

History of Hispanics in America

Dr. Justo L. González



Miami, FL

History of Hispanics in America

Intro: I find the title strange. For most Hispanics, "America" is the entire hemisphere. And, there were Hispanics here before this was called "America." The name was suggested by Waldseemüller in 1507.

In any case, I take my task to mean the History and Background of Hispanics in the United States.

Perhaps best to begin with the background, for this is varied, and relates specifically to history. According to the 1980 census, 59.8% of Hispanics in the US were Mexican-American or Mexican; 13.8% were Puerto Rican; 5.5% were Cuban; and 20.9% were "other."

So, the background of most Hispanics in the US is Mexican. The Mexican-Americans

The earliest ancestors of the present Mexican-Americans did not come to this country as immigrants. Rather, it was the United States that engulfed them in its expansionist drive of the middle of the 19th century. Santa Fe was founded 12 years before the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock, and to this day the descendants of those early settlers are often considered newcomers in a nation to which they never migrated, but which migrated to them.

The first stage of that process of American expansion into formerly Mexican territories took place in Texas. That area, a much neglected part of the Mexican state of Coahuila, had been invaded in 1819 by an American adventurer, James Long. Historians still debate how much support Long had from private or government sources in the U.S. In any case, partly in order to dissuade others from similar adventures, and partly in order to open up the region for economic development, Mexico began allowing people from the United States to settle in Texas, on the condition that they embrace the Catholic faith and swear allegiance to Mexico. Quite naturally, people who were willing to change their religion in order to be allowed into Mexico would not be very hesitant to break their oath of allegiance to Mexico. The result was that many of the immigrants were white Americans who believed that they were superior to the mixed-blood Mexican population, and that Texas would be better off under white North American government. As Stephen Austin, one of these immigrants, would later state it, “for fifteen years I have been laboring like a slave to Americanize Texas,” and he would also add that he was fighting for control of Texas against “a population of Indians, Mexicans and renegados, all mixed together, and all the natural enemies of white men and civilization.”

The question of slavery made matters more difficult. Mexico abolished slavery in 1829. The immigrants in Texas, whose wealth often depended on slavery, responded by conspiring to secede from Mexico and join the United States. Such conspiracies had the support of those in the United States who feared the abolitionist movement, and who saw Texas as a possible ally. Others hoped to become rich by speculating on lands the Mexicans would be forced to

abandon. At one point, the American ambassador tried to bribe a Mexican official by offering him \$200,000 for his support for a proposed purchase of Texas by the United States.

Finally, war broke out. The story is well known. The rebels had firearms whose range was three times as great as those of the Mexican army; but the latter was much larger in size, and in a number of encounters, of which that at the mission of El Alamo is the best known, defeated the rebels. Then Sam Houston, in a daring coup-de-main, took the Mexican headquarters and captured the President of Mexico. The President, who for this and a number of other reasons is not well regarded in Mexico to this day, regained his freedom by agreeing to the independence of the Republic of Texas. A stipulation on which Mexico insisted, and to which the United States agreed, was that Texas would remain an independent nation, and not be annexed to the United States. In 1844, by a joint resolution of Congress, Texas was made a state of the Union.

A year later, in 1845, the famous phrase, "manifest destiny," was coined. As then employed, it referred to the national historical task of the U.S. to expand to the Pacific. This involved occupying Oregon, whose possession was then in dispute with the British, and all Mexican territories directly west of the United States. The Oregon question was settled through diplomatic channels. The other was settled by force of arms.

There were many in the U.S. who opposed expansion at Mexico's expense. Earlier, when talk had first emerged along such lines, John Quincy Adams had declared that in a war with Mexico

“the banners of freedom will be the banners of Mexico; and your banners, I blush to speak the word, will be the banners of slavery.” Since this sentiment was still strong, Mexico must fire the first shot. President Polk ordered then General Zachary Taylor to march into territory in dispute with Mexico. A young lieutenant by the name of Ulysses S. Grant, who was part of the expedition, put its purpose succinctly: “We were sent to provoke a fight, but it was essential that Mexico commence it.” The same lieutenant, years later, would suggest the possibility that the horrors of the Civil War were God’s punishment for the war with Mexico, and was convinced that the entire enterprise was part of a conspiracy to increase the number of slaveholding states. In any case, when the Mexicans held their fire, Taylor was ordered to continue advancing until he drew fire. When this happened, Polk protested vehemently, and Congress declared war on Mexico. The war did not last long. It ended in 1848 by virtue of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, by which the United States received more than 3,000,000 square kilometers—the present states of New Mexico, Arizona, California, Utah, Nevada, and part of Colorado—and Mexico accepted the fait accompli of the annexation of Texas. In exchange, Mexico received a payment of \$15,000,000, and the guarantee that the rights and property of Mexicans who decided to remain in the territories that were being ceded would be protected.

The last of these stipulations was never fulfilled, and was increasingly forgotten as the memory of the treaty receded. Those Mexican nationals who had clear title to the land, and who trusted the American government enough to stake their claims, retained their possessions. But most did not trust the new government, did not register their homesteads, and were therefore driven out

by land speculators.

At the same time, Mexicans continued moving north and south across the border. The Rio Grande is hardly a barrier, and for generations Mexicans had crossed it. When the new border was established, the population of what then became the northern states of Mexico continued crossing it as they had before. Then, as newly acquired territories of the United States became integrated with the American economy, and required a larger labor force, Mexicans filled that need. Thus began a steady flow of migration that has not been stemmed until the present. The economic development of the American Southwest began in earnest around 1880, at a time when the native American population had finally been physically subjugated, and railroads established closer links with the East.

The main factor governing that migration has never been the patrolling of the border, but the contrasting conditions in Mexico and the United States. Therefore, the first great wave of Mexican migration in the United States took place in 1909 to 1929. This was the time of the Mexican Revolution, which caused a great deal of disquiet and material destruction in Mexico. It was also a period of prosperity in the United States. It is estimated that during the first three decades of the 20th century, fully one-tenth of the population of Mexico, or one million people, migrated to the United States.

Beginning in 1942, and then more formally in 1951, as a compromise between the interest of American laborers and those of American farmers who needed cheap seasonal labor, the “bracero” program was instituted. This legalized the temporary and seasonal immigration of a number of workers. Many of these stayed in the United States, thus adding to the Mexican-American population. Although officially terminated in the sixties, the bracero program, and variations of it, have continued to exist, sometimes legally, and sometimes illegally. The current immigration law includes a provision for something similar, and the decision already mentioned on the part of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, to allow temporary farm workers into the U.S. on their word that they have done this work before, fulfills the same purpose.

After the end of the Mexican Revolution and the beginning of the Great Depression, immigration from Mexico slackened. The Depression itself caused a backlash against Mexican workers in the Southwest, 400,000 of whom were deported. Many of these had been born in the United States, but this did not preclude their deportation. Immigration then wavered according to conditions on both sides of the border. When the price of oil was high, and Mexico seemed to be on the verge of becoming a rich nation, the flow of immigrants was less. But then the price of oil dropped, Mexico’s economy practically collapsed, the peso lost 99% of its value, and there was another great wave of migration from Mexico to the United States. It was this wave, coupled with the migration of at least half a million refugees from Central America, that resulted in the current immigration law.

Mexican-Americans are not only the largest and the fastest-growing Hispanic subgroup in the United States, but are also the Hispanic group that is most represented in rural and small towns. Only 55% of them live in large metropolitan areas, as compared with 73% for Puerto Ricans and 83% for Cubans. Also, their age distribution more closely resembles that of the population at large, with less concentration on the younger generations than other Hispanic groups. With a median family income (in 1982) of \$16,399, their economic situation is practically at the level of the average Hispanic family (\$16,228), but much higher than Puerto Ricans (\$11,148) and significantly lower than Cubans (\$18,883) and "other Hispanics" (\$19,069).

Mexican-Americans have a long history of poverty and discrimination. In the Southwest, there were laws and practices similar to those applied in the South against blacks. Indeed, the Mexican-American population, which at that time was not as ready to claim its rights as was the black population, benefitted from the civil rights movement. Before that time, there were many public places where Mexicans were not allowed, and the older generation of Mexican-Americans remembers separate schools as well as separate housing at seminaries.

The Mexican-American population has long been divided between those who seek to be assimilated as much as possible into the dominant culture, and those who identify primarily as Mexican-Americans. While this classification may be somewhat simplistic, there is no doubt that tensions exist in the Mexican-American community along these lines. As one of its writers says,

The first class of Mexican Americans described, those who live almost wholly within a Mexican culture, refers to the second class as the *agringados* or the *presumidos*, Mexicans who act like Anglo Americans or who are presumptuous. The second class, on the other hand, calls the first class the *atrasados* or the *pelados*, backward or penniless nobodies.

This division has become more apparent in recent years with the advent of the Chicano movement. The word "Chicano" is an abbreviation of "Mexicano," and in the 1960s became a term by which Mexican-Americans emphasized their uniqueness vis-a-vis both white Americans and Mexicans. While its use has become increasingly common, it is still rejected by some Mexican-Americans who feel that those who use it are too radical.

In any case, one of the most remarkable characteristics of the Mexican-American community in the last two decades has been a search for identity. In this, the Mexican-American community draws from a tradition of long standing in Mexico itself, where the "birth of the Race" has been the subject of much reflection and many literary essays, artistic depictions, etc. In Mexico itself, the emphasis has been on the mixed nature of the Mexican race. This is symbolized in Mexico City in the "Plaza de las Tres Culturas," commemorating the bloody encounter between Cortez and his Indian allies on the one side, and the Aztecs on the other. The inscription commemorating that event says, "There were neither victors nor vanquished. It was rather the painful birth of the Mexican race."

This side of the border, such reflection has continued along the lines of the meaning of "mestizaje," both genetic and cultural. Roman Catholic Father Virgilio Elizondo, of the Mexican

American Cultural Center in San Antonio, has explored the cultural and theological significance of “mestizaje” in his book *Galilean Journey*. He points out that the Mexican-American is no longer a Mexican, nor an American, but the product of a further “mestizaje,” so that Mexican-Americans are no longer at home in either Mexico or the dominant North American white culture.

Since the 1960s, the Mexican-American community has been constantly growing in self-awareness as well as in political participation. It has taken a leading role in the struggle to unionize farm laborers, and in some cities, such as San Antonio and increasingly in Los Angeles, it has supported strong community organizations that have done much to give voice to the needs as well as aspirations of Hispanics as well as of other minorities

The Puerto Ricans

It is estimated that when Columbus first arrived in Puerto Rico, in 1493, there were 50,000 to 70,000 inhabitants on the island. These were Taíno Indians, related to the Arawak peoples of South America. Due to disease and exploitation, by the time the first census was taken, less than 40 years later, there were only 1,158 Indians left on the Island. None of these were free: 675 were outright slaves, and 473 were granted to Spaniards under the system of “encomiendas” —to which we shall return later. There were also 369 whites. However, the majority of the population was composed of black slaves, who numbered 1,523. Thus, the early colonization of Puerto Rico produced not only the almost total demise of the original population

but also the depopulation of the island.

Then Mexico and Peru were conquered. By then the meager gold deposits of Puerto Rico were being exhausted, and new lands beckoned. Laws had to be passed to prevent most of the Spanish population from leaving the island. Eventually, San Juan became one of the main stopping and gathering places for the fleet that periodically carried gold and other riches from the colonies to Spain. Since this necessitated a garrison and fortifications, and Puerto Rico did not produce the financial resources that this required, an annual payment from Mexico was “assigned” to the island in 1586. This was the main source of income for the island during most of the Spanish colonial period, although as time went on coffee and smuggling became increasingly important elements in the economy. By 1800, the total population of the island was 155,426. By then, the Indian population had disappeared, except in the genetic traits that it left in some elements of the population.

The 19th century was the formative period in Puerto Rican culture and politics. As Puerto Rican culture began to take shape out of the ethnic and cultural mix of Indian, Spanish, and African elements, the distinction also became clearer between “peninsulares” and “criollos”—that is, between the white population born in Spain, and those born in Puerto Rico. The former held all political power, while the latter had a measure of economic power and also constituted the intelligentsia of the island. These tensions were exacerbated by news of the independence of the rest of the Spanish colonies in the Americas—except Cuba. Thus, the politically active

Puerto Rican population (slaves and peasants, naturally, were not participants in this debate) became divided among three positions.

Those who supported Spanish domination as it existed, and who wished to see Puerto Rico as closely tied to Spain as possible, the “unconditionalists” or “assimilationists,” saw their ranks enlarged by people of similar ideas who came as exiles from the newly formed republics of Spanish America. The “autonomists,” who sought reforms in Puerto Rico's relations with Spain, formed the Liberal Reformist Party (later, the Puerto Rican Autonomist Party). Finally, there was a growing movement for independence. In the early decades of the century, this was related to the hope that Simón Bolívar would send an expedition to liberate Cuba and Puerto Rico. By mid-century, however, that and similar efforts had failed, and Puerto Ricans and Cubans were working closely together in their struggle for independence. In Puerto Rico, this led to the Cry of Lares on September 23, 1868—17 days before Cuba's parallel Cry of La Demajagua—which was Puerto Rico's Declaration of Independence. The republic that was founded in Lares, however, was short-lived, for it was crushed by the Spanish garrison and the “volunteers”—a militia consisting of “unconditionalists.” Another revolt, this time in Yauco in March, 1897, was also put down by the Spanish.

Meanwhile, the autonomists had gained only one significant victory: the abolition of slavery in 1873. In 1897, however, Spain was hard-pressed. The Cuban War of Independence had been going on for two years, and the Spanish coffers were depleted. The March rebellion in Yauco

made Spain fear that it would soon have in Puerto Rico a situation similar to that which was obtained in Cuba. This and other political factors within Spain itself led to the granting of political autonomy to Puerto Rico in November, 1897.

It was too late. The Cuban War of Independence had led American President William McKinley to intervene with Spain, offering the United States as a mediator, with the final role of a certain arbiter if the peace had not been established by a certain deadline. Spain rejected this last provision. In February, 1898, the battleship Maine blew up in the harbor of Havana. The United States declared war on Spain. In May, the U.S. Navy bombarded San Juan. Two months later, North American troops landed in Guánica. They were not received with hostility by the native population; nor were they particularly welcomed. Many of the autonomists, who had been supporting liberal democratic and free-trade ideas such as were espoused by the United States, lent their support to the new regime. Some of the assimilationists left for Spain. Others continued being assimilationists, although now in favor of the United States. The most distinguished leaders in the struggle for independence remained in exile. A government of military occupation was established in Puerto Rico, and the Treaty of Paris, by which the war ended, granted the Congress of the United States the right to determine the future status of Puerto Rico.

The early decades of the 20th century brought great economic and social changes for Puerto Rico. In 1899, Puerto Rican farmers and peasants owned 93% of the existing farms and estates

in Puerto Rico. The new political situation in the island promoted the influx of American capital, the growth of latifundia, and concentration on cash crops such as sugar and tobacco (coffee was losing ground for a number of reasons). By the early thirties, 60% of the sugar production of the island was controlled by four large American corporations, as well as 80% of tobacco and the totality of maritime commerce. By then, American investment on the island reached \$120,000,000. Puerto Rican tobacco production began to decline in the 1920s, as smokers in the United States turned toward cigarettes instead of cigars (Puerto Rican tobacco was more competitive for making cigars than cigarettes). As sugar production took an increasingly larger share of the land, the number and size of latifundia grew, and more and more peasants lost their land. It was also a time when improved sanitation and medical services led to very rapid population growth, without parallel economic development. Therefore, when the Depression hit in the thirties, Puerto Rico was affected even more harshly than the United States. For that reason, President Roosevelt's administration extended some of the benefits and programs of the New Deal to Puerto Rico.

The political options which had divided Puerto Ricans under Spanish sovereignty continued dividing them under American sovereignty. The Puerto Rican Republican Party supported complete annexation to the United States. Its main opposition, the Union Party, included both those who sought autonomy under the American flag, and those whose ultimate goal was independence. The Union Party won practically every election. This, however, did not mean much, for according to the Organic Law of 1900 the President of the United States appointed

the governor as well as the 11 members of the Executive Council. Only five of these 11 were to be Puerto Ricans. This Council acted both as Cabinet and as the Upper Chamber of the Legislative Assembly. Therefore, the elections which the Union Party consistently won only gave them control of the Chamber of Deputies, whose power was very limited. In any case, struggles continued within the Union Party between autonomists and those who favored independence.

While the new conditions did not bring much political power to Puerto Ricans, they did bring a greater measure of personal freedom. Unions were organized. The separation of church and state, freedom of religion, of assembly and of speech, brought about significant progress in civil liberties. In 1917, through an act of Congress, Puerto Ricans were made citizens of the United States. While the option was left open for those who wished to retain their Puerto Rican citizenship, they would have no political rights, for they would be citizens of a country that did not exist. Nearly 300 people chose this course. Most of the leaders for the independence movement accepted citizenship under vehement protest, declaring that Congress had put them in a position where in order to continue in their struggle they had to accept such citizenship.

The debate concerning the three political options that had begun under the Spanish regime has continued throughout the 20th century. In 1922, the Nationalist Party was founded. In 1940, the Popular Democratic Party, under the leadership of Luis Muñoz Marín, came to power. This was a party modelled after the New Deal. Its main political platform was “bread, land, and liberty.” Muñoz Marín, like his father before him, was able to bring together autonomist elements with

the vast majority of the supporters of independence. Muñoz Marín himself had declared that autonomy was “freedom with a long chain,” and also that independence was “just around the corner.” In the founding of the Popular Democratic Party he declared that “status is not at issue,” thus bringing together a coalition that would retain power for three decades. In 1947 Congress granted Puerto Ricans the right to elect their governor, and Muñoz was elected in 1948. In 1952, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico (Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico) was established by act of the U.S. Congress and a vote of the people. This allowed Puerto Rico to design its own Constitution—under the U.S. Constitution—laws, and form of government. With some variations and further clarifications, this is the present status of the island.

The economic program of the “populares” was similar to the New Deal. However, since the island lacked the fiscal resources that Roosevelt had for his program, what actually evolved was a system of economic development by the infusion of foreign capital, promoted by tax incentives. These incentives included the total remission of business taxes for a number of years, depending on the area where a company or corporation settled. Companies which located in the more depressed areas of the island received longer terms of tax-exemption.

The result was very rapid economic growth during the fifties and the sixties. During those decades, there were years where the index of economic growth in Puerto Rico surpassed those of the European Common Market and was among those of the leading industrial nations. Unemployment dropped. Education improved to the point that in the mid-sixties one of every

three Puerto Ricans was engaged in formal education.

On the other hand, there was a high cost to such development. Puerto Rico became an island of light industry, to the neglect of agriculture. By 1969, clothing, chemicals, and electrical machinery and equipment accounted for 41% of all exports, as compared with 9% for sugar and 8% for tobacco. By 1980, those light industrial products were 61% of all exports. By 1985, agriculture accounted for only 1.7% of the gross economic product of the island. Food had to be imported from the neighboring Dominican Republic and from the United States.

Unfortunately for Puerto Rico, recession had set in on the United States at the same time when tax concessions were running out for many of the corporations that had settled on the island. The recession made it difficult for the government to provide additional or continuing incentives. Since most of the industry was light, it was fairly easy to close down shops and move them elsewhere. Thus, while the island economy was still devoted mostly to light industry, this was not growing at a sufficient rate, and in many areas was rapidly declining. In 1985, only 48.2% of the population over 16 was economically active (as compared with 65% for the U.S.), and 20.3% of these were unemployed (7% in the U.S.). In 1984, the average family size was 4.1 persons, with a median income of \$16,794. In the same year, the average American household, with 2.7 members, made \$29,500.¹²

Given such figures, it is not surprising that there has been a large migration of people from Puerto Rico to the United States. In 1910, there were 1,513 Puerto Ricans in the United States. In the following decades, there was a slow flow of immigration. But it was particularly after World War II that the number of Puerto Ricans in the United States boomed. In 1940, there were fewer than 70,000; by 1950, 300,000; in 1970, 1.4 million; and the census of 1980 reported 2,013,945 Puerto Ricans in the United States. As mentioned previously, this large Puerto Rican population is concentrated in New York and the neighboring states, but has recently shown a tendency to spread to other areas of the nation, particularly where there are large numbers of other Hispanics. Still, 73% of them live in large metropolitan areas.

It should also be noted that this migration has not been exclusively one-way. Puerto Ricans in the United States usually dream of returning to their island, and many do. At some points, those returning have outnumbered those migrating to the United States, although that trend, particularly strong during 1931-34 and again in the early seventies, has never lasted more than a few years. It has been statistically demonstrated that the main factor governing Puerto Rican migration is the average wage in the United States, and its relation to its counterpart in Puerto Rico. Contrary to a commonly held assumption, unemployment benefits, welfare, and other government programs are not a significant factor in Puerto Rican migration.

By now, there is also a large proportion of Puerto Ricans born in the United States. In 1950, approximately 25% of all Puerto Ricans living in the United States were born there. In 1970, that

figure was closer to 40%. At present, it is more than half. Those born in the United States are younger on average—a median age of 9.3 years as compared with 30 for those born on the island. There are a number of indications that, as is to be expected, U.S.-born Puerto Ricans are adapting to North American culture at a much more rapid pace than those who have immigrated from the island. At the same time, however, this should not be interpreted in the sense of a total readiness for assimilation. In recent years, there has been a strong movement among the members of the younger generation to seek their roots in Puerto Rico, and to return to the island even if it is just to recover the language of their parents.

The average education of Puerto Ricans in the United States is slightly higher than Mexican-Americans: 55% of them are high school graduates, while 53% of Mexican-Americans report the same attainment. However, their median family income, at \$11,148, is significantly lower than the Mexican-American figure, at \$16,399, and less than half that of the non-Hispanic population, at \$23,907 (1982 figures). Forty percent of these families are maintained by women, while the figure for the non-Hispanic population is 15%, and for the total Hispanic population it is 23%. Thus, Puerto Rican poverty is probably a combination of the poverty of an ethnic minority with female poverty—both well-documented realities.

A telling statistic is that in New York City Puerto Rican households are much more crowded than the average population. By federal standards, in 1982 almost 16% of all Puerto Rican households in New York City lived in overcrowded conditions, as compared with 8.2% for the

city as a whole.

Puerto Ricans reported in 1969 that 69.4% of those over 10 years of age could read and write English. While it is possible that some of the 30.6% who reported otherwise were illiterate, most of them are probably Spanish-speaking and Spanish-educated. It is to be expected that most of those who report no knowledge of written English are immigrants from the island, rather than U.S.-born.

Most Puerto Ricans in the United States work in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs, and unemployment is higher than official statistics would indicate. Indeed, since such statistics consider only those who are either employed or actively seeking work, they undercount unemployment among the chronically poor population, where many are no longer seeking work, or are seeking it along avenues that do not reach official counting procedures. In any case, even without taking this into consideration, Puerto Rican unemployment has normally stayed at a level of two to three percentage points above the national average. In the case of women, it has often doubled the national average. Studies on the reasons for unemployment among Puerto Ricans list, beyond the normal fluctuation in the job market, the dropping demand for unskilled labor, lack of work experience, lack of knowledge of English, lack of transportation, and sheer discrimination.

While all this is true, there is also growing leadership in the Puerto Rican community in the United States. Some of this leadership is making a place for itself in society at large—professionals, business leaders, etc. Others are reflecting on the conditions of their people and on what it means to be Puerto Rican, and are organizing their communities for self-improvement.

In every major Puerto Rican community in the U.S., there is a strong Puerto Rican community organization. As in the case of the Mexican-Americans, it is clear that Puerto Ricans are organizing in order to claim their rights and make a future for themselves.

The Cubans

The history of Cuba until 1902 is closely parallel to that of Puerto Rico. Columbus arrived in Cuba in 1492, a year before he arrived in Puerto Rico. During the South American War of Independence, Cuban and Puerto Rican patriots conspired to have Bolívar send an expedition to their islands. The Cry of Lares, as already stated, preceded the Cry of La Demajagua by a few days. When the movement failed in Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans joined the rebels in Cuba, and fought with them during the lengthy Ten Years' War that ensued. The political parties that arose in Cuba in the 19th century were similar to those that existed in Puerto Rico—with the exception that Cuba also had an Annexionist movement that sought to become part of the United States. During the entire latter half of the 19th century, Cuban and Puerto Rican patriots met in the Dominican Republic, in New York and in other places to plan for independence. Martí

and Hostos, the two great figures of the two islands, were close friends. In 1895, Cubans again took up arms against Spain. Two years later, Puerto Ricans rebelled at Yauco. In 1897, autonomy was granted to both islands by Spain in an attempt to thwart the movement towards independence. In 1898, both Cuba and Puerto were invaded by American troops, and military governments were established. It is no coincidence that the flags of the two islands are identical, except that the colors are reversed.

One difference between Cuba and Puerto Rico during the second half of the 19th century was that, Cuba being closer to the United States, many more Cubans came to this nation as exiles. There were large Cuban communities in Tampa, Key West, and New York. As we shall see later, these communities were instrumental in the introduction of Protestantism into Cuba. In any case, what this means is that, although the great wave of Cuban immigration came to Florida after Castro's revolution, that wave had its antecedents.

Most of the earlier Cuban population centered in Florida, and particularly in Tampa and Key West, where they took the tobacco industry that they brought from Cuba. After independence, many of these Cubans returned to the island. But others remained, and formed the core of the older Cuban population around Key West and Tampa. To them were added, after independence, other Cubans who also settled in Key West and Tampa. As the southeastern shore of Florida was developed, Cubans also went to Miami, where many of them worked in the hotel and tourism business. Indeed, the connection between Havana and Florida was such that this was the first

international commercial aviation route in the world. As political turmoil produced various minor waves of exiles, the Cuban population in Florida grew.

Then came the Revolution of 1959, and the great wave of Cuban exiles, who settled mostly in Miami and the surrounding areas of Dade and Broward counties. Given the nature of this wave of migration, they were generally more educated than the average Cuban population, had more marketable skills, and had a higher proportion of members of the managerial and entrepreneurial classes. A number of the early arrivals had been employed in Cuba by international corporations who again provided them employment in the United States. Also, since they were political exiles from a hostile regime, Cubans benefited from a number of government programs specially designed to meet their needs and to help them establish a financial base. For these reasons, Cubans enjoy a higher median family income (\$18,883 in 1982) than Mexicans or Puerto Ricans, although still substantially lower than the rest of the nation's population (\$23,907).

In May, 1980, the Mariel boatlift brought to Florida an additional 125,000 Cubans. These tended to be of a lower socioeconomic class than the earlier arrivals, including an undetermined number of habitual criminals and other persons of whom the Cuban government wished to be rid. A number are still in prison in the United States seven years after their supposed "ride to freedom." In any case, the rest have concentrated in Miami, where they have lowered the socioeconomic profile of the Cuban community, and where many of the older arrivals scorn

them as “marielitos”—a term some use as a synonym for criminal and anti-social behavior.

Apart from this boatlift, and a small number of refugees still arriving from Spain and other countries, Cuban immigration into the United States has virtually stopped in the last decade. At the same time, the birthrate among Cubans is approaching that of the average population. Therefore, of the three groups that constitute the bulk of Hispanic population, this is likely to grow at the slowest pace—although still far above the rest of the population.

The Present Reality

A few figures suffice to show the growing importance of the Hispanic population in the United States. According to the 1980 census, the Hispanic population in the 50 states and the District of Columbia at that time was 14.6 million. To this one should add 3.2 million Puerto Ricans who reside on the island, a number of undocumented Hispanics whom the census failed to find, and (for the purposes of our study) the growing Hispanic population in Canada. Thus, a conservative estimate for 1980 would put the total Hispanic population in the area of concern for this study at 19 to 20 million. Other estimates are as high as 23 and 25 million.

Even the figure of 14.6 Hispanics in 1980 represents an increase of 5.5 million as compared with the census of 1970, when the total Hispanic population for the 50 states and D.C. was 9.1 million. More significantly, this is an increase of 61%, during a period when the nation's total population grew by 11.5%. In 1970, Hispanics were 4.5% of the total population. In 1980, they

were at least 6.4%.

The Census Bureau has issued a study projecting future trends on the level of immigration in the Hispanic population. Depending on the level of immigration, this study projects three sets of figures for the Hispanic population in the future. On the low premise, which includes no immigration except a continuation of the present legal immigration and refugee admissions, and which also assumes substantial emigration, it is projected that Hispanics will be 7.8% of the total population in 1990, 9.1% in 2000, and 17.6% in 2080. The middle series also assumes no undocumented immigration, but this time with no emigration. The results are 8% for 1990, 9.4% for 2000, and 19.2% for 2080. The high series, which projects undocumented immigration at the level of 211,000 per year (lower than it has probably been in the last few years), results in 8.7% in 1990, 11% in 2000, and 27.9% in 2080.

The same document also includes two other variables: fertility and mortality assumptions.

When all these are taken into account, projections for Hispanic population vary as follows (in millions):

	1990	2000	2080
Lowest projection:	19.15	23.07	34.60
Middle projection:	19.89	25.22	59.57
Highest projection:	22.05	31.21	140.74

The net effect of the new immigration law is still very much in doubt. If that law stands, and the policies which it supports are continued, the middle projection, or one slightly higher, would seem to be the most correct. However, there are a number of indications that economic pressures, and political instability south of the border, will make it very difficult to apply the law fully. In 1987, the Immigration and Naturalization Service announced that it would allow summer migrant laborers to cross the border and work in the United States simply on their own word that they had done so before. This is a rather lax interpretation of the law, induced by the danger of substantial crop loss for lack of migrant laborers.

The census of 1980 also showed that Hispanics are still concentrated in a few states, but that substantial numbers are also present throughout the nation. Three states account for approximately two thirds of the Hispanic population: California (31%), Texas (20%), and New York (11%). The ten states with the highest Hispanic population were the following:

Hisp. % of total population in state

California	4,544,331	19%
Texas	2,985,824	21%
New York	1,659,300	9%
Florida	858,158	9%
Illinois	635,602	6%
New Jersey	491,883	7%
New Mexico	477,222	37%

Arizona	440,701	16%
Colorado	339,717	12%
Michigan	162,440	2%

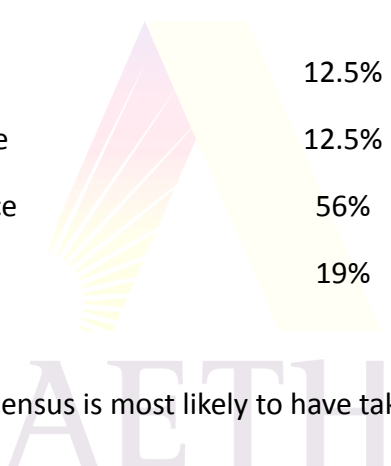
In 1980, there were eight states with fewer than 10,000 Hispanics. All but one of these states (Delaware) are in the extreme north: Alaska, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Vermont.

The majority of the Hispanic population is urban. In 1980, 50% of all Hispanics lived in central cities, with an additional 37% living in metropolitan areas outside the central cities, for a total of 87% urban dwellers. Since it is likely that most of the undocumented Hispanics who were missed by the census are living in large cities, that percentage is probably higher.

In spite of recent waves of immigration, and contrary to the image often presented in the press, 71% of all Hispanics are native U.S. citizens, while 29% are foreign born. The state with the highest percentage of foreign born in its Hispanic population is Florida (61%). In New Mexico, 94% of all Hispanics are natives to the U.S.; in Arizona and Texas, 82% and 81%, respectively; in New York, 73%; in California and Illinois, the figure is 63%.

Although such a high percentage of Hispanics are born in the United States, a very large percentage also report that Spanish is the language spoken at home. Eleven million people, or 75% of all Hispanics counted by the census, reported that Spanish is the language spoken at

home. (Again, this does not include the 3.2 million population of Puerto Rico.) Roughly one fourth of those who speak Spanish at home, or 19% of the Hispanic population, also declared that they do not speak English well, or that they do not speak it at all. There is no statistic regarding the use of Spanish by the 25% of Hispanics who declared that English is the language most used at home. It is likely that roughly half of these are bilingual, or have at least some use of Spanish. Thus, it would appear that the usage of language among Hispanics in the United States breaks down as follows:



English only	12.5%
Bilingual with English preference	12.5%
Bilingual with Spanish preference	56%
Spanish only	19%

Since any undercounting by the census is most likely to have taken place among undocumented Hispanics, and these would tend to speak Spanish either exclusively or primarily, it would seem that the number of Hispanics who do not use Spanish at all is 10% or less of the total Hispanic population. Thus, bilingualism is likely to continue being a feature of the Hispanic community in the foreseeable future.

This population is also very young—21.9% is less than ten years old, as compared with 14.1% for the rest of the population. Another 21.1% is 10-19 years old (17.1% for the rest of the population), and 20.3% is 20-29 years old (17.9% for the general population). This means that

63.3% of the Hispanic population is less than 30 years old, while the figure for the rest of the population is 49.1%.

The converse is true at the other end of the spectrum. Only 14% of the Hispanic population is 50 years or older, while 26.8% of the rest of the population is in that age range. This will obviously have disturbing effects in the near future, as a larger proportion of the Hispanic population is called on to provide Social Security and other retirement benefits for an elderly, non-Hispanic generation.

The size of the Hispanic nuclear family has declined between the census of 1970 and that of 1980 at a rate parallel to that of the rest of the population. Between 1970 and 1980, the average number of children in Hispanic households declined from 2.7 to 2.3. In the rest of the population, this decline was from 2.3 to 1.9. In terms of percentage, this decline is obviously less for Hispanics. Indeed, Hispanics' fertility and population growth is much higher than for the well-known post-war "baby boom" among whites. The growth rate of the general population during the baby boom was 1.8% a year. The present growth rate among Hispanics is 3% a year, and will not decrease to baby boom levels until 30 years from now. At present, the U.S. population is growing at a rate of 0.9% a year. This rate is declining, and it is expected that the U.S. general population will reach zero population growth in 2040. At that point, the Hispanic population will be growing at 0.9% a year, which is the present rate of growth for the population at large.

Economic and Educational Data

The median family income among Hispanics in 1982 was \$16,228, as compared with \$23,907 for the rest of the population. In other words, median family income among Hispanics is 67.88% of the median income among the rest of the population. In terms of purchasing value, this represents a decline rather than an improvement. Indeed, in 1982 dollars, the median family income for Hispanics in 1972 was \$18,880. In 1979, it had declined slightly to \$18,842. At that point it began dropping rapidly, to \$16,228 in 1982. Between 1979 and 1982, in a period of three years, Hispanic real income dropped by 13.88%. This trend has continued since that date. For instance, in the period between 1984 and 1985, while after-tax income for white households increased by 0.8%, and for black households by 2.9%, for Hispanic households it declined by 0.4%. In terms of 1985 dollars, this represented a net drop in the median Hispanic family income of \$478. Between 1973 and 1985, the typical Hispanic family's income has declined by more than \$2,000.

As a result of these statistics, 29.9% of all Hispanics in the U.S., or 20.9% of all Hispanic households, lived in poverty in 1982. In this regard, there was a slight improvement between 1972 and 1979, followed by a significant deterioration in more recent years, with little sign of recovery after the recession of the early 1980s, as may be seen in the following chart:

	1972	1979	1982	1985
Poor Hispanics	22.8%	21.8%	29.9%	29.0%

Poor total pop.	11.9%	11.7%	15.0%	14.0%
-----------------	-------	-------	-------	-------

The drop in Hispanic family income in 1984-85 means that as of December, 1985, 39.9% of all Hispanic children were poor, and that the trend of the period since 1972 would seem to indicate that this condition will worsen before it improves.

Given this situation, various government programs of aid to the poor are of great importance for Hispanics. Forty-four and one-half percent of Hispanic children benefit from free or subsidized school lunches, while 18.9% of Hispanics receive food stamps, 20.3% receive Medicaid benefits, and 10.8% live in public or otherwise subsidized housing (1982 statistics). The net result is that, while in 1979 20.9% of all Hispanic households were under the poverty level as far as monetary income was concerned, public assistance programs reduced that figure to 11.4%. Therefore, Hispanics have a significant interest in government programs to alleviate the deprivations of poverty.

On the other hand, particularly in the case of Puerto Ricans, Mexican-Americans and Central Americans, there is a factor of which the census does not take account and which, if taken into account, would greatly increase the poverty level of Hispanics. Many Hispanic workers send a substantial portion of their income back to Puerto Rico, Mexico or Central America, where they support elderly parents, children, spouses, or other relatives. In 1986, for instance, it was estimated that the El Salvadoran refugee community alone sent between \$300,000,000 and

\$500,000,000 back to El Salvador. Thus, many Hispanics have dependents who (since they do not reside in the U.S.) are not counted by the census—nor by the Internal Revenue Service—but who would clearly place them even further below the poverty level.

The unemployment rate among Hispanics is also significantly higher than for the rest of the population. While numbers have varied according to the fluctuations of the economy, since 1973 the ratio between Hispanic unemployment and unemployment in the rest of the population has remained fairly constant, at a rate which is approximately 150% higher for Hispanics.

Hispanic United Methodism

I have not been asked to deal with this subject. However, allow me to conclude with a few considerations that may be helpful lessons of history as we plan for Hispanic ministries in the coming years:

1. Perhaps the greatest hindrance to Hispanic work has been a lack of recognition of the permanence of Hispanic culture and tradition in this society, and the fostering of assimilationist tendencies that appear again and again. In this area, by 1913, there was a “Cuban-Spanish Mission”, which then evolved into the “Florida Latin District.” This was dissolved in 1939, at the time of Methodist reunion. That date also marked the beginning of decline in Hispanic Methodist work in the area. In California, from 1941 to

1956, there was a Latin American Provisional Annual Conference. This was integrated into the corresponding geographical annual conferences in 1956. That date also marked the decline of Hispanic work in California. The lesson seems to be that the work progresses best when there is a measure of autonomy, and this is structurally established. I have my theories about that, and will gladly discuss them if anyone is interested.

2. Another major obstacle has been not taking into consideration the economic status of the vast majority of Hispanics.
3. A third problem has been using the Hispanic mission as a way to cover up, even unwittingly, the failings of the mission in general, and then blaming it on the Hispanics. This is often the problem with shared buildings.

