

# The migration and assimilation of mexican americans

Countries, United States



The Migration and Assimilation of Mexican Americans The migration of Mexican Americans has been a long journey. The road in which most have taken is one of sacrifice and hard-work. A road paved with the dreams and hopes, faith, determination, and the forbearance to achieve all that this land has to offer. The subject to be discussed is how Mexican Americans have migrated and how they were assimilated into " American" society. The history of Mexican Americans migration dates back to the twentieth century, which are closely associated to the growth of the railroads and irrigated agriculture. Economic conditions in Mexico caused hundreds of thousands of Mexicans to make new beginnings in the United States in the years from 1917 to the outbreak of the Great Depression in 1929 (Compean, n. d.). Because of the expansion of sugar beets in Idaho, many Mexican migrant workers were recruited to the basin of the Columbia River. An increase in the demand for labor was seen when recruiters for the railroad companies and agriculture started to move out to the southwestern states and the borders cities in northern Mexico because many Mexicans voluntarily enrolled to find employment and a better life in the United States (Compean, n. d.). On the other hand, many traveled to the areas of Oregon, Idaho, and Washington on their own because they received word about work opportunities. However, The Great Depression drastically slowed Mexican migration to those regions, but it did not fully come to a halt. Agriculture started to increase in volume because of World War II coming into place and so the demand for labor also increased. Recruiters, again, went in search for Mexicans and Mexican Americans to work the fields. Thousands from the regions of northern Mexico and the Southwest responded to this call to engage in hard and unceasingly

hard work in the fields and orchards. At this time the federal government also joined in this struggle by coming to an agreement with Mexico to import Mexican contract workers, who became known as braceros, to harvest crops in the Pacific Northwest and other regions of the country (Compean, n. d.). Many criticized the Bracero program indicating that it was an indentured alien program and a system of cross-border labor exploitation. Many Mexicans and Mexican Americans were not all eligible for the Bracero Program. Only healthy, landless, and surplus male agricultural workers from regions not experiencing a shortage in labor were allowed to be part of the Bracero Program contract (Hernandez, 2009). In the post-World War II years that the agricultural work opportunities continued to increase and attract Mexicans and Mexican Americans to such states as Oregon, Idaho, and Washington. An increase in the Mexican American migrant "settling out" of the migrant stream to search for year-round employment and to establish roots close to where they worked was becoming more predominated. Many plants were erected providing more employment and education was also provided for their children. It could be clearly seen that an assimilation process was occurring because Mexican Americans were able to establish communities. As a subordinate group, they have taken on many similarities or characteristics of the dominant group. Religion-based celebrations and customs also encouraged ethnic fellowship and the continuity of Mexican culture among Mexican American communities in the Pacific Northwest. Many of the assimilated features among the Mexican American people were that of volunteer, cultural, and political associations, which has played an important role in the building Mexican American communities in the

Columbia River Basin (Compean, n. d.). Before 1970, a small amount of inhabitants with poor levels of education and discrimination prohibited many from any purposeful political participation in the community where they reside. Mexican Americans will continue striving to shape politics and in the Columbia River Basin as they become citizens. As second-generation descendants; Mexican Americans will continue to obtain education to have the opportunity for voting, erecting businesses, and to contribute important factors to the cultural life of the region. The Mexican American subordinate group has had a great deal an impact not just in the past but well into the present regarding the agricultural department here in the United States. Hernandez (2009) stated, " By the turn of the twenty-first century, over one hundred years of Mexican and Latino immigration had forged a large Hispanic population in the United States, which signified a fundamental shift in U. S. demographics and carried a significant impact upon American society and culture. However, the century of mass migration from Mexico and, more recently from Central America, was dictated by developments that spanned far beyond the borders of the United States. Uneven capitalist development and U. S. foreign policy framed the story of Latino immigration to the United States, " (pp. 28). References Compean, M. (n. d.). Mexican Americans in the Columbia basin. Retrieved from <http://archive.vancouver.wsu.edu/crbeha/ma/ma.htm> Hernandez, Kelly Lytle. OAH Magazine of History, Oct2009, Vol. 23 Issue 4, p25-29, 5p Schaefer, R. T. (2006). Understanding Race and Ethnicity (10th ed.). : Prentice-Hall.