

NOTABLE MEXICAN AMERICANS



Loretta Sanchez



Anthony Quinn



Richard Rodriguez



Hector P. Garcia



Cesar Estrada Chavez



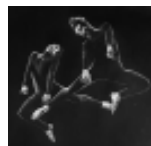
Nancy Lopez



Dr. Ellen Ochoa



Luis Valdez



Jose Arcadio Limon



Rudy Galindo



Alfred Rascon



Carlos Santana

Biographies of these and many more notable Mexican Americans can be found at www.aifl.org/mexican

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION...

The Washington presentation of this exhibit is hosted by the American Immigration Law Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit Organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of immigration law and policy and the value of immigration to American society; to promoting public service and excellence in the practice of immigration law; and to advancing fundamental fairness and due process under the law for immigrants.

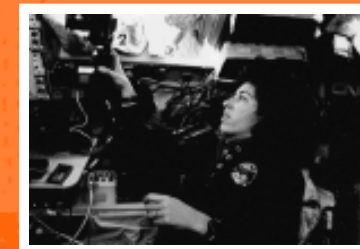


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MEXICAN VOICES
AMERICAN DREAMS
A CELEBRATION OF MEXICAN IMMIGRATION

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INSTANT IMMIGRANTS

The flow of Mexicans to the United States is distinctively different than any other national wave of foreign immigration, if for no other reason than Mexicans are indigenous to the North American continent. The signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 awarded the U.S. the territory that now makes up the states of California, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona, as well as part of New Mexico, Colorado and Wyoming. Ironically, the expansion of cattle ranches and increased fruit production in Mexico's annexed land witnessed the advent of the Mexican migratory worker. During this period, nearly 55,000 Mexican workers filled jobs in agriculture, ranching, mining, and the railroad industry. Despite the Immigration Act of 1917, which imposed harsh regulations on immigrants, the tide of Mexican immigrants swelled to more than ten per cent of all immigration to the U.S..

PROGRESS DESPITE HARSH WORKING CONDITIONS

The Great Depression saw a heightening of discrimination as some people viewed Mexicans as a drain to the economy. In response, the U.S. and Mexican governments co-sponsored a



repatriation program that returned thousands of immigrants to Mexico. Approximately one-sixth of all people of Mexican descent living in the U.S. in 1930, were repatriated by 1939. The tide turned when the U.S. entered World War II in 1942 and labor was siphoned from all sectors of U.S. industry. The U.S. signed a formal Bracero Treaty, allowing approximately 5 million Mexicans into the U.S. with temporary contracts to work for American growers and ranchers. Working conditions were harsh and contracts were often written in English and often not understood by the worker. Humanitarian violations of many Bracero workers brought the program to an end in 1964.

Nonetheless, Mexican immigration to the U.S., climbed steeply during the 1950s. More than 300,000 Mexican Americans served in the U.S. armed forces, earning many military honors. They formed a number of social, political, and service organizations, including the Mexican American Political Association and the American G.I. Forum. Such organizations helped Mexican Americans fight poverty, lack of education, and discrimination.

GROWTH AND ACHIEVEMENT

There are now more than 20 million Mexican Americans in the U.S., constituting fifty-eight per cent of the entire Latino population. Roughly one in four immigrants in the U.S. is of Mexican descent. In fact, by the last decade of the 20th Century, there were more legal immigrants from Mexico alone than from all of the countries of Europe combined. This large number of Mexican Americans represents powerful economic forces and socio-cultural practices. As with immigrants before them, Mexican Americans have achieved all this while maintaining a strong cultural and family heritage.