

Facts about Mexican Americans

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Mexican Americans are the largest Hispanic group in the United States, making up 61% of the population. They have a long history in the U.S., with families settling in the Southwest before the nation's existence, and their culture reflects Indigenous, Spanish, and Mexican influences. Mexican Americans have significantly contributed to the U.S. economy and served in its military, while also facing discrimination and complex identity struggles between cultures.

Demographics & Identity

- **Population:** Mexican Americans comprise over 11% of the U.S. population.
- **Heritage:** Their cultural heritage is a rich mix of Spanish, Mexican, and Indigenous traditions.
- **Long-Standing Presence:** Many Mexican American families lived in the Southwest before it became part of the U.S., leading to the saying, “we didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us.”

History & Contributions

- **Labor & Economy:** Recruited for labor in the 20th century, Mexican immigrants and their descendants played a vital role in transforming the Western U.S.
- **Military Service:** Over 500,000 Mexican Americans served in the U.S. military during World War II alone, receiving 13 Medals of Honor.
- **The Bracero Program:** From 1942 to 1964, the Bracero Program allowed Mexican guest workers to come to the U.S. to work temporarily, primarily in agriculture.

Challenges & Culture

- **Complex Identity:** Many Mexican Americans navigate a complex identity, being “stuck between two cultures.”
- **Discrimination:** Despite their accomplishments, Mexican Americans have historically faced discrimination and treatment as second-class citizens.
- **Legal Struggles:** Historically, they have used the court system to assert and defend their rights, including property and civil rights.
- **The Term ‘Chicano’:** The term “Chicano” is sometimes used by Mexican Americans to describe their unique identity.