

# **Hispanics: Shaping the Future**

## **PREFACE**

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## **SCOPE**

The Topical Research Intern Program provides the opportunity for Servicemembers and DoD civilian employees to work on diversity/equal opportunity projects while on a 30-day tour of duty at the Institute. During their tour, the interns use a variety of primary and secondary source materials to compile a review of data or research pertaining to an issue of importance to equal opportunity (EO) and equal employment opportunity (EEO) specialists, supervisors, and other leaders throughout the Services. The resulting publications (such as this one) are intended as resource and educational materials and do not represent official policy statements or endorsements by the DoD or any of its agencies. The publications are distributed to EO/EEO personnel and selected senior officials to aid them in their duties.

**The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and should not be construed to represent the official position of DEOMI, the military services, or the Department of Defense.**

## *Hispanics: Shaping the Future*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The U.S. Congress sets aside the period from September 15 to October 15 each year for our nation to celebrate Hispanic heritage. It is fitting that America observe *Hispanic Heritage Month*--for it is here the term "Hispanic" was created to describe the different people of Spanish-speaking heritage. Fiestas and cultural activities are staged coast-to-coast to demonstrate diverse Hispanic roots and customs. Hispanic Americans represent more than two dozen countries of origin, as well as U.S. territories and states, and live virtually everywhere in the country. Hispanic culture is so prevalent that according to author Ellen Summerfield, salsa has now officially replaced catsup as the nation's top-selling condiment. (28:5) Whether through food, music, arts and sciences, or business and trade, the cultural exchange is rapidly occurring and Hispanics are changing the country.

Hispanics are, arguably, more culturally differentiated than any other large minority. Through heritage festivals, even Hispanics learn more about each other. This spirit of mutual beneficence is also spreading throughout other Spanish-speaking countries as we witness greater communication through satellites, the worldwide web, and the growth of Spanish-speaking television and radio. There are even efforts to standardize Spanish among the international media for greater communication possibilities.

The new millennium will bring unprecedented opportunities for Hispanics, due in part to their ballooning population, growing representation in local and federal politics, and an emergence in all sectors of American enterprise. With this growth comes a renewed responsibility for Hispanic leadership to shape not only their culture's future, but national policy as well. Challenges will likely include: increased recruiting and retention of Hispanics into the armed forces, the prospects of NAFTA expansion, the evolution of Cuba as a non-Communist nation, the possible addition of Puerto Rico as the 51st state, language issues, and comprehensive immigration policy revision.

Nation-building is a dynamic process, and the United States is a burgeoning nation just 222 years young. Building on the best of what each culture has to offer may be our country's greatest attribute. As Federico Mayor Zaragoza, Director General of UNESCO, says:

- America's main role in the new world order is not as a military superpower, but as a multicultural superpower. (28:149)

## **A DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT**

There are several essential points to remember when studying Hispanics: there are a great many living in the United States, there are many cultures and subgroups comprising "Hispanics," and many Hispanics have lived in the territory occupied by the United States for a very long time. The term "Hispanic" is derived from the Latin word for Spain (*Hispania*). (15:20) In the United States, some consider the word "Hispanic" to be a bureaucratic government label used for census purposes. Indeed, the Census Bureau defines Hispanics as residents of the United States who are of Spanish-speaking ethnic groups, origin, or descent. (32) This categorization is relatively new, appearing for the first time in government reports in 1978. (15:20)

In fact, the federal government has been slow to recognize the importance of differentiating this minority. The landmark 1970 Census was the first to enumerate those of Spanish origin or descent, thereby distinguishing between Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans. There were also separate categories for Central and South Americans, and "others." (29:2) Previous iterations included a variety of labels such as Latino, la Raza, Spanish-speaking, country of origin, Spanish surname, etc. The census effort is further complicated by the fact that Hispanics are an ethnically and racially diverse group. They include many heterogeneous cultures, indigenous languages, and dialects. In other words, it is possible to be ethnically Hispanic and racially Black or White at the same time. As a result, any discussion of demographics must account for these statistical anomalies.

Using more recent data, Mexican Americans comprise the largest subgroup of Hispanics in the United States, followed by Central and South Americans, and Puerto Ricans. The smallest subgroups are made up of Cuban Americans and Caribbean Islanders. (30) (Figure 1)

The U.S. population, now about 270 million, is expected to rise by 130 million in the next 50 years; the largest growth is predicted to occur within the Asian and Hispanic communities. In 1990, Hispanics made up nine percent of the nation; they are expected to be almost a quarter of the population in the next two generations. California claims more than 30 percent of their population as Hispanic and that proportion is expected to rise to 40 percent within the next several years. (16:34) Because of higher birth rates among immigrants and other non-White populations, Whites are predicted to comprise only a simple majority (53%) by the middle of the Twenty-First Century. This demographic phenomenon is often referred to as "the browning of America." (28:5)

## **HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Figures are very useful in creating a profile of Hispanics, but they do not give us a feel for the distinct histories of three prominent subcultures: Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans. The annals of the American Southwest have been clearly shaped by Chicanos (Mexican Americans). The Southeast is a direct reflection of the Cuban American influence. Augmenting the character of the Northeast are the Puerto Ricans and Central and South American immigrants, who represent a large percentage of the urban population.

### **Mexican Americans**

We must be reminded that Mexican Americans should generally not be regarded as immigrants, but rather indigenous people of the Southwest. It is ironic they are treated as foreigners in what is their native

Population of the United States 264 M

Hispanic Population of the United States 28.4 M

Mexican American 18.0 M

Central & South American 4.1 M

Puerto Rican 3.1 M

Cuban American 1.1 M

"Other" Hispanic 2.1 M

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (March, 1996), Current Population Survey Report (PPL-72). Online. <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/hispanic/cps96/tab01-1.txt>

land. Nobel laureate John Steinbeck expressed this sentiment in *The Grapes of Wrath*:

- Once California belonged to Mexico and its land to Mexicans; and a horde of tattered feverish Americans poured in. And such was their hunger for land that they took the land...and they guarded with guns the land that they had stolen...Then, with time, the squatters were no longer the squatters, but owners. (26:240)

Spanish exploration in the 16th Century ranged from St. Augustine to San Diego, as explorers established missions along the way. Juan Ponce de Leon first arrived in Florida in 1513, and founded America's oldest permanent settlement, St. Augustine, in 1565--roughly 55 years before the pilgrims set out from Plymouth, England, in the Mayflower. As early as 1598, Juan de Onate began the colonization of New Mexico. More recently, in 1836, Texans under Sam Houston, including some *tejanos* (Mexican-Texans), defeated Santa Anna's army at San Jacinto. Texas became an independent republic, and in 1845, achieved statehood. (9:3-4)

In modern American history, the Mexican-American War (1846-48) is not regarded as a monumental event. However, Mexico lost half of its territory to the expanding United States. The territory ceded in the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* was barely populated; nevertheless, Mexicans know that California, Arizona, and New Mexico were lost to them in that war. Overnight, Mexicans in the borderlands became U.S. citizens. Though the borders were forcibly annexed and Anglo culture officially imposed, Mexican cultural patterns were already deeply imbedded throughout the Southwest.

During the Mexican Revolution (1910-20), hostilities between the two countries escalated with the occupation of Veracruz by U.S. forces and culminated in General Pershing's famous search for Pancho Villa. (29:7) In the late 1960s, the radical Mexican-American movement adopted the word "Chicano" (which typically connoted lower socioeconomic class), and many Chicano Studies programs taught that the "Mexican Republic" extended well into present day Kansas and Oklahoma, including parts of Utah and Nevada, and everything south and west of there. Additionally, they wanted to eliminate the misconception that Columbus "discovered" America, instead, holding the Aztecs and Mayans as their founding fathers.

The aftermath of Guadalupe Hidalgo is metaphorical for many Mexican American activists who are reviving "*Aztlan*" and "*Reconquista*" as symbols of national ideology and unity. (29:5) *Aztlan* is the ancestral homeland of the Aztecs thought to be located somewhere in the American Southwest. (1:1) The legacy of Chicano nationalism and Mexican history raises the possibility that Mexican-Americans may elect to align themselves in the future within the Mexican civilization continuum. This concept of "Mex-America" has acquired a certain legitimacy in academic circles and is underscored by the practical uncertainty of where Mexico ends and Southern California begins.

Political activists also talk about "reclamation" which is far more plausible than traditional assimilation. This concept is being fueled by the major political parties of Mexico, who are taking steps to allow Mexican immigrants to retain their citizenship in Mexico while acquiring citizenship in the United States. Thus, Mexican Americans could conceivably be voting in two national elections in the future. (16:35)

## **Puerto Ricans**

Puerto Rico was first visited by Christopher Columbus in 1493, and it remained a Spanish colony until it was ceded to the United States in 1898 by the Treaty of Paris, ending the Spanish-American War. United States citizenship was extended in 1917, and in 1950, the U.S. Congress prescribed a process of instituting self-government for Puerto Rico, resulting in "Commonwealth" status for the island. (21:2) Almost four million United States citizens live in Puerto Rico, making it the largest and most populated U.S. territory. Since Puerto Ricans are American citizens at birth, their movement to and from the United States is defined as migration, not immigration. Additionally, as citizens, they are able to serve in the military and enjoy most of the privileges of citizenship, except they don't vote in federal elections nor do they pay federal income tax.

Puerto Rican immigration is historically linked to economic development in the United States. The largest migration of Puerto Ricans occurred during the period from 1946-1964. (24:3) Unlike most Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans can always go back if they choose. This has given rise to almost perpetual movement between the mainland and the island. As such, it may be difficult for Puerto Ricans to achieve a sense of belonging to either the island or, for many, to the *Nuyorican* culture. (9:10)

In his 1989 State of the Union Address, President George Bush urged Congress to take the steps necessary to allow the people of Puerto Rico to express their wishes regarding their political status. As a result, the Government of Puerto Rico conducted a non-binding plebiscite in 1993, and none of the three propositions received a majority vote (commonwealth - 49%, statehood - 46%, and independence - 4%). (21:3) Puerto Ricans had voted twice previously to maintain their status as a Commonwealth of the United States.

On March 4, 1998, the U.S. House of Representatives passed, by a narrow margin (209-208), a special referendum to again allow Puerto Rico's residents to choose whether they want statehood, independence, or to remain a Commonwealth. (10:A1) The bill, if it were to become law, would afford Puerto Ricans the chance of self-determination that would set into motion a ten-year transition, though both the Congress and the Puerto Rican legislature would have final approval over any status change in 2008 or later. Opponents of the measure note Puerto Rico is a distinct culture, predominantly Spanish-speaking, and statehood would mean a gradual end to these features. Other issues, such as the cost of adding a less prosperous state and the impact of six or seven new seats in the House and two new Senators, are also being debated. Supporters of the bill argue Puerto Rico can remain true to its culture and retain its language, while becoming a state.

The language question is significant, since English and Spanish are the co-official languages of Puerto Rico and most of the island's school curriculum is conducted in Spanish. Only a quarter of the island's 3.8 million people speak fluent English, according to the U.S. Census. (11:2A) The March 1998 vote followed a rejected attempt to attach a special provision establishing English as the official language of the United States. The amendment, sponsored by Representative Gerald Solomon (R-NY), Rules Committee Chairman, cautioned that Canada was nearly torn apart with a secession vote by French-speaking Quebec. The United States currently has no "official" language, yet there are provisions that all state business be conducted in the language of the Constitution (i.e., English).

Aside from the Puerto Rican population (located largely in the Northeast), the issue of Puerto Rico's status has very little political momentum among Cuban Americans, Mexican Americans, and other Hispanic groups in the United States, though lawmakers are cautiously courting Hispanic voters in their districts. A similar "statehood" bill is pending in the Senate, and it seems unlikely it will make the legislative schedule of the 105th Congress, particularly since the bill does not have the support of Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-LA). (10:A17) The House faces the prospect of starting over again if the bill stalls and Congress ends its session in the fall. The future of the nation will be reshaped if a new state is added.

### **Cuban Americans**

Cuban Americans are the product of three distinct waves of immigration: the immediate post-Castro exiles (1959-62), the anti-Communist refugees (1963-71), and the *Marielitos* (1980). Those that fled the Communist Revolution tend to align themselves with other European immigrants who equate their immigration with political unrest and see themselves as invited guests of the United States. They joined a large Cuban community already in Florida dating back more than one hundred years. Between 1959 and 1960, 64,000 Cubans arrived in the United States. By the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, 181,000 more had sought refuge. Cubans continued to arrive by the tens of thousands, and in 1971, under a program of family reunification, nearly 300,000 more arrived here. (9:12) The *Marielitos* came to the United States during a seven-week air and sealift from Cuba to the United States. Though their mass evacuation was aided by the U.S. Government, they arrived to both scorn and sympathy from the Cubans of the earlier waves because many believed the image of well-established Cuban Americans would be tarnished. Research concludes they have been less financially successful than their predecessors. (3:54-56)

In general, Cuban Americans tend to be very well organized, politically active, and have benefited from their entrepreneurial efforts. The future for this significant subgroup may be linked to the possibility of Cuba reverting to a non-communist form of government. However, a 1997 poll showed a majority of "golden exiles" and roughly 85 percent of all Cuban Americans would not return to Cuba if the communist regime were replaced with a more democratic government. (5:1093)

## **The Others**

The distinct histories and experiences of Hispanic Americans would be incomplete without discussing the Central and South Americans and Caribbean Islanders. These groups encompass those who have generally immigrated to the United States more recently, prompted by significant social and economic events in their homelands, including: the revolutions and political upheavals in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Columbia, and Peru; and civil wars in Nicaragua, Panama, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Ecuador. In fact, Southern California's most rapidly growing populations are the Salvadorans and Guatemalans. The 1990 Census revealed almost 400,000 in these communities. (18:1) New York City's emerging Dominican and Colombian communities make up a sizable share of that Hispanic population. More than 330,000 Dominicans and 90,000 Colombians, in addition to nearly 1.4 million other Hispanics, live there. (See Figure 1 for U.S. Hispanic composition.) (7:1)

## **A FOCUS ON MILITARY RECRUITMENT**

Generations of Hispanics have served and sacrificed in the United States Armed Forces. This proud tradition is reflected by scores of veterans. Some were Medal of Honor recipients and others achieved flag/general officer or the top enlisted ranks; all were patriots. But the military of the next century will require even more Hispanics to take up arms and follow in those heroic footsteps, since their national population is projected to increase.

The draft was ended in 1973, and thereafter the military has relied totally on volunteers. Recruiting success is vital to the all-volunteer force and some key factors in recruiting are quantity, diversity, and quality of the recruits. There have been a host of circumstances working against the Department of Defense (DoD) in terms of attaining *quantity*. The military endured a precipitous decline in the pool of eligible young men and women for some 20 years, which has finally ebbed, and we should see steady increases in their numbers. Enlistment propensity has been declining for years and all services have experienced serious cuts in recruiting resources. Additionally, military recruiting is disadvantaged by the strong economy and low unemployment. College enrollment for the 18 - to - 21-year-old cohort is also increasing, which further reflects a strong national economy and severely impacts the recruiting pool.

Despite these obstacles, the military Services are working to achieve social *diversity* in their enlisted ranks and officer corps, representing the demographics of the population at large. Since Hispanics constitute one of the largest and fastest growing minority groups in the country, it should come as no surprise they are a recruiting target of the all-volunteer forces. Their population is expected to reach nearly 14 percent of the U.S. population by 2010, and their numbers could easily reach 65 million by 2030, and 96 million by 2050. Not only is this group growing rapidly, but it is very young. (33)

Recruit *quality* is also of paramount consideration since the military operates in a demanding and highly technical environment. The primary challenge to recruiting large

numbers of Hispanics is a lack of sufficient educational qualifications. A 1996 report shows the Hispanic high school dropout rate nationwide is 38 percent--four times the rate for Whites and twice the rate for African Americans. (17:1) Since most Hispanics are of Mexican origin, language may be a contributing factor. On the brighter side, of the high school graduates in this group, 27 percent were attending college in 1996, though Whites were more than twice as likely to earn a Bachelor's Degree than Hispanics. (31:2-3)

While minorities are currently overrepresented in the force structure, the distribution of racial/ethnic minorities is not reflective of the U.S. population. (See Figure 2) Some within DoD hope to shape a racial/ethnic force composition that mirrors the forecasted general population. One plan, the "Enhanced Opportunities for Minorities" initiative from the Secretary of the Navy, John Dalton, in 1994, directed the Navy and Marine Corps to ensure both its officer and enlisted components reflected society by the year 2000. The plan aspired to increase minority accessions from all sources according to a "12/12/5" scheme (12% African Americans; 12% Hispanics; and 5% Asians, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans). (6) To ensure proportional representation in the future, plans will need to be revised to 13/13/6 (2005), 14/19/8 (2030), and 15/24/10 (2050). (33)

The military's diversity efforts are largely focused on the commissioned officer corps, which is the most disproportionate. An imbalance in diversity between the officer and enlisted personnel might result in perceptions of inequitable treatment or lack of fairness. Similar patterns of underrepresentation may have contributed to the racial polarization experienced by the military of the late 1960s. The lack of senior ethnic role models and mentors may contribute to lowering incentive for junior personnel to aspire to careers in the military.

In recruiting Hispanics, not only are the four military Services competing against the nation's colleges and businesses for the same applicants, but they are also competing against other segments of the defense industrial complex. This includes DoD civil servants and defense contractors, who have also committed themselves to an aggressive workforce diversity campaign. Additionally, equal opportunity legislation and case law, which prevent discrimination, may, in some instances, actually be hindering creative minority enticements. Certainly, a coordinated effort is needed to increase Hispanic accessions.

## **LANGUAGE ISSUES**

As previously stated, English is not the "official" language of the United States. During the 19th and 20th Centuries, America's linguistic diversity grew as successive waves of Europeans and Asians immigrated to the United States, and Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines were colonized. Though many languages have always been a part of American culture, there are recurring debates over establishing an official national language. Restrictive language laws have been enacted periodically, usually in response to booms in immigration, which served to "Americanize" the immigrants and exclude "undesirables."

However, our nation generally has a tradition of language tolerance. English is one of the many languages spoken in early America, and one strength of American democracy is its ability to absorb features of many cultures. According to the 1990 Census, Americans speak more than 300 languages, and while the overwhelming majority of U.S. residents (96 percent) are fluent in English, approximately 10 million residents are not English literate. (34:1)

Historically, the discussions regarding designating English as the official language encompass providing a common means of communication and encouraging immigrants to actively participate in the democratic process. Immigrants themselves recognize the importance of learning English. A 1997 Dade County (FL) survey showed "98 percent of Hispanic parents wanted their children to become 'perfectly' fluent in English." (28:91) Twenty-three states, most in the West and South, have adopted laws declaring English as their official language. (25)

The current English-only advocates, *US English* and *English First*, are working to restrict the use of languages other than English in government and even private business, and eliminate bilingual education. They have also sponsored language amendments to the Constitution without success. At the other end of the spectrum is a group called *English Plus*, an organization favoring bilingualism or multilingualism for all Americans. (28:90) Both sides of this debate agree that immigrants must learn English to succeed, but the methods of learning English and the restrictions imposed while getting there are the critical variables separating the sides.

The *Bilingual Education Act of 1968*, a product of the Civil Rights Movement, was intended to help Hispanic children learn English. The theory behind bilingual education is that academic instruction is given in the primary language, but students are also taught English. Programs vary between school districts around the country, and about one third of limited-English speaking children get no language help at all (languages with smaller populations such as Tagalog or Thai). (13) But in heavily proportioned Hispanic districts, non-English speakers are typically taught in Spanish, with limited English instruction each day. They are moved into mainstream classes only after passing an English proficiency exam. (12)

Many argue bilingual education is a dismal failure. A 1994 New York City Board of Education Study showed more than 90 percent of the students who started bilingual education in the sixth grade were unable to pass an English language test after three years of bilingual instruction. The students most likely to remain in bilingual classes for four or more years were Hispanic. (22) Additionally, Hispanic children in the California school system have the lowest test scores of any ethnic group and the highest dropout rate (40%).

The national battle over bilingual education is being put to a popular test in California. California seems to be the litmus test for the country as evidenced by their recent frontal assaults eliminating benefits to illegal immigrants and restricting affirmative action. "*English for the Children*" is one key ballot box issue for 1998. Though Spanish was

spoken there for 300 years before California became a state, the initiative would require all students in public schools to be taught exclusively in English unless their parents request otherwise. Children who don't speak English would be placed in English immersion classes, normally for no more than one year. California, with its exploding immigrant population, leads the country in students who are not proficient in English (25% in California, compared with 6.7% nationally).

At first glance, the California proposition to eliminate bilingual education may seem to be a race/ethnicity issue, but actually it is a move supported by minorities and opposed by the government. The referendum has garnered strong Hispanic support (84% favor it). (27:36) Immigrants tend to regard English as the language of success and upward mobility. They also want their children to learn to speak English as early as possible. The federal subsidy for bilingual programs is nearly \$400 million a year and it is clear a number of constituencies would lose money if the proposition passes. (13)

Spanish is fast becoming the nation's second language. With the growth of major Spanish-speaking television and radio stations, increasing numbers of Spanish newspapers and magazines, the constant flow of Hispanics into the United States, and a shrinking hemisphere brought on by the Internet and trade, the Spanish language is assuming a heightened importance in American society. In the future, it may be disadvantageous to be monolingual. The outcome of the California initiative will clearly have future national implications.

## **IMMIGRATION ISSUES**

For many Hispanic Americans, the memorable image of immigration is not Emma Lazarus' "golden door" of the Statue of Liberty, but rather a chain link fence, topped with razor wire and guarded by armed patrols, along the U.S.-Mexico border. Public debate over immigration is volatile and most Americans want fewer immigrants admitted to the United States. In one poll, even the majority of Hispanics believe too many immigrants are entering the country. (36:124) However, the newest referendums, such as bills to scrap bilingual education or eliminate welfare for green-card holding residents, seem to have their sights set on taxpaying, legal immigrants. There are also continuous efforts to cap immigration and plans to make it more difficult to achieve naturalization. This surge in nativist attitudes is not new, and the backlash may be due, in part, to historical inequities in lawmaking.

Our immigration history is reflected in several key pieces of legislation, most often in response to a national economic or political crisis. The *Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882* (not repealed until 1943), was the first to control immigration. Previously, there was no such thing as an illegal alien, since permission was not required to enter the country. The *Immigration Act of 1924* (not repealed until 1965), established a system of quotas by national origin. The *Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952* allowed for the exclusion of those whose political views were not deemed democratic. (28:82)

In 1965, immigration policy changed from a preferential system based upon national origin, to one based on family reunification. As a result, the immigrant population shifted from being overwhelmingly European to include a large number of Asians, Latin Americans, and Caribbean Islanders. Additionally, there was a staggering increase in illegal or undocumented immigration from Latin America. In an effort to curb this illegal immigration (primarily Mexican) across the southern border, the *Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986* provided for employer sanctions and strengthened the Border Patrol, but also provided amnesty for undocumented workers who arrived before 1982. (4:162-163)

On November 8, 1994, California passed the Proposition 187 initiative to deny public education and social services to illegal immigrants. It has proven to be one of the most sweeping restrictions on aliens ever enacted in the U.S. The vote in California passed 59 percent to 41 percent and clearly followed ethnic and economic lines. Also in 1994, the Attorney General of the United States undertook measures (*Operation Gatekeeper*) to virtually seal off the southern border of the United States to illegal crossers. (8:35) To further illustrate the perfusion of the debate, in March, 1998, the Sierra Club voted on a measure to push for limits on immigration as a means of protecting the environment. (35:4A) Opponents noted that overpopulation is a global problem and one that cannot be solved by simply curtailing immigration to the United States.

Hispanics, not unexpectedly, are concentrated in America's gateways. More than three-quarters of all legal immigrants live in six states (California, Florida, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, and Texas) and generally in the urban centers. (19) The 1990 Census revealed that 38 percent of America's foreign born are from Latin America, and more than half of those are Mexican. The real percentages are probably greater since the numbers of illegal aliens can never be fully accounted and most of the undocumented are from that region.

Many Hispanic immigrants are at the bottom of the economic ladder. A 1996 study showed for the first time the Hispanic poverty rate exceeded that of African Americans. In California, where Hispanics are approaching a third of the total population, their educational levels are also far lower than those of other immigrants and they are likely to earn only about half of what native-Californians earn. (16:32)

As demonstrated, U.S. immigration policy is a continuously evolving process. However, since we are a nation of immigrants, our future will unceasingly be shaped by the "new" immigrants who will fill an important niche in the national economy and mainstream America, as their predecessors have done.

## **THE NAFTA FACTOR**

The *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA) triggered a bitterly divisive battle in the U.S. prior to being ratified by Congress in 1994. Four years after its implementation, the results are mixed, with both proponents and antagonists claiming vindication. Trade between the United States, Canada, and Mexico is at record levels, but

experts are still debating the agreement's impact on U.S. jobs. A report released by the Clinton Administration in July, 1997, announced NAFTA had "a modest positive effect" on the American economy. (2) Several Hispanic members of Congress have complained NAFTA has harmed their districts, which tend to be concentrated in textile and light manufacturing jobs and are heavily impacted by the foreign market. (14:12) While they would likely concede the agreement has helped the economy in the aggregate, it may be an issue of constituent politics. Additionally, many environmental watchdog groups claim pollution along the United States-Mexico border has worsened. Experts agree it will likely take five to ten years to determine the full effects of the agreement on the vital elements of labor, economy, business, and the environment. (23)

NAFTA was predicted to create higher wages for Mexican workers, enabling them to buy more American goods, and reduce their pace of undocumented migration to the United States. Poverty is inexorably linked to pressure to move north, as evidenced by the mass migration of Mexicans in the late 1980-90's. This prompted the anti-immigrant movement, which was crystallized in California with the passing of *Proposition 187* denying welfare, medical, and educational benefits to illegal immigrants. Highlighting a related issue, a 1996 Cornell University study "found that 62 percent of U.S. companies surveyed [used] the threat of moving to Mexico to hold down wages" in the U.S. (2)

The Clinton Administration has proposed a plan to sequentially expand the regional free-trade zone linking the rest of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Chile, and then to include the remainder of the Western Hemisphere. For Hispanics, NAFTA expansion breeds hope of creating an economic community of 250 million Spanish-speakers and may prove to be the vehicle which incorporates a (post-Castro) pro-democratic Cuba. Most business executives also favor expanding the pact. The debt crises, spiraling double-digit inflation, and slow growth, which were endemic of Latin and Central America in the early 1980s, have seemingly been stemmed in the 1990s, since Latin America is one of the world's fastest growing regions and has a continuously improving economic outlook. The future of the first major hemispheric trade bloc is already taking shape. The groundwork includes regional businesses making new contacts, forming new partnerships, and stimulating co-investments which may precipitate the establishment of the Western Hemisphere Free Trade Agreement (WHFTA).

## **SUMMARY**

Hispanics have made an indelible mark on the history and culture of the United States. As we enter the Twenty-First Century, the myths of the melting pot and total assimilation appear naïve, since there has been a considerable resurgence of ethnicity. We will either be a nation who fully embraces our cultural pluralism and multilingualism or one that disparagingly separates along ethnic, social, racial, or economic lines.

The future requires that Americans--all Americans not just Hispanics--help build a diverse, technologically sophisticated and cosmopolitan society with concern for human values and principles. To build this American society requires trust and knowledge. With

consideration, courage, and understanding, all of which lead to wisdom, the tapestry of a modern America will continue to flourish. (20)

Hispanics have been vital contributors in U.S. society for many generations. Eliminating barriers constraining cultural, educational, economic, and intellectual partnerships can help America's transition into a new millennium. The more we learn about each other, the more knowledge we have of our own experiences. The United States' leadership by example can contribute to a vibrant, diverse global community of tomorrow.

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## APPENDIX A

### SELECTED HISPANIC WEB SITES

Listed below are some of the many outstanding Internet web sites on Hispanic subjects. Those listed are simply a good starting point to do some surfing in this area. Since the Web is a very fluid medium, the addresses may change without notice. As any experienced web surfer knows, often the best sites are the ones you discover by accident. Many of the topic explanations are taken directly from the site.

#### WEB ADDRESS TOPIC

<http://www.hisp.com>

This site offers online access to *Hispanic* magazine and is a good starting point to link to other Hispanic sites.

<http://www.cgs.edu/inst/trc.html>

This is the home of the "Tomas Rivera Policy Institute," dedicated to conducting timely and objective policy-relevant research on issues of concern to the nation's Hispanic community.

<http://www.mercado.com>

This site describes itself as an "online magazine and marketplace showcasing the richness and color of the Latino culture."

<http://www.hispanstar.com>

This is the home of a Hispanic business news magazine for professionals, executives, and business owners. The site also includes a résumé referral service and a databank for timely intelligence on the Hispanic economic market and demographics.

<http://www.hispanic.org>

This is a reference site for Hispanic institutions.

<http://www.hacr.org>

Home of the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility (HACR), this site publishes studies on employment, procurement, and governance detailing the activities of Hispanics in corporate America.

<http://www.latinolink.com>

This site offers web links to Latino news, business, arts and entertainment, lifestyles, chatrooms, etc.

<http://www.coloquio.com>

This web site offers links into databases of Hispanic countries, Spanish language magazines, Hispanic culture, Who's Who in the Latino world, and more.

<http://www-library.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/adams/shortcu/chic.html>

This site connects to Stanford University's extensive collections on the history and contemporary experience of Hispanic Americans, and in particular Mexican-Americans.

<http://www.latinoweb.com/allusers.html>

LatinoWeb is a virtual information center for Latino resources. Its mission is to empower the Latino community by providing a gateway on the Internet where private, non-profit, and public sectors can exchange information freely.

<http://www.mundonet.com>

MundoNet is a business solution provider for the Latin American marketplace, positioned to help businesses reach the Latin market via the Internet.

<http://www.saludos.com>

This web site is dedicated to promoting Hispanic careers and education. The site is supported by the *Saludos Hispanos* magazine.

