

Mexican and american mexican

Countries



Mexican American forms one of the most oldest and largest of ethnic communities living in USA. The overwhelming majority of Mexican Americans live in four southern US states, although many of them are spread also in upper northern parts. Spanish Mexicans were among the first people to explore and inhabit USA, even before arrival of western settlers. Later, as USA expanded its territories after the Mexican war of 1846, Texas was annexed from Mexico and thousands of Mexicans automatically found themselves as part of United States, forced to assimilate themselves with a distinct culture.

The assimilation of Mexicans has been a very slow and comparatively unaccomplished process and ethnic Mexicans have always formed a distinguished niche for them, continuing in their traditional docile and peaceful outlook that stands at sharp contrast with materialist and high paced American lifestyle. This paper analyzes the social, political and economic factors that have guided the relation between Americans and Mexican Americans

History of Mexican American Relation

Spanish explorers had conquered Mexico by 16th century and they used Mexican territories as base to continue their exploration of USA. As the Spanish empire crumbled, Mexico struggled to get its independence, which it achieved in 1826. However, Mexican independence was not a sanguine affair by all accounts and there were numerous issues of internal discord, the chief one them being the problem of Texas. Mexico had allowed American settlers to inhabit the barren and desolate landscapes of its northern states, bordering with USA that included, Texas and California in particular.

However, the number of American settlers increased dramatically in these areas, and it reached to the proportion that Americans began to dominate the political and economic life of these areas. The dominance of Americans started episodes of conflict between the two people as Americans would not accept the hierarchical, state centric and rather outdated political and social model of Mexican people and this caused frequent incidents of friction among them and Mexican authorities. The American settlers of northern Mexican border areas definitely perceived that their future lay with a far more prosperous, secure and economically sound USA than a comparatively regressive and stagnant Mexico. Meanwhile US senators also perceived the economic and strategic importance of these northern bordering states.

The troubles in these areas rapidly snowballed into a major problem when Texas seceded from Mexico in 1836, a decision that Mexico did not recognize. As the mutual affinity of both Texas and US was to each other, USA formally annexed Texas and as result Mexico entered in a two years war with USA. The results of war were disastrous for Mexico and it lost more than one third of its territories to USA at the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

However, the effects of the war were not limited to mere annexation of territories but also of Mexican people living in this huge geographical area who overnight became subjects of USA.

The relations among Americans/Yankees and Mexicans were always strained due to superior attitude of Anglo-Americans that had always made them behave with certain arrogance towards Mexicans. In this context, the results of war were more humiliating, and the loss of national land created a lasting

perception of injustice and wrong that stayed with American Mexicans for decades, and to an extent even today.

Alienation of Mexican Americans

Of all the major ethnic groups living in USA, the Mexican American community is unique in several respects. Despite their living in a predominantly American society, they have been able to preserve their value system, their culture and tradition, their family structure and their belief, a fact that has puzzled many social scientists. Although the likeliest explanation of this phenomena relates to the fact that most of the Mexican-American and newly arrived Mexican immigrants continued to settle in southern states of USA, bordering with Mexico, providing a sense of continuousness and native familiarity that helped them to stay in their niches.

However, this is only partially true and doesn't throw full light upon the causes. A major reason of separate and distinguished Mexican identity has been long lasting grievances of many Mexicans on account of their forced assimilation in USA and subsequent highhandedness of Americans towards Mexicans after the war years. The American superiority in terms of education and affluence when contrasted with general level of impoverishment, illiteracy, and ignorance of early Mexican Americans definitely presented a great divide between two people with a firm notion that any assimilation among them would be impossible.

This stereotype further caused Mexican to recede in their self formed shell, and minimize their interaction with one of most rapidly changing and

advancing world, of which they had become an unwilling part. Even the fact they were granted all the rights as any other American citizen and no discrimination, at theoretical and ideological level was practiced with them, it did not help in their assimilation in an completely alien and foreign political and social system. As a matter of fact, the very decisions of American government allowing complete political and religious freedom to Mexican population at the time of Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo allowed Mexican people to preserve their cultural and traditional identity in the great cultural potboiler called USA.

However, the ground political, social and economic realities worked to gradually dilute the barriers that Mexican American had created around them. Slowly many of them started to interact with the mainstream society as they realized the necessity of assimilation in order to exist in circumstances that had changed irrevocably. Most of the Mexican Americans fanned out, taking participation in the world around them, though maintaining their cultural roots intact. Those with deeper sense of wrong and who found new system unacceptable, took violent methods of protests while some who completely failed to get assimilated continued to live isolated lives.

Although some dissatisfied Mexicans tried to express their anger through means of violence, in general the Mexicans rejected violence as expression tool, for they realized that through peaceful course alone they could ensure the survival in a largely Anglo USA. As the Mexicans realized their future destiny to be intertwined with USA and their new status as Mexican Americans, they also gradually accepted the new political and social system.

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Mexican Americans formed their own political parties, elected representatives in the democratic processes and for a time become influential political force in the southern states, owing to their numerical superiority. The Mexican political leaders tried to protect the rights and privileges of their people to the best extent possible for them, notwithstanding the fact that among themselves there were frequent instances of both political and economic exploitation.

However, the influence of Mexican politics lasted only as long as they could held to their numerical superiority. As the southern states were connected to rest of the country through extensive system of railways by 1880s, the inflow of North Americans (Yankees) reached steadily, and soon they outnumbered the native Mexicans to end their political and even cultural influence, gradually absorbing them in the Yankee mainstream. As the general trend showed in perspective, Mexicans Americans were successful in preserving their cultural roots and identity in all those places where they enjoyed numerical superiority, such as Southern Arizona, New Mexico and South Texas. In other places, where they were outnumbered, they become American Mexicans from Mexican Americans.

The composition of Mexican Americans changed after the heavyimmigrationof Mexicans in USA in early 20th century, when USA offered much better employment opportunities. For a considerable time, the immigrants identified themselves merely as workers in an alien land, while culturally mingling with their own countrymen. But since 1960s Mexican community has seen wave of cultural liberation and social assimilation and integration in the mainstream American system.

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