Today, that amount is equal to \$48 to \$96. Many families of all backgrounds decided to leave the state, moving where job and **relief** opportunities were better. During the decade of the Great Depression, about half a million families left the state out of a population of 2.5 million.

Mexican families also sought opportunity and stability elsewhere. By the end of the decade 75 percent of the Mexican population moved out of Oklahoma. Most of the departures appear to be voluntary. However, there is some evidence that the **Mexican Repatriation**, the period of forced **deportations** of Mexican residents and American citizens of Mexican descent in the 1930s, occurred in Oklahoma. Families originating from Oklahoma made up 3 percent of the total number of returnees arriving in Nuevo Laredo in 1932. In 1933–1934, federal immigration authorities conducted a series of raids and deportations in Oklahoma City.

Building a Community

Mexican culture dotted the Oklahoma landscape during this decade. Little Flower and Our Lady of Guadalupe served Mexican families in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. In 1938, a Spanish-language library opened in 1938 in Oklahoma City. Mexican restaurants were operated in many cities and towns by Mexican families, including Tejano Luis Alvarado. In 1937, he opened El Charro. After a fire, he reopened under the name El Charrito. This popular restaurant gained a significant following, and he built more restaurants. Eventually, this restaurant chain became El Chico.

Some families stayed, having made Oklahoma their permanent home. These families, with last names like Martinez, Cruz, Casillas, Rodrigues, and Zamudio, worked to preserve and celebrate their Mexican heritage. They also welcomed and assisted the small number of new families moving to Oklahoma in the coming decades.

MEXICANS GO TO HOME LAND

Unemployment Alleviated
By Government Construction,
Consul Claims.

Unemployment and economic depression has decreased the Mexican population of Oklahoma City, H. Valdez, Mexican consul, said Saturday.

Approximately 20 families, the heads of which were out of jobs and unable to find work, have returned to Mexico, Valdez said.

The Daily Oklahoman, December 28, 1930.



The Martinez Family, early 1900s (image courtesy ¡Latino Presentes!).

World War II

World War II significantly impacted Latino families in the United States. Over 500,000 Latino Americans fought in World War II. This represents a significant portion of the Latino population. On the home front, work in the high-demand, high-paying defense industry was available only to US citizens. This spurred many Mexican residents to pursue **naturalization**. The Mexican and United States governments reached an agreement to allow a



PFC and Medal of Honor recipient Manuel Perez Jr.
(image courtesy University of Texas at Austin).

large number of Mexican workers entry into the United States to work in agriculture, railroad, and mining in the **Bracero** program. This program, embraced by large growers, continued well past the war and into the early 1960s. The war also produced an increased demand for the rights of Latino Americans.

One of the many Mexican-Americans awarded the Medal of Honor was originally from Oklahoma. Manuel Perez Jr., fought in the Pacific theater. He participated in the Battle of Luzon in the Philippines campaign and earned the Medal of Honor for his actions. Pinned down by the Japanese during the battle, Perez assaulted the **fortified pillboxes** that protected the enemy. He singlehandedly attacked the positions with grenades and killed 18 enemy soldiers. His division, no longer pinned down by enemy fire, was able to move forward toward the objective. A month later, Perez was killed by a **sniper** in the Philippines at the age of 22. He was buried in Oklahoma City. On February 22, 1946, US officials presented the Medal of Honor to Perez's father on the International Bridge between the United States and Mexico.

Puerto Ricans

World War II also introduced **diversity** into Oklahoma's Latino population. The war produced the first communities of Puerto Rican families in the state. Puerto Rico became a part of the United States as a result of the **Spanish-American War**. The United States established **birthright citizenship** for Puerto Ricans beginning in 1917, fostering large Puerto Rican communities in the continental United States and a high degree of participation in the military. Over 65,000 Puerto Ricans served in the military in World War II. This tradition of service, veteran status, and **bilingual** ability made them strong candidates to fill roles on the growing number of military bases after the war.

In 1950, United States and Puerto Rican leadership embarked on an ambitious program to improve the economy on the island called Operation Bootstrap. For a long period of time, this process created a lack of opportunity on the island and many Puerto Ricans decided to move to the continental United States for better employment. Many Puerto Ricans found that opportunity in or around the military bases in Lawton, Midwest City, and Enid.



Rachel Rodriguez, from Puerto Rico, an Oklahoma City resident in the 1950s
(2012.201.B1134.0161, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

Cubans

After a successful revolution placed Fidel Castro in control of Cuba in 1959, some Cubans expressed disagreement with the country's direction under his leadership. Of those Cubans that opposed the government, some decided to leave the country, often choosing the United States. The US, also in opposition to the Castro government, welcomed these Cubans, and even passed a law that made it easier for Cubans to immigrate than for people from other places.

There were periods when large numbers of people migrated out of the country. In the early 1960s, many, especially people who held property and professional positions, left the country. This period also included a migration of **unaccompanied** children in Operation Peter Pan. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Cubans leaving the country participated in the "Freedom Flights," ten flights a week from Cuba to Miami, agreed upon by the US and Cuban governments. In 1980, another peak of migration occurred during the Mariel Boatlift when the Cuban government briefly lifted its restrictions on **emigration**, which had been closed. A large number of Cuban **exiles** arranged 1,700 boats to pick up people wishing to leave at the Mariel port.

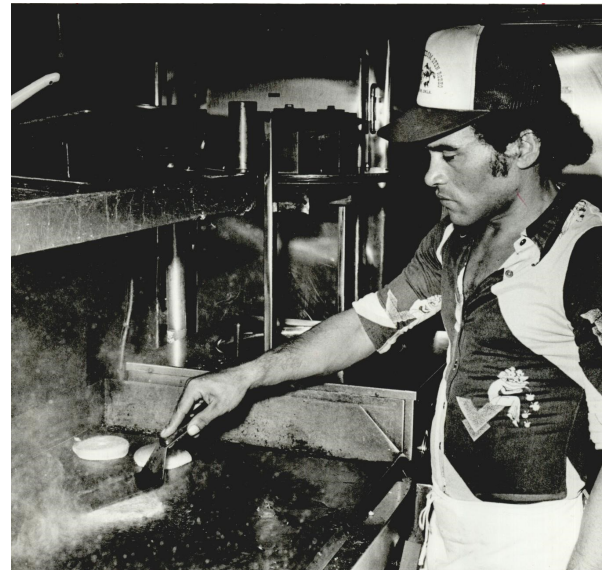
While most Cubans stayed on the East coast, some did settle in Oklahoma. Some churches and church groups in the state pooled their resources to sponsor Cuban resettlement. Later, during the Mariel Boatlift, a nearby **refugee** detention center in Fort Chafee, Arkansas, increased the number of Cuban migrants in the region. By 1965, approximately 300 Cubans made Oklahoma their home, largely in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Oklahoma City mayor James Norick and his wife, Madalynne, hosted a young Cuban woman named Leyda Hernandez after the **Bay of Pigs** incident in 1961.



Madalynne Norick and Leyda Hernandez in 1962 (2012.201.B0288.0027, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS)



The Leon family arriving in Oklahoma City in 1971 (2012.201.B0370.0419, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).



Formerly a chef in Cuba, German Hernandez, a *Marielito*, found work in a Pond Creek, Oklahoma, diner in 1980 (2012.201.B0257.0271, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

1965 Immigration Act

In 1965, the Hart-Cellar Act became law and fundamentally changed the United State's immigration system. Previously, the immigration system was based on **quotas** established for different countries. Those quotas contained a much higher number for individuals moving from northern and western Europe than anywhere else. However, quotas were not applied to the countries in the Western Hemisphere. With this new law, a 120,000-per-year cap was placed on immigrants from the Western Hemisphere. The criteria for granting legal permanent residency (green card) in the US were based on job skills and family already living in the United States. These caps did not align with the concrete number of migrants moving to the United States. This, along with the end of the Bracero program in 1964, resulted in more **undocumented** entries into the country.

Guatemalans

Guatemala has been closely connected with the United States since the early twentieth century. An American company, United Fruit, gained significant power in Guatemala's government. The US government offered extensive support to keep this arrangement, even when the people of Guatemala attempted to change the government in the 1950s. From this conflict, a civil war waged in the country for thirty years. Then, in 1976, an earthquake devastated the country, killing over 23,000 people and leaving a sixth of the population homeless.

The beginning of the Guatemalan community in Oklahoma partly centers on the efforts of Sister Joselita Allen. Sister Allen, originally from Mexico, served in several Catholic churches in Oklahoma. Then she worked in Guatemala for nine years before returning to Oklahoma. While in Guatemala, she organized a youth **marimba** band and brought them to the United States for a tour, stopping in Oklahoma first. Later, she arranged for Benvenuto Barrios to come to Oklahoma City so he could go to school at Bishop McGuiness. He recalls meeting only one other person of Guatemalan heritage when he moved here, a hospital worker at St. Anthony's, who later moved away. Benvenuto Barrios moved here permanently, and his brother joined him soon after. Other Guatemalan families followed, especially after the earthquake.



Sister Joselita Allen with Sister Martin preparing for Guatemala in 1962. Photo by Austin Traverse. (2012.201.B0319B.0306, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS)



The 1976 earthquake worsened conditions in war-torn Guatemala (image courtesy AP News).

Building Institutions

The Latino communities in Oklahoma established a wide range of businesses, events, and organizations. The Little Flower Festival, which began in 1934, became an institution during this period. After World War II, both Oklahoma City and Waynoka hosted large celebrations of Mexican Independence Day that drew participants in the hundreds. Beginning in 1947, the Catholic Action Club with Little Flower Catholic Church began hosting the annual independence celebration in Oklahoma City. In 1960, a chapter of the American G.I. Forum organized in Oklahoma City. This organization was founded by Texan, Dr. Hector Garcia, to advocate for the rights of Latino Americans. Jesse Martinez was a driving force behind this organization in Oklahoma. The Oklahoma City chapter hosted dances at the Myriad and used the proceeds to fund scholarships. In 1971, the ORO Development Corporation began with the mission to offer opportunities to migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The workers the organization initially supported were primarily Spanish-speakers; they now provide services to a wide variety of **rural** residents in Oklahoma.



American GI Forum scholarship recipients in 1979. Photo by Paul B. Southerland (2012.201.B1102.0329, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).



Preparing tamales for the Little Flower Festival in 1977 (2012.201.B0119A.0462; Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).



Rosemary Negrete, 1956 Waynoka Fiesta Queen, September 14, 1956 (473163, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).



Police presentation at Mexican-American Cultural Center in 1976; photo by Michal Thompson (2012.201.B0397.0228, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

Dr. Edward Esperanza established the Mexican-American Cultural Center in 1974; it was later renamed Hispanic Cultural Center in 1980 to reflect the varied community of Spanish-speakers who attended its English-language, immigration, job skills, and dance classes. Anita Martinez opened La Puerta de Oro, a senior citizens' center for Spanish-speakers. From this base, she also organized Los Viejitos, a popular mariachi band. In 1979, Alfonso Macias organized chapters of LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) in the state. LULAC Oklahoma offers voter education, youth leadership, and scholarship opportunities.



Alfonso Macias, right, with LULAC scholarship winners in 1983; photo by George Wilson (2012.201.B0380.0211, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).



Seniors enjoying lunch at La Puerta de Oro in 2018 (image courtesy of *Telemundo*).

1980–2020

Demographic Change

The size of the Latino community in Oklahoma steadily increased from the post-Depression low of 1,425 in 1940. The 1980 census indicated there were 57,419 Hispanic Oklahomans. Estimates for 2018 suggest the number has grown to 429,000. The percentage of the total state population that is Latino has grown from 1.8 percent in 1980 to approximately 10.8 percent in 2018. The median age in Oklahoma is 36, while the median age for Latinos in Oklahoma the age is 23. This indicates that the Latino population is much younger than the overall population. There are large communities in both Oklahoma City and Tulsa, but a major source of growth is in more rural communities such as Guymon and Watonga, where the populations are majority Latino and exceed (as a percentage of the population) that of the two largest cities. The population increases are mostly because of movement of Latinos from other states to Oklahoma and higher birth rates. A third of the state's Latinos are foreign-born, and a percentage of these individuals, perhaps a third, are undocumented. **Asylum-seekers** from Central American countries are a recent addition to Oklahoma's Latino foreign-born population.



Jesus Ruiz is a barber in Guymon, Oklahoma (image courtesy of Reuters).



Ramiro Vasquez opened La Oaxaquena Bakery on SW 29th Street in Oklahoma City in 2009, joining dozens of other Latino-owned businesses (image courtesy of *The Oklahoman*).

Changes in Immigration law

While the 1965 immigration law remains the foundation of immigration law and policy in the United States, there have been some major changes in the law that impacted the foreign-born portion of the Latino community in the state. In 1986, during the Reagan Administration, the Immigration Reform and Control Act became law. This law combined **punitive** measures toward individuals attempting to enter the country without authorization and those hiring them, with an opportunity for those already living in the United States to **normalize** their status. This was commonly known as “**amnesty**.” Because Oklahoma was home to a sizeable undocumented population in the 1970s, many in the state applied for a Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR or green) card under this provision. With 20,000 applicants, Oklahoma ranked in the top ten of states. This allowed many individuals the opportunity to sponsor other family members once they attained citizenship.

Ten years later, President Bill Clinton signed into law the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA). This law included several parts. The elements with the strongest impact on Oklahomans were the strengthening of border security at the US-Mexico border and bans on re-entry for people living in the US without authorization who left the country. These changes helped make migration to the US much more one-way and permanent. In the years before this law, when movement across the border easier, many people might live and work in the US for some time and then return to their country of origin. At the time of the passage of the law, most of the undocumented immigrants in the country had lived in the US for more than ten years. They usually belonged to **mixed-status** families. The hard border and strong punishments for being caught meant fewer undocumented immigrants would take the risk of crossing the border again because they would be separated from their families. The number of undocumented individuals living in the United States nearly tripled ten years after the passage of IIRIRA.



Three members of the Rendon family faced deportation until the Immigration Control and Reform Act passed in 1986. Beckel (2012.201.B1083.0558; Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).



In 2012, President Barack Obama signed an executive order known as DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) to address the challenges facing “Dreamers.” A specific category of undocumented immigrant, Dreamers came to the US as children. Not all Dreamers are Latino but many of the Dreamers in Oklahoma are. DACA provided eligible Dreamers with permission to work and protection from deportation. In Oklahoma, nearly 10,000 individuals were eligible. Approximately 7,000 participate in the program.

Oklahoma “Dreamers” advocate for a legislative solution for childhood arrivals in 2017. DACA was an executive order rather than a law (image courtesy of *The Oklahoman*).

Wider Community

Institutions and individuals beyond the Latino communities in the state responded to the identifiable increase in the Latino population. Some groups, organizations, and institutions adapted their services and sought strategies to bridge language gaps. Others, viewing the rapid growth of these communities, worked to create barriers to services and limit further growth. Latino communities in Oklahoma offered support and guidance on inclusive efforts. Latino leaders and community members met efforts to create policies that excluded immigrants or Spanish-speakers with protest.

Libraries within neighborhoods with a large number of Spanish speakers began working on increasing the Spanish language material and programming available. Schools reworked their bilingual programs. Most large school districts offered some kind of bilingual education in the 1970s in response to federal funding requirements and a large number of students who spoke only Vietnamese or Spanish enrolling in schools. A bilingual educator, Rosa Alvarez, saw the need for more trained teachers in bilingual education and pursued hundreds of grants to fund this education. By the 1990s, these programs grew both in size and across the state as the Spanish-speaking population in Oklahoma rapidly increased and settled in



Bilingual instruction in 1980 (2012.201.B1329.0325, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

new communities. By the 2000s, most bilingual programs offered a model that includes **intensive** instruction in English for part of the day and **sheltered instruction** in other subjects for the rest of the school day. Businesses employing large numbers of Spanish-speakers sought advice and bilingual speakers to improve workplace safety and efficiency.

Politically, until 2007, the general approach toward Latino communities in the state was **inclusive**. In 1996, Governor Frank Keating established the Governor's Advisory Council on Latin American and Hispanic Affairs. It was not **abolished** until 2011. A law in 2001 made the state driver's license test available in multiple languages. In 2003, State Representative Kevin Calvey introduced legislation making undocumented immigrants eligible for in-state tuition, financial aid, and scholarships. This became law, and only three other states offered such expansive educational benefits for undocumented immigrants. These measures proved popular in Latino communities that included some monolingual Spanish speakers and undocumented members.



Tulsa Yolanda Charney served on the Governor's Advisory Council on Latin American and Hispanic Affairs (image courtesy ¡Latino Presentes!).

English Only and HB1804

In 2003, efforts to pass an English-only bill failed, but the bill marked the beginning of a strong effort seeking legislative goals to create barriers for Spanish-only speakers and undocumented immigrants, both groups making up a portion of the Latino communities in Oklahoma. In 2006, state representative Kevin Calvey attempted to pass a bill that required state employees to make reports to immigration authorities if a client could not prove their status. In 2007, the Oklahoma Legislature passed state representative Randy Terrill's HB1804 bill, and Governor Brad Henry signed it into law. HB1804, also known as the Oklahoma Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act, sought to do several things. First, it carried explicit punishment for employers of undocumented immigrants, although this provision was later set-aside. It also confirmed that undocumented immigrants were ineligible for several benefit programs and slightly extended the number of programs these individuals were barred from accessing. They were also barred from official state-created forms of identification, such as driver's licenses. HB1804 encouraged local law enforcement to participate in programs allowing them to enforce federal immigration law. At the time of its passage, the Oklahoma Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act was considered the harshest anti-immigrant state law in force. This law provoked fear and protest from Latino communities in Oklahoma. In response to its passage, some mixed-status Latino families left the state. In 2010, State Question 751, or "English-only" law, made it to the November ballot. Voters approved the question with 75 percent in favor, adding a law requiring most official state business be conducted in English. A Tulsa attorney challenged the law based on the First Amendment, but the case was thrown on other grounds.



HB1804 comes up for a vote (image courtesy of *News on 6*.)

Protest

Efforts to create barriers for Spanish-only speakers and undocumented immigrants were opposed by significant numbers within Latino communities in the state. In 2006, as harsh anti-immigrant measures were introduced in both Congress and in the Oklahoma Legislature, large protests took place in Oklahoma. The Governor's Advisory Commission on Latin America and Hispanic Affairs wrote a letter to legislators encouraging them to oppose the bills. LULAC held a rally to protest these bills. On April 1, 10,000 Oklahomans, including a large number of Latino Oklahomans, converged on the Capitol to demand immigration reform that did not **criminalize** immigrants.



The Oklahoma Capitol on April 1, 2006. Photo by John Clanton (image courtesy of *The Oklahoman*).

Nationwide protests called “A Day Without an Immigrant” took place in May 2006 and large numbers of Latino Oklahomans participated, with a youth-led march through Capitol Hill in Oklahoma City, 1,500 protestors in Tulsa, and 200 protestors at the Guymon County courthouse. Some employers closed their businesses so their employees could participate.

Dreamers organized their own protests and support organizations. In 2009, organizers established Dream Action Oklahoma (now DAOK). This group began by assisting Oklahoma Dreamers with assistance filling out the DACA application and scholarships for Dreamers unable to afford the \$500 filing fee. They also conducted Know Your Rights clinics and made speakers available for community events. Dream Action Oklahoma also advocated for passage of the 2001 Dream Act, which would have offered a pathway to citizenship. The organization also

staged numerous protests in support of “Dreamers” including vigils and marches. In 2012, Judith Huerta publicly announced her undocumented status at her college graduation wearing “UndOCumented” on her robes. At other graduations, Dream Action Oklahoma dropped banners reminding the participants that there were undocumented students among them at the event. Since 2017, DAOK has organized students in walkouts to support DACA, which drew hundreds of participants. They have organized protests against the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.



Santa Fe South walkout, November 8, 2019 (image courtesy of *Oklahoma City Free Press*).

Building communities

Guatemalans

The Guatemalan community in Oklahoma rapidly expanded in size and geography in the 1990s. Original families in Oklahoma often found success and sponsored other, extended family members. Certain surnames are closely connected to these early families, such as Cifuentes, Barrios, De Leon, Lopez, and Gramajo. The majority of Guatemalans in Oklahoma are from the western region of Guatemala, primarily the municipality of Sibilia in the town of Quetzaltenango, followed by individuals from the town of San Marcos, Guatemala. Maya culture and tradition are dominant in this region; in fact, Spanish is no longer the primary language of many Guatemalans in this region. Instead, they speak a variety of indigenous languages.



This community is now the second-largest Latino community in Oklahoma with a population over 25,000. The large number of Guatemalans in Oklahoma and surrounding states influenced the Guatemalan government to open a **consulate** in Oklahoma City in 2017, so these individuals would not have to travel to Houston for consular services. In addition to assistance with documents, Ambassador Jose Arturo Rodriguez Diaz and his staff work to increase awareness and understanding of Guatemala and its relationship with Oklahoma.

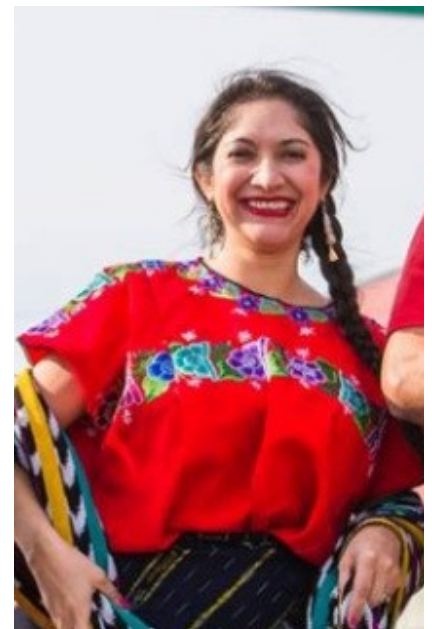
Guatemalan ambassador, Jose Arturo Rodriguez Diaz, and wife, Jennifer Rodriguez (image courtesy of *The Oklahoman*).



Pastor Saily Herrera de Orellana leads a church in Norman (image courtesy Saily Orellana).



Jerry Gramajo Cifuentes, “Dreamer” and Mr. Guatemala 2019–2020 (image courtesy of *El Nacional*).



Hilda De Leon Xavier, traditional dance instructor and community leader (image courtesy of *una-okc.org*).

Puerto Rican

Military bases in Oklahoma continued to serve as magnet for Puerto Rican communities. One long-time Puerto Rican resident of Oklahoma, Lino “Taino” Roldan, learned how to operate radio equipment in the military. In retirement, he began a popular internet radio program named *Radio La Brisa Tropical*. He also founded the Puerto Rican Foundation of Oklahoma in 2012.

This program and organization offer Puerto Ricans a way to share their culture, celebrate together, and help students through scholarships. Some Oklahoma businesses and school districts viewed Puerto Rico as a promising place to recruit bilingual workers. Advance Foods in Enid offered cash bonuses and free airfare to relocate to Oklahoma and work in their meatpacking plant. Oklahoma City Public Schools, with a large Latino student population, began a campaign in 2014 to hire Puerto Rican teachers and bring them to work in the school district.



Lino “Taino” Roldan (image courtesy of *El Nacional Oklahoma*).

The island of Puerto Rico experienced severe financial problems that, while beginning in the 1990s, did not become a major problem until the early 2010s. In 2017, the government of Puerto Rico defaulted on their debts, meaning they announced they were unable to pay back money they borrowed. This hurt the people living on the island in a number of ways. Some people lost their jobs while others lost their retirement investments. The services offered by the government were drastically reduced so it became more difficult to live on the island. Then, beginning in 2017, two devastating hurricanes hit the island. This resulted in many Puerto Ricans looking for opportunity in the mainland of the United States. The Puerto Rican community in Oklahoma continues to grow.



Teachers from Puerto Rico arriving to work in Oklahoma City Public Schools (image courtesy of *KFOR.com*).

South American Communities

The oil company CITGO, once one of the largest oil companies in the world, relocated its headquarters to Tulsa in 1964. After the extremely uneven oil markets in the 1970s, CITGO looked for investment capital. In 1986, the state oil company of Venezuela, PDVSA, purchased 50 percent ownership in CITGO. In 1990, they took full ownership. The ties between PDVSA and CITGO meant a large number of Venezuelan employees and their families visited or moved to Tulsa. This laid the foundation for the Venezuelan community in Oklahoma. Within the last few years, instability in Venezuela spurred new migrations from the country.

Universities also attracted South Americans. At the University of Oklahoma (OU), both Bolivian Millie Audas and Colombian Yoana Walschap worked to cultivate the connections between South America and Oklahoma.



Dr. Millie Audas (image courtesy of *The Oklahoman*).



Yoana Walschap (image courtesy of the Smile Education Foundation).

Dr. Audas served as the director of International Student Services for many years. In that role, she created agreements with other universities around the world but many in South America, to make it easier for their students to study at OU more easily and at a lower cost. Yoana Walschap spent part of her academic career as the director of the Energy Institute of the Americas. Through this position, she built connections and agreements that resulted in many students from all over South America attending the University of Oklahoma for part or all of their degree programs. Her efforts directed at fellow Colombians helped build a strong community both here and in Houston. Both she and Dr. Audas innovated programs and mentored South American students that assisted them with living in a new country and state.



Students participating in the OU Cousins program developed by Dr. Audas (image courtesy of OU Cousins). Below the Colombian Student Association's logo. Yoana Walschap mentors this organization (image courtesy of COLSA).



Building Institutions

From the 1980s on, several organizations focused on serving Latino communities throughout the state. Media companies found a large audience waiting for content delivered in Spanish. Support organizations carry on a long tradition of mutual aid in Latino communities. Business leaders created both formal and informal groups to educate business owners and to build peer networks. Cultural and educational organizations provide a grounding in Latino youth's respective culture while providing the means to access higher education and perform well there. Social media platforms have provided the means for new communities to form.

In 1988, Argentina native Rosa Quiroga King began publishing *El Nacional* and it continues publication today. The next year, Nancy Galvan, originally from Mexico, relocated from Chicago to start a dedicated Spanish-language radio station with the call letters KZUE. Much later, in 2004, Telemundo began broadcasting. Other Spanish-language publications, radio and TV joined these pioneers, including *El Latino American*, *Hola Oklahoma*, Univision, and numerous radio stations. There is even a YouTube channel, *Huellas Latinas*, focusing on stories about Latino communities in Oklahoma.



Rosa Quiroga King established the first Spanish-language newspaper in Oklahoma in 1988. Photo by Steve Gooch (2012.201.B0334.0068, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).



Advertisement for *El Latino American*, which began in 1994 (image courtesy of *El Latino American*).



Bella Gutiérrez, with former US ambassador Edwin Corr, reporting a story for *Huellas Latinas* (image courtesy Bella Gutiérrez)



Patricia Fennell, founder of LCDA (image courtesy of *The Oklahoman*).

Oklahoma City's Hispanic Cultural Center closed in the late 1980s. It became evident that an organization that focused on providing social services to the metro area's Latino population was needed. In 1991, the Latino Community Development Agency (LCDA) began with Ecuadorian Pat Fennell as executive director. LCDA offers a wide range of services including high-quality pre-K, health services, assistance to families experiencing domestic violence, and youth programs. Now under the leadership of former educator and Puerto Rican Raúl Font, the organization is working to add more services and update their historic building.

A group of entrepreneurs organized the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in 2000. This organization provides training and advice to Latino business owners. The Chamber offers Latino Leadership OKC to develop community leaders. They also bring attention to their member businesses. Certification classes and job fairs round out their activities. The Hispanic Chamber Women's Business Center seeks to support women entrepreneurs as they open and build businesses.



Business training at the Hispanic Chamber Women's Business Center (image courtesy of the Greater Oklahoma City Hispanic Chamber of Commerce).



Miriam Campos learned leadership as a teenager by participating in LCDA's Latino Club and now she serves on the LCDA Board of Directors (image courtesy Miriam Campos).

The past twenty years have seen an explosion of Latino-centered cultural and educational organizations. Calles Dos Cinco offers several programs devoted to the historic Capitol Hill neighborhood in Oklahoma City, but the largest and most well known is the annual Fiestas de las Americas celebration. This celebration brings Latinos from all over the region to celebrate their heritage and is a major annual attraction. The Hispanic American Foundation in Tulsa offers a wide variety of scholarships and cultural programs for Latinos in northeastern Oklahoma. The Oklahoma Latino Cultural Center and the Hispanic Arts Council are recent collective efforts to highlight the arts. Throughout Oklahoma, at colleges and universities, Hispanic American Student Associations provide college students connection to others with similar heritages and a way to serve their local communities in a coordinated way.

With the widespread adoption of social media, one use of these platforms has been the organization of groups to connect and celebrate individuals from specific national backgrounds. In Oklahoma alone, there is Asociación de Guatemala Unidos de Oklahoma, the Puerto Rican Foundation of Oklahoma, the Panamanian Society of Oklahoma, Salvadoreans in Oklahoma, and the Colombian Society of Oklahoma. These groups organize cultural celebrations, support businesses of their members, and offer scholarships to students.



The Fiestas de las Américas is a large celebrations held yearly in Oklahoma City's Capitol Hill neighborhood (*Tierra de mi Familia: Oklahoma* exhibit at the Oklahoma History Center, 2008, OHS).



Dancers preparing for the 2008 Fiestas de las Américas (*Tierra de mi Familia: Oklahoma* exhibit at the Oklahoma History Center, 2008, OHS).

Fiestas DE LAS AMERICAS 15th Anniversary

PRESENTED BY **Fowler AUTOMOTIVE**

VIRTUAL CELEBRATION SCHEDULE

TRAVEL OF THE AMERICAS VIRTUAL TOUR
SPONSORED BY BANK OF AMERICA

SUNDAY - SEPT. 27TH
1PM- CELEBRATE MÉXICO
6PM- CELEBRATE PERÚ
SPONSORED BY SISTER CITIES INTERNATIONAL OKC

MONDAY - SEPT. 28TH
9AM- CELEBRATE HONDURAS
4PM- CELEBRATE VENEZUELA

TUESDAY - SEPT. 29TH
9AM- CELEBRATE GUATEMALA
4PM- CELEBRATE ECUADOR

WEDNESDAY - SEPT. 30TH
9AM- CELEBRATE PUERTO RICO
4PM- CELEBRATE PANAMA

THURSDAY - OCT. 1ST
9AM- CELEBRATE COLOMBIA
4PM- CELEBRATE EL SALVADOR

FRIDAY - OCT. 2ND
9AM- KID'S ADVENTURE OF THE AMERICAS
SPONSORED BY METRO TECH
6PM- MISS FIESTAS DE LAS AMERICAS
PAGEANT 2020 SPONSORED BY FOWLER AUTO

SATURDAY - OCT. 3RD
11AM CALLE DOS CINCO LIVE- 15 YEARS OF FIESTAS IN OKC FIESTAS
SPONSORED BY ARVEST BANK

EVENT SPONSORS:

BANK OF AMERICA, OKLAHOMA CITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE, PROSPERITY BANK, TFCU, Simmons Bank, TDA, La Voz, MORELOS SUPERMART, ENERGY FC, TELEMUNDO OKLAHOMA, ARVEST BANK

In 2020, the 15th Anniversary Fiestas de las Américas Celebration was held virtually (image courtesy of Calle Dos Cinco).

What is the difference between Latino and Hispanic?

Names for different groups of people change over time. Sometimes, the group described had no say regarding the name others use. Sometimes, the preference for a particular name falls out of favor and a new name replaces it. In general, the more specific and accurate name is the one favored by the group. Most people who fall under either the descriptive names of “Latino” and “Hispanic” prefer to identify with their country of personal or ancestral origin, e.g. “Mexican-American” or “Salvadorians.” In general, it is a distressing situation when an individual is misidentified for a different group, such as referring to a group made up of people from several national origins as “Mexican”. It helps to use a more general term. When speaking more broadly, “Latino” and “Hispanic” refer to different but overlapping groups.

“Latino” refers to the individuals and cultures from the defined geographic region of Latin America. Latin American countries are those that Spain, Portugal, and France colonized, located in the Western Hemisphere. Before to the 1970s, “Latino” was the name that was commonly used for individuals who shared an ancestral and cultural connection to Spanish-speaking countries in South America, the Caribbean, and Central America. Another common word is *Latinx* (*lah-tee-necks* or *la-ten-ex*) The “x” makes the word gender-neutral so that one gender is not used to describe everyone; otherwise, “Latino” (masculine) or “Latina” (feminine) is used depending on who is being described. Because *Latinx* is less well known, some people will not know what the term means.

“Hispanic,” which is a commonly used term, refers to individuals and cultures who speak Spanish. People who are from Spain are Hispanic, but they are not Latino. The term “Hispanic” came into use in part through efforts by the Census Bureau to measure the number of people in the 1980 census who spoke Spanish *or* whose family is originally from Latin American countries.



Oklahoma Hispanic Cultural Center, 1981; photo by George R. Wilson (2012.201.B1219.0266, Oklahoma Publishing Company Photography Collection, OHS).

Activities

Compare and Contrast: Exploring Culture

Culture is the people around you, the objects you use, and how you use your time. Culture shapes how you think and is a big part of what makes you...YOU! People come from many different cultures. Other people may think some things are important that you don't, they may express themselves very differently than you, or they may use objects you are not familiar with. At other times, a person's culture may be very similar to your own. That culture will seem very comfortable to move around in and familiar. A great way to learn about different cultures is to explore a culture's food and dance. Visit Calles Dos Cinco: Historic Capitol Hill's YouTube channel and watch at least two of the country features. As you do, think about these questions:

1. Were the dances very different or similar?
2. Were the dances very difficult or simple? You should try to learn them!
3. What ingredients were the same between cultures?
4. What ingredients were different between cultures?
5. Find the countries you learned about on a map. Does their location explain why they would use certain ingredients?

Historic Capitol Hill's channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA6tJkmizkSiaV4WKgkoLbw>

Conducting Research: Country Profile

You can extend your learning by taking the countries you learned about and creating a country profile. Fill this out to keep track of your answers.

Name of Country:

Area:

Population:

What continent is the country on?

What is the capital of the country?

What kind of government does this country have?

What countries does this country border or touch?

What kind of climate does the country have?

Does it have any major mountains, rivers, deserts, or other physical features? What are they?

What are the major languages in this country?

What are the major religions in this country?

What are popular foods in this country?

What are the major economic activities in this country?

What is an environmental challenge they face?

Sketch the country, marking the location and name of its capital:

Analysis: Identifying important information

One of most important skills for a historian is understanding main ideas and supporting details. When a creator makes a story, they want the person who is seeing, reading, or hearing it to learn something specific. The most important message in a story is the main idea. In order to understand the main idea well, the creator of the story will add details to make the story interesting, or relatable, or to add context. It can be hard to figure out the main idea and the supporting details but, with practice, it gets easier! Try this activity to practice your skills at identifying the main idea and supporting details.

Pick a section in this e-exhibit and read it. Ask yourself, “What is the most important message in this section?” Write that down in the first box. In the other boxes, write down details from that section. A detail is a piece of information that helps explain the main idea.

If you had to tell someone what this story is about in one sentence, what would you tell them?

This is the main idea!

Supporting detail

Supporting detail

Supporting detail

Supporting detail

Evidence Scavenger Hunt: Developing a Narrative

“Doing” history is like being a detective. Historians look for pieces of evidence to put together so they can understand what happened. Then, they take that evidence and build a narrative or a story that explains what the evidence shows. Below are several newspaper articles about what happened to a man named Rufino Rodrigues.* See if you can find pieces of evidence about what happened. Then, create a story, using the evidence you found, about Rufino Rodrigues.

*Rufino Rodrigues’s name is not spelled correctly in these newspaper articles. Mistakes like that can happen but don’t let it throw you off the trail!

Newspaper Articles

Sapulpa Evening Democrat. (Sapulpa, Okla.), Vol. 1, No. 122, Ed. 1 Saturday, February 24, 1912

<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc1469503/>

The Guthrie Daily Star (Guthrie, Okla.), Vol. 8, No. 301, Ed. 1 Saturday, February 24, 1912

<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc275103/>

Tulsa Daily World (Tulsa, Okla.), Vol. 7, No. 137, Ed. 1 Saturday, February 24, 1912

<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc133547/>

The Oklahoma Labor Unit (Oklahoma City, Okla.), Vol. 3, No. 39, Ed. 1 Saturday, March 2, 1912

<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc107068/>

The Coalgate Record-Register (Coalgate, Okla.), Vol. 22, No. 5, Ed. 1 Thursday, May 21, 1914

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Wagoner County Record (Wagoner, Okla.), Vol. 22, No. 40, Ed. 1 Thursday, May 28, 1914

<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc1721400/>



Rufino Rodrigues (18032, Frederick S. Barde Collection, OHS).

Glossary

abolish: Formally put an end to.

amnesty: A pardon for breaking a law.

Anglo: White English-speakers, many of whom migrated to Mexico from the United States in the early nineteenth century.

asylum-seekers: A person who is seeking refuge by staying in another country.

Bay of Pigs: A failed invasion of Cuba by Cuban exiles, with the support of the United States, in 1961.

bilingual: Having the ability to speak two languages.

birthright citizenship: Automatic citizenship granted when a child is born within United States territory.

Bracero: Agreement between the US and other countries to temporarily allow entry in the United States for work.

catastrophe: A disaster.

Chinese Exclusion Act: A federal law, passed in 1882 and lasting until 1942, that prohibited the immigration of all Chinese laborers into the United States.

conquistadores: The Spanish conquerors of Mexico in the 16th century.

consulate: An office in another country where people can get documents they need from their country of origin.

criminalize: Make something illegal.

deportation: Sending a person back to their country of origin.

discrimination: A thought that a group is better or worse than other groups and acting on that belief.

diversity: Showing great variety.

elaborate: Richly detailed.

emigration: The act of leaving a country to permanently settle elsewhere.

encomienda: The awarding of indigenous laborers to conquerors by the Spanish crown.

exile: Forced absence from one's country.

expedition: Travel with the purpose of exploring.

fortified: Defensive works built to protect against attack.

inclusive: Actions or policies that include.

indigenous: The original or earliest known inhabitant of a place.

intensive: Very concentrated or thorough.

interior: The center, non-coastal areas of a continent.

lariat: A rope with a loop on one end.

lucrative: Profitable

lynching: The killing of a person by a group without a legal trial.

mariachi: A traditional Mexican musical style usually played by a group of trumpeters, guitarists, and violinists.

marimba: A musical instrument similar to a xylophone; considered the national instrument of Guatemala.

Mexican Repatriation: A mass deportation of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans between 1932 and 1936.

Mexican Revolution: A period of conflict between 1910 and 1924 that dramatically change the government and society of Mexico.

mission: A small settlement of people attempting to accomplish a goal, such as spreading a religion to a new place.

mixed-status: A family that includes members that are a mix of undocumented, Dreamers, legal residents, and citizens.

monks: A group of men that devote themselves to their religion.

naturalization: The process of becoming a citizen.

normalize: Bring to a standard state.

patrons: Supporters

pillboxes: A partially underground concrete fort

pommel: The upward curving or projecting part of a saddle in front of the rider.

prejudice: Preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.

punitive: To punish.

quirt: A short-handled riding whip with a braided leather lash.

quota: A required amount.

railheads: The beginning point of a railroad.

ranchera: A type of Mexican country music typically played with guitars and horns.

ranchero: A person working on a ranch.

ration: A fixed amount that is allowed.

reata: A lasso.

refugee: A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

relief: Assistance, especially in the form of food, clothing, or money, given to those in special need or difficulty.

remuda: A herd of horses used by cowboys or rancheros.

rural: The countryside.

saddle horn: A hornlike prolongation of the pommel of a stock saddle.

sheltered instruction: An approach to teaching English-language learners that include both subject content and language acquisition goals.

sniper: A person who shoots from a hiding place, especially accurately and at long range.

Spanish-American War: Conflict between Spain and the United States in 1898 over the island of Cuba.

spur: A device with a small spike or a spiked wheel that is worn on a rider's heel and used for urging a horse forward.

tallow: A hard fatty substance made from rendered animal fat, used in making candles and soap.

Tejano: A term used for people who were both Mexican and Texan in heritage.

unaccompanied minors: Individuals under the age of 18 that are traveling or attempting to immigrate.

undocumented: Lacking the appropriate authorization to be in the country, including the permission to work.

urbanization: The increasing growth and importance of cities.

vaquero: A cattle driver.

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