

# Culture of hispanic latino americans



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One of the fastest growing and the most interesting of origins come from is Hispanic/Latino Americans. I preferred this ethnic group as it the biggest growing populations in the US so I can healthier relate to them. Additionally, my attention upon achieving my Paralegal degree is inside Human Trafficking as well as Sex Trade which engage this Hispanic/Latino Americans in the midst of others. Furthermore, my son-in-law is Hispanic American also for that reason I would like to know more concerning his culture.

Being a fast growing community, one way or another, we as Anglo-Non Hispanic Americans have an association with them. For my part, my son-in-law is a Hispanic American, and I want to learn more of his very rich culture. Also, we can observe that a lot of actions are being undertaken to make their presence more pronounced in the community. It would no longer come as a surprise then, if the status and acknowledgment of their presence would significantly change in the future. Thus, their culture is worth studying. In retrospect, I can say that my reasons for wanting to study this group and their culture are not just for these reasons. I am interested in a more specific are, which is the involvement of ethnic groups in Human Trafficking and Sex Trade. It can be observed that these unlawful activities primarily targets individuals from the minority group, and in obtaining my Paralegal degree, I have more than a passing fancy for these concerns.

Language and Population: we should first have a basic understanding and appreciation of their culture before going into detail about the concerns that are currently being faced by the people with Hispanic origin. This will then be our reference in the kind of life they are generally living. It was mentioned before that the Hispanic population is the fastest growing community in the

United States. They constitute 11% of the country's population, and surveys have shown that there are approximately 31 million people who have Hispanic origins (Clutter and Nieto). If most races are being identified primarily because of their physical attributes, the Hispanic Americans have a different reason that bind them together. Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese, among others, and basically Asians are being identified because of their eyes and physical appearance. Africans are distinguished because of the color of their skin. For the Latinos, it is different. They cannot trace their origins in just one country (Garcia). When we combine a Cuban, an Argentine and an Argentine, we will see various cultures that do not necessarily coincide. One thing binds them together, and that is their language (Arana). Admittedly, like most other communities who are adapting to new cultures, this is increasingly becoming forgotten. However, it cannot be denied that they are being bound by one language, and this is Spanish (Arana). This is the point of reference for the mixed and diverse cultures that the Hispanos have.

Even so, there had been a steady decline in the fluency of speaking Spanish among the Latinos. This is because of their continuous and increasing interaction with non-Hispanics, which made their practice of their native tongue very limited. At this point, it is very helpful to note the evolution of way the Hispanic Americans see themselves. Increasingly, they are becoming determined to be called in a manner they think befit them. For one, less and less of them have been refer to themselves as Americans (Englekirk and Marin). Most of them are more comfortable in still referring to

themselves as Mexicans. Being Hispanic or Latino, seems to be more acceptable to them, than be identified to be the Americans.

Differences and similarities between Anglo-Non Hispanic Americans and Hispanics/ Latino American are not several sometimes people attribute who and what they are today to where they came from, and what kind of family brought them up. Many studies have tried to link one's behavior, health, and other things with family history and genetics. There still exist the debates and discussions about nature as opposed to nurture. In all these things, family history, including one's family tree, becomes prominent. Indeed, in my own case as an Anglo-Non Hispanic American, my family became very influential in the person that I have become.

Raised as a Methodist, celebrations of Christian holidays such as Christmas and Easter happen in our homes as Anglo-Non Hispanic Americans, Perhaps this added joy to childhood, as I cannot imagine one without the festivities which brought simple joys to me then. Admittedly, ours was not a very religious family, and I can say that it is more so now than then, as we stopped going to church as a family while I was still in high school.

As far as working is concerned, I can honestly say that the work ethic in my family is indeed very strong as Anglo-Non Hispanic Americans. This seems to be the natural tendency for the women in the family. Proof to show, all the women in our family worked outside the home. This is in addition to the responsibility of taking care of the children and of the homes themselves. My adoptive father and mother, although the latter is not very close to me, were teachers/administrators. My stepmother was employed in the same

profession as my adoptive parents. Even my grandmothers on both sides worked as well. This is not to say, though, that ours has broken away from the traditional way of living that has been in existence during our time. While I was growing up, girls were not groomed for college. They were not encouraged to pursue higher education in order to have careers of their own. We have not been set to conquer the world, as the boys in the family do. What came about in my life was the trend during those days. I started working while I was still in high school, married afterwards, and raised my own children. At this day and age, women no longer do that. Careers are being established as much by men as by women.

The closest similarity between Anglo-Non Hispanic Americans and Hispanics/Latino American is probably the feeling of not being accepted in addition to often being rejected. I have felt that way as an Anglo-Non Hispanic American at times, being adopted but I am sure it does not compare to the degree of their circumstances. It is like salsa and ketchup, which are two very different condiments but both have their own significant and striking features. For their part, the Latinos have distinct family values that are very admirable indeed. Family is the very essence of their living, and this importance and respect that is being accorded to the concept of familial usually extends to more than the immediate family. They go by the conventional norm regarding the father as the head of the family. The mother then, is in charge of everything that is concerned with matters of the home. They feel a strong sense of responsibility for familiar concerns that include, but are not limited to, financial problems, health issues, and such other concerns that affect the state of living at home.

Also, they have certain etiquettes and beliefs that distinguish the Anglo-Non Hispanic Americans and Hispanics/ Latino American from most cultures is the way they talk to each other is one, as they tend to treat each other with formality. If we are to compare this with the American way, which is usually informal and casual in nature, there is indeed a significant difference. It is to be noted that Latinos speak in a loud, fast and animated manner when the conversation is informal in nature. When that is not the case, each conversation is then punctuated in the beginning and in the end, of firm handshakes. Body language and gestures like a peck in the cheek signifies how close a Hispanic individual is to the person one is talking to. Most notable also is the particular attention given by Latinos to their looks and appearance. This, for them, is very much in connection with honor, pride and dignity (Clutter and Nieto). Thus, it is common to see well-groomed and impeccably dressed Hispanic people during social gatherings, church events, and in work. This code of etiquette relaxes during informal events, and tennis shoes and jeans are becoming the popular choice of the people also. In terms of time management though, they are more flexible and less conscious of punctuality than most Americans. Being late is a socially acceptable behavior for the Hispanic people, because that is the kind of culture that they are used to. Also, we have discussed earlier that what binds the people is their language. They remain connected, despite the cultural and historical differences, because of this factor. Considering this, it would be understood then, if they try to lessen their public speaking. It was noted that generally, most Latinos are reserved in public speaking, and this is because of their heavy accent (Clutter and Nieto). Although this may still be true until now, we can say that this is rapidly changing, as most of the

younger generations who are immersed in the American culture, have the tendency to be less fluent of their native language, than of English.

Religion is aspect of their culture that is worth noting is the religion of the Hispanic community. Most of them are Roman Catholics, constituting more than 90% of the population, and this somehow influences the other cultural traditions, practices, and beliefs of said individuals. The core of the Hispanic culture, thus, does not just mean music and food. There is a spiritual foundation in most of the things that they do and believe in. For instance, these people are known for the creativity and hype that is present in their festivities and celebrations. What we do not realize is that they put more weight and significance to the celebrations that is related with religion, like patron saints' days, rather than birthdays and personal festivities.

The same goes true for the situation that the community in question, and my own. Despite being an adopted child, I believe that I lived a privileged life, and I think the same cannot be said for the Latinos. Everything that they have, they have to work for-from the acceptance, trust and respect of the people around them, the food that they place in the table and to the status that they have in society, socially and economically.

### **Employment**

There is one very common misconception for Hispanic Americans, and this is their seeming simple-mindedness (Englekirk and Marin). This is mainly due to the initial impression for those who have first settled in the country. This perception was somehow a root, or a trace for that matter, of the low

impression and general distrust for the Hispanic Americans. They were thought to be of inferior class than the natives.

This view aids in the initial labor and employment opportunities for most Hispanic Americans. They have been involved in agriculture, mining and transportation, nature of work that requires physical, rather than mental abilities. They had more opportunities as compared with the Japanese and other Asians who were banned from working in and migrating in the United States. Thus, it was the Mexicans who had the most opportunities. They were the ideal candidates to work on these manual labors at a lesser cost. During these times, Mexicans flock states like Texas and California, as these are the places where those jobs were in demand. This was during the 1930s. Their employment opportunities improved along with the change in the perception of people of their abilities and skills. Especially with the Equal Employment Opportunity in effect, their rights in the working environment have changed dramatically and brought immense economic and financial security. These new opportunities, the better treatment, and generally the improved situation, was brought about by the after effects of World War II. All aspects of the Hispanic Americans living dramatically improved after said event.

### **Political Situation and Immigration Concerns**

Hispanics/ Latino American political standing and voice as a people is not handed-in in a silver platter. Latinos still are struggling for representation politically, although this would seem to take more time because their bet in the gubernatorial election against Arnold Schwarzenegger has lost (Masci). This is the very person who held the torch in this aspect of recognizance for Latinos all over the United States. On a lighter note, their campaign for more

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participation in the political arena seems to continue, as the Democratic candidate in New York is most likely going to hold a position in the House of Representatives (Griffin). With these events and circumstances in mind, we can see that their campaigns and advocacies to make their standing in society better are getting results, albeit being small and seemingly insignificant at first.

This advocacy for better representation in government seems to have stemmed from several reasons. Leaders of the Hispanic communities claim that they are underrepresented in virtually all aspects. In jobs, they are short-listed, and this results from their limited access to job training programs (Griffin). We cannot say that just because there had been a significant development in the economic and political situation of the Latinos, that the situation no longer needs analysis. If we are to look into the lives of the majority of the Latinos, we will see that there are various flaws that really need attention. One of these would again be the limited access of these people to many of the social programs of the government (Griffin).

There is also the aspect of civil rights implementation and effect on the Hispanic communities in the United States. “ Federal enforcement of civil rights in education, for example, relies on victims of discrimination to file complaints” (Griffin). This remains to be an unexploited avenue for the Latinos, as there are many of them who are hesitant to file complaints against people who slighted them. There are several reasons for this, and one of the major ones would be the consequences that it would bring. No Latino in his right mind would prefer the ill will of the members of the community, and this would cause such person to just keep quiet. Also, there

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are instances, and many of them for that matter, when the Hispanics do not complain simply because they are not familiar or are unaware of the grievance process. What more, there are many who cannot complain because they, themselves are not eligible to. This is when Human Trafficking and other abuses would come into play. There had been many instances in the past when the news carried reports on illegal immigrants. These people have not entered the country through the approved and legal process of the American Embassy. This concern has been one of the primary concerns of the Hispanics then. Many of them entered the country unlawfully and are residing in the United States without proper documents. This makes them prone to abuses, as they would not be able to complain, and neither do they really have the legal backing of the government to protect them from abuses. This immigration concern of the Latinos brought legislators to propose that there be more rigid immigration laws to implement (Griffin). This would certainly affect the chances of many Hispanics who want to enter the country, for their own chance for success. This is one of the issues that are being faced by the community. Along with the social concerns that have been discussed early in this paper, it would no longer come as a surprise if there would be health concerns that the Latin communities in the United States face. Because the majority still faces financial difficulties, health issues are prevalent. This is to be expected because these families would not concern themselves much about basic nutrition and regular check-ups. These are basic factors that make good health, and these basic standards are not being met by these families. Health concerns take the back seat, and survival becomes the priority.

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