

Latinos in the 1990s

In the decade of the 1990s, the Hispanic population of American jumped by 38%, from 22.4 million to 35.3 million (the overall population of the country only increased by 9%).

Demographers were predicting that Latinos would become the nation's largest minority by 2005, being approximately 25% of the total population. Steven M. Gillon, in his book, *The American Paradox, a History of the United States Since 1945*, quoted a bilingual magazine editor:

“If the African American civil-rights slogan was ‘*We shall overcome*,’ the Latino motto will be ‘*We shall overwhelm*.’”

How the increase in the Latino population changed American culture and politics

In 1995, major corporations such as Procter & Gamble, AT&T, Coca-Cola and Sear, spent more than \$1 billion on Spanish-language advertising.

Latinos registered to vote in several key states such as New York, California, Texas, Illinois, and Florida. Between 1994 and 1998, Latino voting increased by 27%. In addition, during the same four years, the number of Latino officeholders statewide increased from 460 to 789.

Mexican and American cultures mixed in the Border States. Banda music emerged in the 1990s. It is a mixture of rock, salsa, country-western, and *norteño* – the traditional folk music of northern Mexico. Banda is neither Mexican nor American; it is a mix of the two.

New York City saw the bodegas emerge on street corners. These neighborhood grocery stores are owned by Dominican entrepreneurs who own stores both in New York and the Dominican Republic. They ship merchandise back and forward between their stores and many owners commute between the two locations.

Latinos were not the major recipients of college education in the 1990s. This belonged to Asian students. Even though Asians were only 4% of the population, they represented 5.4% of all college students. One in four undergraduates at Stanford in California were Asians and one in five undergraduates at Harvard were Asian students.

Latinos, African-Americans and Asians shared a common identity as they were American minority groups but they did not always agree on a common agenda. They did collaborate on defending affirmative action, fighting against police brutality and seeking more government spending on education. However, African-Americans often opposed Latinos in obtaining tax breaks for minority owned businesses or college grants and loans.

The Latino communities were leaders in the demand for more minority representation in the major networks television programs. The National Latino Medical Council led other organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People,

American Indians in Films and Television, and the National Asian-Pacific American media in achieving their goal. Today, there are several cities with multiple, ethnic television stations and the major networks have many of these groups as news anchor personnel, weather, street and sports reporters.

Latinos and blacks disagreed about jobs. The African-Americans allied themselves with the whites as they also feared that this sudden surge in Latino growth would take away their valuable jobs. In the 1980s and 1990s organized labor and segments of the black communities supported tough immigration laws. In 1994, a narrow majority of black voters in California supported Proposition 187, which would have barred any sort of states assistance to illegal aliens. Many Hispanic leaders replied that blacks were overrepresented in the federal government. They were 17% of the civil work force within the government, compared to only 6% for Hispanics.

States with the Largest Latino Populations

State	Latino Population	Percentage in State	Percentage of U.S. Latinos
California	7,687,938	25.8	34.4
Texas	4,339,905	25.5	19.4
New York	2,214,026	12.3	9.9
Florida	1,574,143	12.2	7.0
Illinois	904,446	7.9	4.0
New Jersey	739,861	9.6	3.3
Arizona	688,338	18.8	3.1
New Mexico	579,224	38.2	2.6
Colorado	424,302	12.9	1.9

Sources: United States Decennial Census, 1990 & United States Bureau of the Census, 1991 & U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1991.

Selected Characteristics of Latino families

	Median Family income	Percentage of Families Below the Poverty Level	Percentage of Families Headed by Single Females	Percentage of Persons with Four Years of College or More
Latinos	\$ 23,446	23.4	23.1	9.2
Non-Latinos	\$ 35,183	9.2	16.0	22.2

Source: United States Bureau of the Census