

Latino Immigration to the United States in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries



Carol Highsmith, "Olvera Street in the Oldest Part of Downtown Los Angeles, California," 2012, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

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BY JOSÉ A. GREGORY (CREATED IN 2024)

José A. Gregory has taught grades 10 through 12 at Marist School in Atlanta since 2016. He was named 2021 Georgia History Teacher of the Year by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: Five 45-minute class periods

UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute’s Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary and secondary source materials. These skills will enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate documents and other resources of historical significance.

The five lessons in this unit explore Latino and Latina immigration to the United States in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, emphasizing how immigrants understood and experienced this process. Students will read and view an infographic, visual materials (including art), interviews and memoirs, and legal petitions. You will assess students’ understanding through an essay assignment that compares and contrasts the varied immigrant stories covered in this unit.

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary and secondary sources using close-reading strategies
- Interpret, analyze, and demonstrate understanding of visual materials
- Describe what they see in photographs and infer the significance of what they see
- Demonstrate understanding of both literal and inferential aspects of primary sources (e.g., historical contexts and personal experiences of Latino immigration from Mexico, the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, and Central America)
- Analyze maps to understand population and ethnographic data (e.g., to understand how the Latino American population is distributed across the United States and where some of the main groups formed ethnic communities in large urban areas)

- Compare and contrast different ethnic or cultural groups (e.g., how varied Latino immigrant groups had similar and different opportunities and challenges in the United States)

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why did Latin Americans immigrate to the United States during the twentieth century?
- What opportunities and challenges have Latino immigrants encountered in the United States?
- How has Latino immigration to the United States contributed to American society?
- How have people in Latino communities helped each other?
- How have varied Latino immigrant groups had similar and different experiences in the United States?

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9: Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9: Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

MATERIALS

- Source 1: Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census, US Census Bureau, August 12, 2021, [census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/racial-and-ethnic-diversity-in-the-united-states-2010-and-2020-census.html](https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/racial-and-ethnic-diversity-in-the-united-states-2010-and-2020-census.html) (third tab: “Race and Ethnicity Prevalence Maps”)
- Source 2: Hank Prussing, “The Spirit of East Harlem,” commissioned by Hope Community, Inc., photo by William Alatraste, El Museo del Barrio, [elmuseo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Spirit_Of_East_Harlem1.pdf](https://www.elmuseo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Spirit_Of_East_Harlem1.pdf)
- Source 3: Carol Highsmith, “Olvera Street in the Oldest Part of Downtown Los Angeles, California,” 2012, The Jon B. Lovelace Collection of California Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith’s America Project, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, [loc.gov/resource/highsm.21865/](https://www.loc.gov/resource/highsm.21865/)
- Source 4: Carol Highsmith, “A Street Vendor Awaits Customers on Calle Ocho (SW 8th Street), the Vibrant Artery of the Historic Little Havana Neighborhood of Miami, Florida,” 2019, Carol M. Highsmith’s America Project in the Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Collection, [loc.gov/item/2020720617/](https://www.loc.gov/item/2020720617/)
- Source 5: Camilo José Vergara, “Billboard with [Miles] Morales as a Latino Spiderman, The Heights, St. Nicholas Ave. and W. 181st St., Manhattan,” 2023, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [loc.gov/item/2024695720/](https://www.loc.gov/item/2024695720/)

- Source 6: Carol Highsmith, “Mural at the Chamizal National Memorial, located in El Paso, Texas, along the United States-Mexico International Border,” 2014, The Lyda Hill Texas Collection of Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith’s America Project, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, [loc.gov/item/2014630910/](https://www.loc.gov/item/2014630910/)
- Activity Sheet 1: Analyzing an Image
- Source 7: Historical Background: “Latino Immigration to the United States” by Geraldo L. Cadava, Professor of History and Wender-Lewis Teaching and Research Professor, Northwestern University
- Activity Sheet 2: Important Phrases: Historical Background: “Latino Immigration to the United States”
- Source 8: Elisa Silva, “A Mexican Immigrant Describes Her Work in Los Angeles” (interview by Manuel Gamio, 1926–1927, in Gamio, *The Mexican Immigrant: His Life-Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), pp. 159–162)
- Source 9: Pablo Mares, “A Mexican Migrant Reflects on His Experiences” (interview by Manuel Gamio, 1926–1927, in Gamio, *The Mexican Immigrant: His Life-Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), pp. 1–5)
- Source 10: Excerpts from “Situation of Mexicans in Rockdale, Illinois to the Chicago Mexican Consulate, 30 December 1930,” Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City, IV-354-4
- Source 11: Excerpts from an interview with Jesús Rivera López, interviewed by Perla Guerrero, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso/Bracero History Archive, May 13, 2006, braceroarchive.org/items/show/274
- Option A: Activity Sheet 3: Analyzing a Primary Source
- Option B: Activity Sheet 4: Analyzing a Primary Source
- Source 12: Excerpts from Guillermo Ricardo Paz Vazquez, “My Story,” Operacion Pedro Pan: The Cuban Children’s Exodus, Operation Pedro Pan Group Inc., [pedropan.org, assets.website-files.com/6007cfcba10177efef718a2/600a2494e75a74fc241a0ee2_Guillermo_Paz_Story_.pdf](https://pedropan.org/assets/website-files.com/6007cfcba10177efef718a2/600a2494e75a74fc241a0ee2_Guillermo_Paz_Story_.pdf), 2012
- Source 13: Sherezada “Chiqui” Vicioso, “Discovering Myself, Un Testimonio,” in Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores, eds., *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States*, Duke University Press, 2010
- Option A: Activity Sheet 3: Analyzing Texts
- Option B: Activity Sheet 4: Analyzing Texts
- Source 14: Adriana Rodriguez, “I Had Never Thought of Leaving My Country,” in *A Dream Compels Us: Voices of Salvadoran Women* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1989), pp. 211–215. Originally published in *Links* 2, nos. 1 and 2 (1985), “Three Faces of Salvadoran Nursing,” National Central America Health Rights Network (NCAHRN), New York, NY
- Source 15: “Nicaraguan Woman Recounts Her Undocumented Journey,” 1988, in Dianne Walta Hart, *Undocumented in L.A.: An Immigrant’s Story* (New York: Scholarly Resources Books, 1997), pp. 9–25
- Activity Sheet 5: Compare and Contrast

LESSON 1

LATINO COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES (LATE TWENTIETH AND EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY)

BY JOSÉ A. GREGORY (CREATED IN 2024)

OVERVIEW

This lesson plan explores some of the longest established Latino neighborhoods in the United States, highlighting the stories of Latino neighborhoods clustered around major urban areas in the Southwest, Southeast, and Northeast. Students will also learn about the Latino population around the entire country based on data from the US Census Bureau to understand the presence and distribution of the nation's largest racial/ethnic minority. They will analyze quantitative data on racial and ethnic diversity in the United States from the 2020 Census and visuals from El Barrio (Spanish Harlem in New York City), Olvera Street (Los Angeles), Little Havana (Miami), the United States-Mexico international border (El Paso, Texas), and Washington Heights (also in New York City). They will also read a historical background essay by a scholar that places these statistics and images in context. You will assess students' understanding through a class discussion that answers the lesson plan's essential questions.

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary and secondary source materials. The five lessons in this unit explore Latino and Latina immigration to the United States in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, emphasizing how immigrants understood and experienced this process.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What opportunities and challenges have Latino immigrants encountered in the United States?
- How has Latino immigration to the United States contributed to American society?

MATERIALS

- Source 1: Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census, US Census Bureau, August 12, 2021, [census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/racial-and-ethnic-diversity-in-the-united-states-2010-and-2020-census.html](https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/racial-and-ethnic-diversity-in-the-united-states-2010-and-2020-census.html)
- Source 2: Hank Prussing, "The Spirit of East Harlem," commissioned by Hope Community, Inc., photo by William Alatraste, El Museo del Barrio, [elmuseo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Spirit_Of_East_Harlem1.pdf](https://www.elmuseo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Spirit_Of_East_Harlem1.pdf)
- Source 3: Carol Highsmith, "Olvera Street in the Oldest Part of Downtown Los Angeles, California," 2012, The Jon B. Lovelace Collection of California Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America Project, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, [loc.gov/resource/highsm.21865/](https://www.loc.gov/resource/highsm.21865/)
- Source 4: Carol Highsmith, "A Street Vendor Awaits Customers on Calle Ocho (SW 8th Street), the Vibrant Artery of the Historic Little Havana Neighborhood of Miami, Florida," 2019, Carol M. Highsmith's America Project in the Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Collection, [loc.gov/item/2020720617/](https://www.loc.gov/item/2020720617/)

- Source 5: Camilo José Vergara, “Billboard with [Miles] Morales as a Latino Spiderman, The Heights, St. Nicholas Ave. and W. 181st St., Manhattan,” 2023, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [loc.gov/item/2024695720/](https://www.loc.gov/item/2024695720/)
- Source 6: Carol Highsmith, “Mural at the Chamizal National Memorial, located in El Paso, Texas, along the United States-Mexico International Border,” 2014, The Lyda Hill Texas Collection of Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith’s America Project, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, [loc.gov/item/2014630910/](https://www.loc.gov/item/2014630910/)
- Activity Sheet 1: Details, Description, and Decision
- Source 7: Historical Background: “Latino Immigration to the United States” by Geraldo L. Cadava, Professor of History and Wender-Lewis Teaching and Research Professor, Northwestern University
- Activity Sheet 2: Important Phrases: Historical Background: “Latino Immigration to the United States”

PROCEDURE

1. Opening: Ask the entire group of students, “Where do most Latinos live in the United States?”
 - a. You may explain that the term “Latino” is frequently used interchangeably with “Hispanic,” and most recently, with other terminology such as “Latinx” and/or “Latine.”
 - b. After ensuring students have a basic understanding of how these terms will be used, provide them with the definition used by the US Census Bureau. In accordance with the 1997 Office of Management and Budget standards on race and ethnicity, the Census Bureau defines “Hispanic or Latino” as “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.”
 - c. As students individually respond verbally to this initial question, write the most common answers on the board.
2. Project Source 1, the Census Bureau map depicting the Hispanic or Latino population in the United States (2020) for the whole class to see. Alternatively, you could provide students with hard copies of the map. Give students a few minutes with a partner to analyze the data on “Largest Racial or Ethnic Group by County: 2020,” so they can identify the main areas with a high concentration of Latino populations. Update the list on the board after examining this source.
3. Provide students with copies of Sources 2–6, the visuals from El Barrio (Spanish Harlem in New York City), Olvera Street (Los Angeles), Little Havana (Miami), the United States-Mexico international border (El Paso, Texas), and Washington Heights (also in New York City). Then divide the class into small groups of three to four students and have them complete Activity Sheet 1: Details, Description, and Decision. You may choose to have the students answer the “Compare and Contrast” section for every image or have them answer it once, selecting any two of the images in the set.
4. Lead a class discussion on what they observe in each image. Help students identify which Latino group is primarily associated with each of these historical neighborhoods and draw connections to these groups’ contributions to American society. After they read the historical background essay (see Procedure 5 below), you may ask them to revise or build on their conclusions.

5. Provide students with the historical background written by the scholar that will help students understand the historical context for the creation of these communities. Have students read the historical background on their own or “share read” it in class. This is done by having the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Then ask the class to join in with the reading after a sentence or two while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model for the class. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).
6. Distribute Activity Sheet 2: Important Phrases. The students will select important or informative phrases and explain why they selected each one.
7. Ask students what claims in the historical background are supported by the census information and the visual images.
8. To conclude the lesson, ensure that students understand that the Latino presence in the United States is diverse, although mostly concentrated in large urban areas, and has been in existence for multiple generations. Have students answer the two essential questions for this lesson:
 - What opportunities and challenges have Latino immigrants encountered in the United States?
 - How has Latino immigration to the United States contributed to American society?

LESSON 2

MEXICAN IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES DURING TIMES OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION (1920s–1950s)

BY JOSÉ A. GREGORY (CREATED IN 2024)

OVERVIEW

This lesson plan shares experiences of a number of Mexican immigrants who came to the United States during the 1920s to 1950s, when American policies both included and excluded them from the country. These stories are provided in the immigrants' own words. Mexican immigrants were generally allowed to enter the US in the 1920s and then on and off under the Bracero Program created during World War II and lasting through the 1960s. However, many Mexican immigrants (and some people of Mexican descent who were US citizens) were repatriated and/or deported in the 1930s during the Great Depression. While the US policies that drove this movement are

important and provide historical context for these immigrants' experiences, this lesson will focus on their reasons for immigrating and the opportunities and challenges they encountered in the US by highlighting their own voices. You will assess students' understanding through their work on an activity sheet and class discussion.

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary and secondary source materials. The five lessons in this unit explore Latino and Latina immigration to the United States in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, emphasizing how immigrants understood and experienced this process.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why did Latin Americans immigrate to the United States during the twentieth century?
- What opportunities and challenges have Latino immigrants encountered in the United States?

MATERIALS

- Source 8: Elisa Silva, "A Mexican Immigrant Describes Her Work in Los Angeles" (interview by Manuel Gamio, 1926–1927, in Gamio, *The Mexican Immigrant: His Life-Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), pp. 159–162)
- Source 9: Pablo Mares, "A Mexican Migrant Reflects on His Experiences" (interview by Manuel Gamio, 1926–1927, in Gamio, *The Mexican Immigrant: His Life-Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), pp. 1–5)
- Source 10: Excerpts from "Situation of Mexicans in Rockdale, Illinois to the Chicago Mexican Consulate, 30 December 1930." Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City, IV-354-4
- Source 11: Excerpts from an interview with Jesús Rivera López, interviewed by Perla Guerrero, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso/Bracero History Archive, May 13, 2006, braceroarchive.org/items/show/274

- Option A: Activity Sheet 3: Analyzing a Primary Source
- Option B: Activity Sheet 4: Analyzing a Primary Source

PROCEDURE

1. Opening: Write the following question on the classroom board: “What are some of the main reasons people emigrate from their native country and move to another?” and have students write down a couple of possible answers. Although this is a fairly broad question, some students may struggle with this activity. It may help the students to re-read the historical background.
2. Choose whether your students will use Activity Sheet 3 or 4 for the next part of the lesson. Divide the class into groups of four students and distribute the sources for this lesson.
3. Assign each group member one of the sources and have them work on the activity sheet for their respective source. They should leave the Extended Learning section blank for now. Have the students in each group discuss their own reading and activity sheet so all group members are familiar with all four sources.
4. Lead a class discussion in which students present their responses for the first source and then repeat these steps for the remaining three sources. The students will explain their responses and cite textual evidence that supports their assertions. To ensure that these presentations are successful, have each student corroborate, modify, or refute prior assertions. Briefly clarify any misunderstandings.
5. To conclude the lesson, have students revisit the activity sheet and write down at least two contributions made to American society by Mexican immigrants during this time period and explain their historical significance, as evidenced by these sources.
6. Have students answer the two essential questions for this lesson:
 - Why did Latin Americans immigrate to the United States during the twentieth century?
 - What opportunities and challenges have Latino immigrants encountered in the United States?

LESSON 3

CARIBBEAN IMMIGRATION TO THE US SINCE THE 1960s

BY JOSÉ A. GREGORY (CREATED IN 2024)

OVERVIEW

This lesson focuses on the experiences of two immigrants from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean who came to the United States during the 1960s. The first is a native of Cuba, Guillermo Ricardo Paz Vazquez, who made it to America as a child refugee thanks to the freedom flights conducted under “Operación Pedro Pan” (or “Operation Peter Pan”). The second, Sherezada “Chiqui” Vicioso, emigrated from the Dominican Republic. Both personal accounts highlight in their own voices the reasons for immigrating and the opportunities and challenges they encountered in the US. Students will read and analyze these personal accounts. You will assess students’ understanding through an activity sheet and class discussion.

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute’s Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary and secondary source materials. The five lessons in this unit explore Latino and Latina immigration to the United States in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, emphasizing how immigrants understood and experienced this process.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why did Latin Americans immigrate to the United States during the twentieth century?
- What opportunities and challenges have Latino immigrants encountered in the United States?

MATERIALS

- Source 12: Excerpts from Guillermo Ricardo Paz Vazquez, “My Story,” *Operacion Pedro Pan: The Cuban Children’s Exodus*, Operation Pedro Pan Group Inc., [pedropan.org, assets.website-files.com/6007cfcbaf10177efef718a2/600a2494e75a74fc241a0ee2_Guillermo_Paz_Story_.pdf](https://pedropan.org/assets/website-files.com/6007cfcbaf10177efef718a2/600a2494e75a74fc241a0ee2_Guillermo_Paz_Story_.pdf), 2012
- Source 13: Excerpts from Sherezada “Chiqui” Vicioso, “Discovering Myself, Un Testimonio,” in Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores, eds., *The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States*, Duke University Press, 2010
- Option A: Activity Sheet 3: Analyzing a Primary Source
- Option B: Activity Sheet 4: Analyzing a Primary Source

PROCEDURE

1. Provide students with the two sources selected for this lesson and have them work in pairs. Each partner will be primarily responsible for one of the sources, which they must annotate using three different color highlighters to identify 1) reasons for immigrating to the United States, 2) opportunities they had in America, and 3) challenges encountered in the United States. Then, have students swap sources and conduct the same color coding exercise, adding to the previous student's work. To finalize this step, have each pair work on the activity sheet (either 3 or 4) for this lesson. They should leave the Extended Learning section blank for now.
2. Lead a class discussion in which students share their responses for the first source and then for the second source. Ask them to explain their responses and cite textual evidence that supports their assertions.
3. To conclude the lesson, have students revisit the activity sheet and write down at least two contributions made to American society by Latino immigrants from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean during this time period and explain their historical significance.
4. Have students answer the two essential questions for this lesson plan:
 - Why did Latin Americans immigrate to the United States during the twentieth century?
 - What opportunities and challenges have Latino immigrants encountered in the United States?

LESSON 4

CENTRAL AMERICAN IMMIGRATION TO THE US DURING THE 1980s AND BEYOND

BY JOSÉ A. GREGORY (CREATED IN 2024)

OVERVIEW

This lesson plan focuses on the experiences of two immigrants from Central America who came to the United States during the 1980s. The first was a nursing student in El Salvador, Adriana Rodriguez, who escaped persecution and made it to Texas. The second was a Nicaraguan woman who also made it to the United States as an undocumented person. Both personal accounts highlight in their own voices the reasons for immigrating and the opportunities and challenges they encountered in the US. Students will read and analyze these personal accounts. You will assess students' understanding through an activity sheet and class discussion.

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

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ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why did Latin Americans immigrate to the United States during the twentieth century?
- What opportunities and challenges have Latino immigrants encountered in the United States?

MATERIALS

- Source 14: Excerpts from Adriana Rodriguez, "I Had Never Thought of Leaving My Country," in *A Dream Compels Us: Voices of Salvadoran Women* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1989), pp. 211–215. Originally published in *Links* 2, nos. 1 and 2 (1985), "Three Faces of Salvadoran Nursing," National Central America Health Rights Network (NCAHRN), New York, NY
- Source 15: Excerpts from "Nicaraguan Woman Recounts Her Undocumented Journey," 1988, in Dianne Walta Hart, *Undocumented in L.A.: An Immigrant's Story* (New York: Scholarly Resources Books, 1997), pp. 9–25
- Option A: Activity Sheet 3: Analyzing a Primary Source
- Option B: Activity Sheet 4: Analyzing a Primary Source

PROCEDURE

1. Provide students with the two sources selected for this lesson and have them work together in pairs. Given the graphic accounts, make sure to let students know about their sensitive nature and provide them with assistance as necessary if they find the material problematic. Each partner will be primarily responsible for one of the sources, which they must annotate using three different color highlighters to identify 1) reasons for immigrating to the United States, 2) opportunities they had in America, and 3) challenges encountered in the United States. Then, have students swap sources and conduct the same color coding exercise. To finalize this step, have each pair work on Activity Sheet 3 or 4 for this lesson leaving the Extended Learning section blank for now.
2. Lead a class discussion in which students share their responses for the first source and then repeat these steps for the second source. Ask them to explain their responses and cite textual evidence that supports their assertions.
3. To conclude the lesson, have students revisit the activity sheet and write down at least two contributions made to American society by Latino immigrants from Central America during this time period and explain their historical significance.
4. Have students answer the two essential questions for this lesson plan:
 - Why did Latin Americans immigrate to the United States during the twentieth century?
 - What opportunities and challenges have Latino immigrants encountered in the United States?

LESSON 5

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT: COMPARE AND CONTRAST

BY JOSÉ A. GREGORY (CREATED IN 2024)

OVERVIEW

This final lesson focuses on a variety of primary and secondary sources studied throughout the unit. Students will select which combination of sources best helps them answer the final Essential Question.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- How have varied Latino immigrant groups had similar and different experiences in the United States?

MATERIALS

- Source 1: Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census, US Census Bureau
- Source 2: Hank Prussing, “The Spirit of East Harlem”
- Source 3: Carol Highsmith, “Olvera Street in the Oldest Part of Downtown Los Angeles, California”
- Source 4: Carol Highsmith, “A Street Vendor Awaits Customers on Calle Ocho (SW 8th Street), the Vibrant Artery of the Historic Little Havana Neighborhood of Miami, Florida”
- Source 5: Camilo José Vergara, “Billboard with [Miles] Morales as a Latino Spiderman, The Heights, St. Nicholas Ave. and W. 181st St., Manhattan”
- Source 6: Carol Highsmith, “Mural at the Chamizal National Memorial, located in El Paso, Texas, along the United States-Mexico International Border”
- Source 7: Historical Background: “Latino Immigration to the United States” by Geraldo L. Cadava
- Source 8: Elisa Silva, “A Mexican Immigrant Describes Her Work in Los Angeles,” 1926–1927
- Source 9: Pablo Mares, “A Mexican Migrant Reflects on His Experiences,” 1926–1927
- Source 10: Mexican Immigrants in Rockdale, Illinois, Ask the Mexican Consul for Voluntary Repatriation, 1930
- Source 11: Jesus Rivera Lopez’s Bracero Testimony, 2006
- Source 12: Excerpts from Guillermo Ricardo Paz Vazquez, “My Story,” 2012
- Source 13: Sherezada “Chiqui” Vicioso, “Discovering Myself, Un Testimonio,” 2010

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- Source 14: Adriana Rodriguez, “I Had Never Thought of Leaving My Country,” 1985
- Source 15: “Nicaraguan Woman Recounts Her Undocumented Journey,” 1988
- Activity Sheet 5: Compare and Contrast

PROCEDURE

1. Display the unit’s essential questions.
2. Provide students with a copy of the historical background written by Professor Cadava and give them a few minutes to re-read this context on their own.
3. Divide the class into groups of four and have them select one of the sources from each of the four lesson plans. Then, provide students with the respective sources they selected. Assign each group member one of the sources and have them jointly complete the activity sheet for this lesson plan. This handout will ask students to consider all of the unit’s essential questions and focus on comparing and contrasting the experiences of varied Latino immigrants from two of the sources selected.
4. Conclude this activity with a whole-class discussion on the main similarities and differences among the unit’s resources when it comes to reasons for immigrating to the United States and both the opportunities and challenges encountered by these immigrants. Acknowledge that while these accounts are representative of the vast experiences of Latino immigrants, they do not provide the complete picture; and, thus, are limited in telling

Source 1

Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census

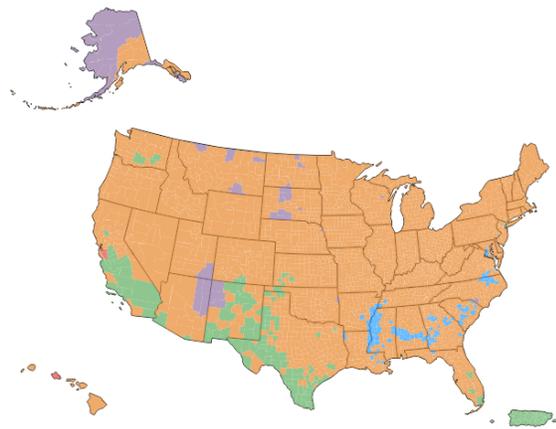
Pick a topic. Diversity Index Maps Race and Ethnicity Prevalence Rankings Race and Ethnicity Prevalence Maps Data Tables

Prevalence maps show the geographic distribution of the largest, second largest, or third largest racial or ethnic group at a specific geographic level. These maps often reveal regional patterns in how the U.S. population is spatially distributed by race and ethnicity.

Hover over the map to view the largest, second largest, or third largest racial or ethnic group for each county. Use the filters to the right of the chart to change the year or highlight a county or group.

White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	Black or African American alone, not Hispanic or Latino	American Indian and Alaska Native alone, not Hispanic or Latino	Asian alone, not Hispanic or Latino	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, not Hispanic or Latino	Some Other Race alone, not Hispanic or Latino	Two or More Races, not Hispanic or Latino	Hispanic or Latino
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Largest Racial or Ethnic Group by County: 2020



Interested in a particular county?
Enter a county in the search bar to highlight it.
No items highlighted

Or enter a racial or ethnic group below to highlight counties for that group.
No items highlighted

Change the year
 2020
 2010

Change the prevalence map
 Largest racial or ethnic group
 Second largest racial or ethnic group
 Third largest racial or ethnic group

	Number of U.S. counties	Percentage of U.S. counties
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	2,854	90.8%
Black or African American alone, not Hispanic or Latino	121	3.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, not Hispanic or Latino	37	1.2%
Asian alone, not Hispanic or Latino	3	0.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, not Hispanic or Latino	0	0.0%
Some Other Race alone, not Hispanic or Latino	0	0.0%
Two or More Races, not Hispanic or Latino	0	0.0%
Hispanic or Latino	128	4.1%

United States Census Bureau | U.S. Department of Commerce | U.S. CENSUS BUREAU | census.gov

Note: U.S. counties do not include Puerto Rico municipios. Ranking based on unrounded numbers. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
Source: 2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File; 2020 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File. Technical Note for "N."
Additional information is available for: Diversity Index, Race, Ethnicity, Race and Ethnicity Data in the 2020 Census.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census, US Census Bureau, August 12, 2021

Source 2: “The Spirit of East Harlem,” 1973
(Neighborhood of historically predominant Puerto Rican ethnicity)



Hank Prussing, “The Spirit of East Harlem,” commissioned by Hope Community, Inc. (Photo by William Alatraste, El Museo del Barrio)

Source 3: “Olvera Street in the oldest part of downtown Los Angeles, California,” 2012
(Neighborhood of historically predominant Mexican ethnicity)



Carol Highsmith, “Olvera Street in the oldest part of downtown Los Angeles, California,” 2012. (The Jon B. Lovelace Collection of California Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith’s America Project, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)

Source 4: “A street vendor awaits customers on Calle Ocho (SW 8th Street), the vibrant artery of the historic Little Havana neighborhood of Miami, Florida,” 2019 (Neighborhood of historically Cuban ancestry)



Carol Highsmith, *A Street Vendor Awaits Customers on Calle Ocho (SW 8th Street), the Vibrant Artery of the Historic Little Havana Neighborhood of Miami, Florida 2019.* (Carol M. Highsmith's America Project in the Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Collection)

Source 5: “Billboard with [Miles] Morales as a Latino Spiderman, The Heights, St. Nicholas Ave. and W. 181st St., Manhattan,” 2023
(Neighborhood of historically Dominican ancestry)



Camilo José Vergara, “Billboard with [Miles] Morales as a Latino Spiderman, The Heights, St. Nicholas Ave. and W. 181st St., Manhattan,” 2023 (Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division)

Source 6: “Mural at the Chamizal National Memorial, located in El Paso, Texas, along the United States-Mexico international border,” 2014
(Neighborhood of historically Mexican ancestry)



Carol Highsmith, “Mural at the Chamizal National Memorial, located in El Paso, Texas, along the United States-Mexico international border,” 2014 (The Lyda Hill Texas Collection of Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith’s America Project, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division)

Source 7: Historical Background Latino Immigration to the United States

by Geraldo L. Cadava, Northwestern University

Immigration is a subject that is both critical to understanding the history of Latinos in the United States, and not synonymous with it. About two-thirds of Latinos today were born in the United States, and many of them have families whose histories in this country stretch back for generations. Moreover, immigration has defined the history of many other groups in the United States besides Latinos—British colonists, Irish, Italians, Chinese, Nigerian. And lastly, immigration is a broad category covering people with many different statuses, such as asylum seeker, citizen, non-citizen, undocumented, or refugee. Nevertheless, both in media accounts and the popular imagination, Latinos and immigration are often portrayed as coterminous subjects, and immigrants are too often portrayed as illegal foreigners.

This unit covers the most important topics related to the immigration history of Latinos, including the early formation of Latino communities across the United States, often in response to US imperial adventures in Latin America; key moments of immigrant inclusion and exclusion; the connection between global politics and the preference for certain immigrants over others; and the diversification of the Latino population in the late twentieth and early-twenty-first century. Altogether, these themes allow us to tell the story of how Latino communities started as regional populations in the Southwest, Southeast, and Northeast, but over the centuries have become a truly national population, which at first made up only a small fraction of the US population but today makes up about twenty percent of the US population as a whole.

When the US-Mexico War, which annexed half of Mexican territory to the United States, ended in 1848, the Mexican communities that lived north of the new borderline weren't really immigrant communities. Many had lived for a long time on the land that became Arizona, California, New Mexico, Colorado, or Nevada. Their communities served as anchors for the Mexicans who immigrated there during the second half of the nineteenth century, and especially during the Mexican Revolution from 1910 to 1920, when more than a million Mexicans moved to the United States. Also at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, after the Spanish American War that made Cuba and Puerto Rico territories of the United States, a growing number of Puerto Ricans and Cubans settled along the eastern seaboard, from Florida to New York. Small numbers of Caribbean migrants had settled in places like Tampa, Philadelphia, and New York City, but their numbers grew rapidly after the war. These three groups—Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans—remain the three largest Latino communities living in the United States today.

Then across the twentieth century, the Latin American immigrant community both grew and became more diverse. Because of the Great Depression, the 1930s was the only decade when the Latino population shrank due to the forced repatriation of Mexicans and the difficulties Puerto Ricans and Cubans had finding work, which led them to return home. When the Great Depression ended because of the industrialization of the US economy during World War II, the number of immigrants continued to rise, from Guatemala after the coup in the 1950s, from Cuba after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, and from Central and South America as a result of the coups, dictatorships, and civil wars during the two decades from the 1970s to the 1990s. Many of them settled in communities that had been inhabited by Latinos for a long time, but others moved to agricultural communities in the South, upper Midwest, or Pacific Northwest, as well as the suburbs of major cities like Los Angeles and Chicago.

The story of Latin American immigration, in other words, helps us understand the country we live in today. Latin American immigrants didn't arrive in the United States as blank slates, but rather came with their own ideas about race, politics, faith, education, and economic opportunity. Likewise, they entered a nation that had its particular histories of racial division and all of these other topics. Latin American immigrants have faced contending pressures to remain connected to the cultures of their ancestral homelands while at the same time

they have been expected to assimilate as Americans. Each generation of Latin American immigrants—from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela, and other places—rejuvenates the already-in-motion conversation among Latinos about individual, group, regional, national, and international identities, as well as how, and whether, to incorporate newcomers into our communities.

Geraldo L. Cadava is a professor of history and Wender-Lewis Teaching and Research Professor at Northwestern University. He is also the director of the Latina and Latino Studies Program at Northwestern. Cadava's work focuses on Latinos in the United States and the US-Mexico borderlands. He is the author of The Hispanic Republican: The Shaping of an American Political Identity, from Nixon to Trump (Ecco/HarperCollins, 2020) and Standing on Common Ground: The Making of a Sunbelt Borderland (Harvard University Press, 2013).

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

Activity Sheet 2: Important Phrases
Historical Background: “Latino Immigration to the United States”

Which phrases or sentences related to the history of Latino immigration to the United States are the most informative or important?

Phrase 1:

Why is this phrase informative or important?

Phrase 2:

Why is this phrase informative or important?

Phrase 3:

Why is this phrase informative or important?

Source 8: Excerpt from Elisa Silva, “A Mexican Immigrant Describes Her Work in Los Angeles,” 1926–1927

I am twenty-three years old. I was married in Mazatlán when I was seventeen. My husband was an employee of a business house in the port but he treated me very badly and even my own mother advised me to get a divorce. A short time after I was divorced my father died. Then my mother, my two sisters and I decided to come to the United States. As we had been told that there were good opportunities for earning money in Los Angeles, working as extras in the movies and in other ways, we sold our belongings and with the little our father had left us we came to this place, entering first at Nogales, Arizona. From the time we entered I noticed a change in everything, in customs, and so forth, but I believed that I would soon become acclimated and be able to adjust myself to these customs. When we got to Los Angeles we rented a furnished apartment and there my mother took charge of fixing everything up for us. My sisters and I decided to look for work at once. One of my sisters, the oldest, who knew how to sew well, found work at once in the house of a Mexican woman doing sewing. My mother then decided that my youngest sister had better go to school and that I should also work in order to help out with the household expenses and with the education of my sister. As I didn't even know how to sew or anything and as I don't know English I found it hard to find work, much as I looked. As we had to earn something, a girl friend of mine, also a Mexican, from Sonora, advised me to go to a dance-hall. After consulting with my mother and my sisters I decided to come and work here every night dancing. My work consists of dancing as much as I can with everyone who comes. At the beginning I didn't like this work because I had to dance with anyone, but I have finally gotten used to it and now I don't care, because I do it in order to earn my living. Generally I manage to make from \$20.00 to \$30.00 a week, for we get half of what is charged for each dance. Each dance is worth ten cents so that if I dance, for example, fifty dances in a night I earn \$2.50. Since the dances are short, ten cents being charged for just going around the ball-room, one can dance as many as a hundred. It all depends on how many men come who want to dance. Besides there are some who will give you a present of a dollar or two. This work is what suits me best for I don't need to know any English here. It is true at times I get a desire to look for another job, because I get very tired. One has to come at 7:30 in the evening and one goes at 12:30, and sometimes at 1 in the morning. One leaves almost dead on Saturdays because many Mexican people come from the nearby towns and they dance and dance with one all night.

From Manuel Gamio, The Mexican Immigrant: His Life-Story (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), pp. 159–162.

Source 9: Excerpts from Pablo Mares, “A Mexican Migrant Reflects on His Experiences,” 1926–1927

In my youth I worked as a house servant, but as I grew older I wanted to be independent. I was able through great efforts to start a little store in my town. But I had to come to the United States, because it was impossible to live down there with so many revolutions. . . . The Villistas [followers of Pancho Villa] pressed me into service, and took me with them as a soldier. But I didn't like that, and because I never liked to go about fighting, especially about things that don't make any difference to me. So when we got to Torreón I ran away just as soon as I could. That was about 1915.

I went from there to Ciudad Juarez and from there to El Paso. There I put myself under contract to go to work on the tracks. I stayed in that work in various camps until I reached California. I was for a while in Los Angeles working in cement work, which is very hard. From there I went to Kansas, and I was also in Oklahoma and in Texas, always working on the railroads. . . . Here in the Miami mine [Arizona] I learned to work all the drills and all the mining machinery and I know how to do everything. The work is very heavy, but what is good is that one lives in peace. There is no trouble with revolutions or difficulties of any kind. Here one is treated according to the way in which one behaves and one earns more than in Mexico. I have gone back to Mexico twice. Once I went as far as Chihuahua and another time to Torreón, but I have come back, for in addition to the fact that work is very scarce there, the wages are too low. One can hardly earn enough to eat. It is true that here it is almost the same, but there are more comforts of life here. One can buy many things cheaper and in payments. I think that as long as we have so many wars, killing each other, we will not progress and we shall always be poor. That is what these bolillos [white Americans] want. It is here that the revolutions are made. It is over there that the fools kill each other. It is better for the bolillos that we do that, for they want to wipe us out in order to make themselves masters of all that we possess. It is a shame that we live the way we do and if we go on we shall never do anything. I don't care about political matters. It is the same to me to have Calles or Obregón [two Mexican presidents in the 1920s] in the government. In the end neither one does anything for me. I live from my work and nothing else. . . . It is not, as I have already told you, that I like it more here. No one is better off here than in his own country. But to those of us who work, it is better to live here until the revolutions end. When everything is peaceful and one can work as one likes, then it will be better to go back there to see if one can do anything. . . . I hardly read the papers for I know that they tell nothing but lies. They exaggerate everything and besides, I hardly know how to read, for my parents didn't have the means with which to send me to school. I, by myself, with some friends, have learned to read a little and to write my name. I had to do this when I went back to Mexico. If I hadn't, they wouldn't have let me come back in [because of literacy requirement].

From Manuel Gamio, The Mexican Immigrant: His Life-Story (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), pp. 1–5.

**Source 10: Mexican Immigrants in Rockdale, Illinois,
Ask the Mexican Consul for Voluntary Repatriation, December 30, 1930**

. . . This letter is addressed to you with the exclusive purpose of communicating the present situation that prevails among us Mexicans in the town of Rockdale, Ill.

Among us are a number of families and single men without work or hope of obtaining work in this town. As far as industries, there is a wire factory and a brick factory. The wire factory has not employed a single Mexican in years but for those who for the past 10 years already worked there. The brick factory was our only option, and on the 29th of this month it laid off all Mexicans in order to hire North Americans and Europeans instead. This leaves you as our only hope against the travails of hunger and cold, to intercede on our behalf before the Prime Magistrate of our country.

Most honorable Consul, we wish that for humanity's sake you will do whatever possible in order to repatriate us with our families before we die of hunger and cold or be forced to crime and dishonor over a morsel of bread for our wives and children. The government denies us aid and when we ask for it they answer that Mexicans are exempt from aid. The only way we have managed without work is because those with jobs have, for a long time, helped those without.

We hope His Excellency will act on our behalf, offer us repatriation and collaborate towards the enrichment of our beloved nation.

From "Situation of Mexicans in Rockdale, Illinois to the Chicago Mexican Consulate, 30 December 1930." Archivo de la Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City, IV-354-4.

Source 11: Excerpts from Jesús Rivera López's Bracero Testimony, 2006

Nombre del entrevistado: Jesús Rivera López
Fecha de la entrevista: 13 de mayo de 2006
Nombre del entrevistador: Perla Guerrero

Ésta es una entrevista con el señor Jesús Rivera López en Los Ángeles, California el día 13 de mayo del año 2006.

PG: Si me hace favor de decirme su nombre de vuelta y en dónde nació y en qué año.

JR: Mi nombre es el señor Jesús Rivera López, nacido en el poblado de Corrales, municipio de Juchitlán, estado de Jalisco, nacido el día 7 de octubre de 1934.

PG: Muy bien. ¿Me podría contar un poquito sobre su familia en México, hermanos, cuántos de familia?

JR: Ah, sí este, somos en total seis de familia, seis hermanos, de los cuales tres decidimos buscar la aventura de los braceros.

PG: ¿Usted es el mayor?

JR: Yo soy el mayor de la familia.

PG: Es el mayor. ¿Qué es lo que hacían sus padres?

JR: Bueno, mi padre nació en el año 1900 según la acta de nacimiento. Entonces él emigró a Estados Unidos en 1930. Arregló su residencia permanente aquí en Estados Unidos pero por cuestiones de cambios en las leyes de este país, de Estados Unidos fue deportado sin haber hecho nada. Solamente en, pues hubo una deportación masiva.

PG: Sí, en los treintas.

JR: De personas con residencia permanente. Entonces él también se vio en la necesidad de emigrar otra vez como bracero en el año 1942.

...

Interviewee's Name: Jesús Rivera López
Interview Date: May 13, 2006
Interviewer's Name: Perla Guerrero

This is an interview with Mr. Jesús Rivera López in Los Angeles, California, on May 13, 2006.

PG: Will you please tell me your name again and where and what year you were born?

JR: My name is Jesús Rivera López, I was born in the town of Corrales, the municipality of Juchitlán, the state of Jalisco, on October 7, 1934.

PG: Great. Could you please tell me a bit about your family in Mexico, your siblings, how many of you were there?

JR: Ah, let's see, there are a total of six of us, six siblings, three of us decided to seek our fortune as *braceros*—seasonal farm workers.

PG: Are you the oldest?

JR: Yes, I am the oldest one.

PG: So you're the oldest. What did your parents do?

JR: Well, my father was born in 1900 according to the birth certificate. Then he emigrated to the United States in 1930. He established his permanent residence here in the United States, but due to changes in the laws of this country, the United States, he was deported without having done anything wrong. It's just that there was a massive deportation.

PG: Yes, in the 1930s.

JR: Of people with permanent residency. So he also had to emigrate again to work as a *bracero* in 1942.

...

PG: Muy bien. Entonces, ¿cuál era su situación de su familia en México?

JR: Pos la situación era dedicarnos a la agricultura. Tan pronto como pudimos y en, en viéndonos en la necesidad de que él se vino aquí a Estados Unidos, pos entonces todos trabajamos de agricultores.

...

PG: Y, ¿usted logró ir a la escuela algún tiempo? Y, ¿cuántos años terminó?

JR: Solamente terminé el primer grado de primaria.

PG: Y luego, ¿por qué dejó de ir a la escuela?

JR: Porque yo era el sostén de la familia, ya que mi padre duraba un año, dos años aquí en Estados Unidos y o no le iba muy bien o no había dinero suficiente para, para la manutención de la familia. Entonces yo como era el mayor de la familia, yo tuve que ser el soporte de todos.

...

PG: Y, ¿por qué decidió venirse? Y, ¿cómo se enteró del programa de los braceros?

JR: Bueno, ya visto de que mi padre venía contratado, como se decía, en aquel tiempo, ¿verdad? De las contrataciones, pos entonces me entró la espinita de también querer venir, aunque mi padre nunca fue de acuerdo.

PG: Ah, okay.

JR: Pero visto yo, que hubiera preferido estudiar, me gustaba estudiar, ¿verdad?

PG: Sí.

JR: Entonces no tuve esa facilidad. Entonces decidí buscar la manera de, de buscar la oportunidad en los programas que había por ese entonces allá en el estado de Jalisco, de venir como bracero.

PG: ¿Cuáles fueron las razones que le dio su padre para que no se viniera? ¿Le dio alguna explicación?

PG: All right. So, what was the situation like for your family in Mexico then?

JR: After that, we started to work in agriculture. As soon as we could, because we needed to since he came here to the United States, so after that we all worked as farm workers.

...

PG: And did you manage to attend school at any point? And how many years did you complete?

JR: I only finished the first year of elementary school.

PG: And so, why did you stop going to school?

JR: Because I was the family's breadwinner, since my father stayed for one, two years here in the United States and either it wasn't going well for him or there wasn't enough money to, to support the family. And since I was the oldest one, I had to be the provider for everyone.

...

PG: And why did you decide to come? And how did you find out about the Bracero Program?

JR: Well, since my father was recruited, as they used to say then, right? And with that recruitment, I then felt the urge to come as well, even though my father was always against it.

PG: Oh, okay.

JR: But personally, I would have preferred to go to school, because I liked to study, you know?

PG: Yes.

JR: But I didn't have the ability to do so. So I decided to look for a way, to seek an opportunity in the programs that existed then in the state of Jalisco to come as a *bracero*.

PG: What reasons did your father give you not to come? Did he give you any explanation?

JR: La experiencia que él había tenido ya aquí en este país, de cómo eran tratados, de cómo—

PG: ¿Cómo los trataban?

JR: De cómo los trataban.

PG: Digo, ¿los trataban mal?

JR: Bueno, hay cosas, digo, que mi manera muy personal de entender, ¿verdad? Había—era injusto lo que hacían con uno cuando decidía uno venir de bracero, ¿verdad? Porque una cosa es estar en buena salud y otra cosa es exponerse a humillaciones, a vejaciones, que realmente yo creo que no tenían nada que ver con ser un buen trabajador. En principio, ya una vez que llegaba uno al lugar de contrataciones, que para mí en mi caso fue Empalme, Sonora.

PG: Y, ¿cuándo decidió entrar al programa de braceros, en qué año?

JR: En 1956 decidí buscar la forma, porque no era fácil. Este, daban una cierta cantidad de números para ciertos poblados.

PG: Sí.

JR: Entonces el poblado donde yo vivía, que es el nombre Juchitlán, del estado de Jalisco, pues daban cierta cantidad para que esos números se rifaran y las personas que salían afortunadas, pos entonces podían participar en el dicho programa de braceros.

...

JR: Bueno, ya una vez estando en Mexicali llegaba uno a una, lo bajaban a uno allí en una ciudad que le llaman El Centro, eso se encuentra en el Valle Imperial. Entonces una vez ya estando en El Centro, llegaba uno y había una especie de hangar donde guardan los aviones, había un hangar. Entonces allí estaba cerrado, completamente cerrado. Ahí lo desnudaban a uno de nuevo y había unas máquinas potentes. Ésas eran para, para fumigarlo.

PG: ¿Fumigarlo con qué?

JR: The experience that he had here in this country, the way that they were treated, how—

PG: How they treated them?

JR: How they treated them.

PG: What I mean is, did they treat them badly?

JR: Well, there are things, I mean, based on my personal understanding, you know? There were— what they did to you when you came as a *bracero* was unfair, right? Because being in good health is one thing but being subjected to humiliation, to harassment, is another, which I really believe didn't have anything at all to do with being a good worker. Initially, once you arrived at the recruitment places, which in my case was Emplame, Sonora.

PG: And when did you decide to join the Bracero Program, in what year?

JR: I decided to try to find a way in 1956, because it wasn't easy. Uh, they gave a specific number for specific towns.

PG: Yes.

JR: So in the town where I lived, which is called Juchitlán, in the state of Jalisco, they provided a certain amount so those numbers could be raffled off, and the lucky people could then take part in that Bracero Program.

...

JR: So, once we got to Mexicali, we arrived at a ... they dropped you off in a city called El Centro, which is in the Imperial Valley. Then, when we got to El Centro, we arrived and there was a type of hangar where they kept airplanes, there was a hangar. And there it was closed off, completely closed. And they undressed you there and there were some powerful machines. They were for, for fumigating you.

PG: Fumigate you with what?

JR: Pues no sabría decirle qué clase de, de polvo era. Era un polvo blanco, ¿verdad? Que lo usaban con máquinas para, pos desnudo tenían que: “Agáchate, párate, siéntate y dale una fumigada a todo alrededor de uno de la cabeza”. Y si—

...

JR: Y mire, ésta es una foto de la manera en que se veía uno cuando ya estaba, ahí estoy yo recién fumigado. Saliendo de la fumigación ya le tomaban a uno esa foto cuando ya había pasado rayos X y exámenes de sangre. Y pos una vez que ya estaba todo terminado allí, entonces de ahí de El Centro, California, lo mandaban ya a uno en autobuses del Greyhound a lugares donde, donde ellos les llamaban, donde reclutaban a uno, ¿verdad? Entonces este, ellos le llamaban Asociación. Entonces una vez que usted salía de ahí del Valle Imperial lo mandaban a La Asociación a donde usted iba a ir a trabajar. En mi caso la primer vez de ahí de El Centro me mandaron a una Asociación que están en la ciudad de Watsonville, eso fue por primera vez.

...

PG: Y, ¿qué le tocó la primera vez?

JR: Piscar fresa.

PG: ¿Fresa?

JR: La primer vez sí.

...

PG: ¿De qué consiste pisar fresa?

JR: Pues usan unas, una especie de carritos donde pone usted la caja allí. Y entonces el carrito pos claro tiene que, se pone pesado porque regularmente a todo el tiempo, los files están llenos de agua. Entonces hay mucho lodo regularmente y lleva usted su carrito empujándolo para adelante y ahí va cortando la fresa, según sea la cosecha. Porque hay fresa para marqueta, fresa para canería y dependiendo de la cosecha que sea en cada, en cada lugar.

JR: Well, I couldn't tell you what type of powder it was. It was some white powder, you know? That they used with the machines to, once naked they had to: “Bend down, stand up, sit down and fumigate entirely around your head.” And if—

...

JR: And look, this is a photo of how you looked when you were there, this is when I had just been fumigated. After being fumigated they took your photo when you had already done X-rays and blood tests. And then when everything was done there, from there in El Centro, California, they then sent you on Greyhound buses to places that, where they called you, where they recruited you, you see? So they called this the Association. And once you were leaving the Imperial Valley they sent you to the Association where you were going to go work. In my case, the first time from there in El Centro, they sent me to an Association that was in the city of Watsonville; that was the first time.

...

PG: And what did you have to do that first time?

JR: Harvest strawberries.

PG: Strawberries?

JR: That first time, yes.

...

PG: What did harvesting strawberries consist of?

JR: Well, they use some, these type of carts where you put the box. And of course the cart has to...it becomes heavy because usually the fields are full of water all of the time. So there's usually a lot of mud and you move your cart along by pushing it in front of you and you continue picking the strawberries, depending on the crop. Because there are strawberries for markets, strawberries for canning, and depending on the type of crop there is in each, in every place.

PG: ¿Usted acuerda el primer, se acuerda del primer día que empezó la pesca?

JR: Sí, cómo no. Llegamos alrededor a Watsonville, llegamos alrededor de las dos de la mañana y ya para las tres y media, cuatro de la mañana, ya estábamos listos para desayunar y irnos a trabajar el día que llegamos.

PG: El mismo día.

JR: El mismo día que llegamos.

PG: Y bueno, supongo que se cansó, pero, ¿se acuerda si estaba inmensamente cansado o estaba—?

JR: Completamente. Sí, con el viaje de El Centro a Watsonville. Yo creo que son alrededor de ocho horas de camino en el autobús este, con la preocupación de a dónde iré, dónde estaré y a dónde me llevarán, pos claro que no durmió. No, no, no duerme uno por ir pensando en eso. Entonces pos llegando, desvelado sin, sí nos dieron de, nos dieron un sándwich en el camino, en el autobús daban sándwiches. Entonces pos llegamos a esas horas, como a las dos y media de la mañana y tener que estar listos para irnos a trabajar ese mismo día.

PG: Ese mismo día.

JR: Así es de que pues en la noche no puede uno dormir. No podía uno sentarse, no podía uno acostarse de lo cansado. Andar todo el día agachado por el surco, ocho horas y pues, para ese entonces los dueños de los files pos muy estrictos para con los trabajadores. Había alguien que lo estuviera vigilando con binoculares y pos si usted se comía las fresas, inclusive se llegó a decir que muchos de los rancheros les daban chicles a sus trabajadores para que no comieran fresas.

...

PG: Wow.

JR: Entonces este, lo vigilaban a uno.

PG: Do you remember the first, do you recall the first day that you started harvesting?

JR: Yes, of course. We arrived near Watsonville, we arrived at around two in the morning and then by three, three thirty, four in the morning, we were already prepared to eat breakfast and go to work the day that we arrived.

PG: The same day.

JR: The same day we arrived.

PG: And, so, I assume that you were tired, but do you remember if you were extraordinarily tired, or were you—?

JR: Completely. Yes, from the trip from El Centro to Watsonville. I think that the trip takes around eight hours by bus, while worrying about where I'd be going, where I'd be staying, and where they'd be taking me, so of course you didn't sleep. No, no, you don't sleep while thinking about that. So after arriving, totally sleep-deprived, they gave us, they gave us a sandwich on the way, they gave out sandwiches on the bus. So we arrived at that time, at like two thirty in the morning and we had to be ready to go to work that same day.

PG: That same day.

JR: That's how it is because you can't sleep during the night. You couldn't sit down, you couldn't lie down because you were so exhausted. Spending the entire day crouched down in the field, eight hours, because back then the owners of the fields were really strict with the workers. There was someone watching you with binoculars to see if you were eating the strawberries, people even said that a lot of the ranchers gave their workers chewing gum so they wouldn't eat the strawberries.

...

PG: Wow.

JR: So, they watched you.

PG: ¿Qué otras reglas había aparte de no comer fresas?

JR: Pos que yo recuerde, no podía estarse parado, no podía. Si era por horas, tenía que andar, lo estaban vigilando, tenía que estar trabajando las ocho horas. No le daban descanso, no le daban nada.

PG: Nada de...

JR: La hora de la comida y regresar otra vez al trabajo.

PG: Y, ¿cómo los castigaban si se comían las fresas?

JR: Bueno, desde luego que los patrones ellos mismos sabían quién era buen empleado y quién no era buen trabajador. Regularmente pos el castigo que podía haberse dado a una persona era reportándolo a La Asociación. Decir: “Este trabajador ya no lo quiero”. Y pos entonces el Gobierno se encargaba de darle ya su salida a muchos trabajadores. Siempre los buenos trabajadores, siempre eran bien recibidos por los rancheros.

...

PG: Y, ¿por qué decidió parar de ser bracero? ¿Por qué decidió ya no regresar?

JR: Se terminó el—

PG: Ah, se terminó.

JR: La época de los braceros en 1964, fue el último año.

PG: Y, ¿se regresó a trabajar en el campo aunque se haya terminado el programa o ya se quedó en México?

JR: Mire, tocante a lo del campo, hasta esta fecha, tengo setenta y un años de edad y todavía sigo siendo agricultor en...

PG: Aún, todavía.

JR: Todavía.

PG: Wow.

PG: What other rules were there aside from not eating the strawberries?

JR: Well, from what I remember, you couldn't stand still, you weren't allowed to. For hours, you had to keep moving, they were watching you, you had to be working the entire eight hours. They didn't give you any breaks, they didn't give you anything.

PG: Nothing like...

JR: A meal break and then go back to work.

PG: And how did they punish you if you ate the strawberries?

JR: Well, the bosses of course knew who was a good employee and who wasn't. Usually the punishment that might be given to a person was to report them to the Association. Saying: “I don't want this worker anymore.” And then the government was responsible for terminating a lot of workers. The good workers were always, they were always well received by the ranchers.

...

PG: And why did you decide to stop being a *bracero*? Why did you decide not to return?

JR: It ended—

PG: Oh, it ended.

JR: The Bracero Program ended in 1964—that was the last year.

PG: And did you return to work in the fields even though the program had ended, or did you remain in Mexico?

JR: Look, with regard to the fields, even now, I'm 71 years old and I'm still a farmer worker in...

PG: Still, even now.

JR: Still.

PG: Wow.

JR: Sí. Aquí de alguna manera, tuve mucha suerte, porque me creo una persona afortunada, porque estuve trabajando doce años en el campo en lo que yo sabía hacer. Pero ya cuando tenía treinta y cinco años de edad, sentí que el tiempo se estaba pasando y yo nomás estaba viviendo en el campo. No sabía cuáles serían las consecuencias cuando llegara a viejo, entonces decidí venirme a vivir aquí a Los Ángeles en 1970. Y afortunadamente encontré un empleo donde estuve empleado hasta el día que yo quise.

...

PG: Otra pregunta, logró, cómo cree, cómo era el dinero, no cómo era, sino en términos financieros de trabajar como bracero, ¿le convino?, ¿le pagaban bien? ¿Pudo guardar dinero o se iba en gastos aquí?

JR: En realidad no fue una época donde uno pudo aprovechar para haber hecho dinero, no, solamente daba pa, solamente daba para los viajes y para pasarlo unos días, sí.

...

PG: Sí. Usted dijo que no, no, ustedes no podían aprovechar muy bien lo que ganaban porque era nada más para algunos días. Entonces si no eran, si no podían ahorrar tanto, ¿cuál era su motivación para venirse como bracero en lugar de quedarse en México a trabajar?

JR: Bueno, era, fue siempre una opción debido a que por esos, por esas épocas el dinero—un peso no valía nada y lo que pagaban por un dólar era, que yo recuerde eran \$12.50.

PG: Doce, wow.

JR: Yes. But in some way, I was very lucky, because I believe I'm a fortunate person, because I worked for twelve years in the fields doing what I knew how to do. But when I was 38 years old, I felt like time was flying by and I was just living in the fields. I didn't know what the consequences would be when I got old, so I decided to come live here in Los Angeles in 1970. And fortunately I found a job where I was employed up until the day that I chose to stop.

...

PG: Another question, did you earn, how do you think, how was the money? Not how was it, but what was it like financially to work as a *bracero*? Did it suit you? Did they pay you well? Did you manage to save any money or was it all used on expenses here?

JR: The truth is that it wasn't really a time when you could make a lot of money, no, it was only enough for, just enough for the trips and to spend a few days.

...

PG: Yes. You said that you couldn't really take advantage of what you earned because it was only for a few days. So if they weren't ... if you couldn't save that much, what was your motivation to come here as a *bracero* instead of staying in Mexico to work?

JR: Well, it was, it was always an option because at that time, back then, money—a peso wasn't worth anything and what they paid for a dollar from what I remember was 12.50 pesos.

PG: Twelve, wow.

¹ One one-hundredth of a Mexican peso, similar to a cent in US dollars.

JR: Doce cincuenta. Entonces un dólar, \$12.50 y las—Digamos el, todo lo referente a para comida, para compras, ya sea frijol, ya sea maíz, pos entonces en ese tiempo no costaba nada en México. Un dólar le servía para mucho, porque pos entonces si compraba una caja de cigarro, le costaba \$0.05 centavos. Entonces compraba un chicle, un centavo. Imagínese lo que usted compraba con \$12.50. Ésa era la ventaja.

...

JR: Entonces pos este, era una ilusión venir aquí a Estados Unidos porque pos, ¿cuánto le costaba una camisa? Las camisas que pos se ponía, todo era barato y era bonito, entonces pos este, los salarios pos eran, todavía hasta 1970 yo ganaba \$0.75 centavos la hora trabajando aquí en Malibu de jardinero. Entonces pos imagínese, para esos años no ganaba uno casi nada, ¿qué tanto ganaba por semana? Lo único que ayudaba, no tenía que pagar renta. El descuento de la comida se lo quitaban de su cheque y pos lo poquito que le sobraba, pa mandarlo a la familia. Digo, en mi caso pos este, lo digo a mucha honra que ayudé a sostener la familia.

...

PG: Si no hubiera tenido esa responsabilidad, ¿no se hubiera regresado como bracero, no hubiera venido?

JR: Yo creo que sí, sí era una ilusión, porque pos entonces no había mucha gente que quisiera venir. No había mucha gente que viniera. No, la gente tenía miedo por lo que había sucedido durante la guerra, ¿verdad? Que mucha gente se tuvo que ir de aquí, se tuvo que salir por lo que estaba sucediendo entonces en la guerra de 1942.

PG: Sí, muy bien. Bueno, ahora le doy esta oportunidad a usted de decir, no sé si hay algo más que quiera decir sobre el tema que no haya tenido oportunidad de compartir, que quiera.

JR: 12.50. So a dollar was 12.50 and—Let's just say that everything related to food, for shopping, whether it was beans, or corn, around that time didn't cost anything in Mexico. A dollar could really go a long way, because back then if you bought a pack of cigarettes, it cost 5 centavos. Back then if you bought gum, it was one centavo¹. So, imagine what you could buy with 12.50. That was the advantage.

...

JR: So back then, it was a dream to come here to the United States because...how much did a shirt cost then? The shirts that we wore, everything was cheap and it was nice, so back then, the wages then were ... up until 1970 I was still earning 75 centavos per hour working here in Malibu as a gardener. So imagine, in those years you barely earned anything, so how much would you earn per week? The only thing that helped was that I didn't have to pay rent. They deducted the food from your check, and then the little bit that was left over was for sending back home to the family. So, I can tell you, in my case, I can tell you with a lot of pride that I helped support my family.

...

PG: If you hadn't had that responsibility, would you have returned as a *bracero*, would you still have come?

JR: I think that yes, it was a dream, because back then there weren't a lot of people who wanted to come. There weren't a lot of people who came. No, people were really afraid because of what had happened during the war, you know? A lot of people had to leave here; they had to leave because of what was happening then during the war in 1942.

PG: Yes, very good then. Well, now I'm giving you this opportunity to say, I don't know if there's anything else that you would like to say about the subject that you haven't had the chance to share, something that you might want.

JR: Bueno, pues solamente decirle que es un honor para mí haber estado aquí con ustedes, que me haigan dado la oportunidad de expresar lo que mi familia no sabe, lo que mi familia no siente y es imposible que otra persona que no pasó por esta situación quiera platicar algo de lo que, de lo que a uno le sucedió.

PG: Sí. Pues con mucho gusto.

JR: Muchas gracias.

PG: Gracias.

Fin de la entrevista

JR: Well, I just want to tell you that it's an honor for me to have been here with you, for you to have given me the opportunity to talk about what my family doesn't know, what my family doesn't feel, and it isn't possible for someone else who didn't live through this situation to be able to talk about something that happened to you.

PG: Yes. So, it's a pleasure.

JR: Thank you very much.

PG: Thank you.

End of Interview

From an interview with Jesús Rivera López, interviewed by Perla Guerrero, Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso/Bracero History Archive, May 13, 2006, braceroarchive.org/items/show/274. Translation from Spanish to English by Eriksen Translations, Inc., July 5, 2024.

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

Activity Sheet 3: Analyzing a Primary Source

Instructions: As you read and analyze each source, answer the following questions to demonstrate your understanding of Latino immigration experiences in the United States. Cite textual evidence that supports your answers.

Source _____

List

Why did Latin Americans immigrate to the United States during the twentieth century?

-
-
-

What were some of the main opportunities these Latino immigrants found in the United States?

-
-
-

What were some of the main challenges these Latino immigrants encountered in the United States?

-
-
-

Describe

Based on your analysis of these sources, how would you describe the following:

1. The primary reasons for these individuals to immigrate to the United States

2. The main opportunities these Latino immigrants found in the United States

3. The main challenges these Latino immigrants encountered in the United States

NAME

PERIOD

DATE

Activity Sheet 4: Analyzing a Primary Source

Instructions: After you read each source, perform the following three tasks to demonstrate your understanding of Latino immigration experiences in the United States. Each part should be two sentences long.

Source _____

Task 1: Summarize

Determine the central ideas or information of this source and provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details.

Task 2: Analyze

Cite specific textual evidence to support your analysis of this source and demonstrate how it is connected (or relevant) to understanding the lived experiences of these Latino immigrants.

Task 3: Draw Conclusions

1. How does this source add to your understanding of the topic?

2. How would you compare and contrast the experiences of these immigrants with those from the prior lesson/s?

Extended Learning

1. Write at least two contributions made to American society by Latino immigrants during this time period.

2. Explain the historical significance of these contributions.

Source 12: Excerpts from Guillermo R. Paz Vazquez, “My Story,” 2012

The year was 1958, I was 8 years old and my life from my perspective was good. I had two wonderful parents and a loving sister who was 2 years older than I. . . . My typical days consisted in getting up in the morning and after having my usual café con leche and Cuban toast I would wait for the school bus in my front porch.

1959 started with a lot of fanfare. When Fidel with his barbudos entered Havana I found it fascinating at the beginning. They would show me their weapons and would give me bullets as souvenirs. It was like living in a real adventure movie much like the TV shows that I loved to watch such as *The Lone Ranger*, *Rin Tin Tin*, *El Zorro*, Westerns, and World War II movies. The fanfare was short-lived. Soon my favorite TV programs were been replaced by public trials resembling the Roman Coliseum with spectators chanting “Paredon” (to the wall) followed by executions by firing squads. I heard of mobs sacking houses of Batista sympathizers. Envy seemed to be running wild in the streets and anyone could label you a Batista sympathizer. Even though my family was not involved in anything that had to do with politics, for the first time in my life I began to sense and feel fear. I remember my father telling me that I should not repeat anything that I heard in our house to anyone and if someone asked me “whom do you belong to, Batista or Fidel?” my answer should be “I belong to my Father and Mother.” . . .

As time went on, I began to realize that I was witnessing the beginning of the end of an era similar to watching a video of a flower wilting in fast forward. I still had my nickel in my pocket but there was no Ironbeer, Coke or mortadella to buy at the bodega and Chiclets were nowhere to be found. People standing in line to buy groceries became a common sight. Even in Varadero you couldn't get mermelada de guayaba con queso crema, which was my favorite. My father, who used to sit on the front porch after work reading the newspaper, was now in his bedroom listening to “La Voz de Las Americas” behind closed doors on a short-wave radio in an obvious effort of obtaining unbiased information. The squelching sound emitted from the radio as he tuned-in the station is unforgettable. One night, I entered his room as he was listening to the radio; he sat me down, turned off the radio and calmly proceeded to explain the theory of communism and its ramifications. I was also told not to worry since the Americans would never allow communism within 90 miles from their shores and that it was all a matter of time before all of this madness would end but that I would be traveling “al norte” (north) in the near future on a temporary basis until the dust settled. . . .

All Cubans know that October 10th also known as “El Grito de Yara” signifies the day when sugar mill owner Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and his followers proclaimed Cuba's independence from Spain. To me, it signifies a lot more, for it is also the day of my independence from communism. It is the day that I left Cuba. On the morning of Tuesday October 10th, 1961 I took a very slow deliberate walk around my house and the neighborhood, paying full attention to every detail with the full knowledge that I wouldn't be there the next day, but little did I know that it would be my last. . . .

Neatly placed on top of my bed was a new dark blue suit that my mother had bought for the trip. After dressing I looked in the mirror and the reflection that came back was that of a full-grown man like my father. At the time I did not understand that at that moment my childhood had ended and that the reflection was of what I had become. Before leaving the house, my father quizzed me on my home address and on all the phone numbers that I should remember. To this day, these numbers are still engraved in my mind.

The trip to the airport was non eventful mixed with an occasional “mira la vacuita” (look at the cow) bit. Obviously my parents and my sister were trying to mask their feelings by casting a positive tone on the situation. I had mixed fillings [feelings]. On the one hand I was going to the good old USA on a temporary basis, I was going on my first plane ride, and I was ridding myself of all the oppression that existed in Cuba. I was going towards freedom! On the other hand, I was leaving behind my family and everything that I knew towards an unknown. . . .

After the plane took-off I kept looking out the window attempting to memorize all the splendor of the Cuban landscape but as we approached the coastline an eerie feeling came over me. I was not sure if I would ever see Cuba again or when I would see my family. The only thing I was sure of was that I was on my own. I was still bouncing those thoughts around in my mind when I heard the announcement that we would be landing in MIA and to please fasten your seatbelts. As I walked down the staircase from the airplane the eerie feeling changed to a sense of accomplishment and relief for I was finally in the USA and free from all of the communist oppression. I took a long deep breath, savoring my freedom, and proceeded towards the terminal. . . .

The 4th of July is USA's day of independence and it is also mine because on that glorious day in the year 1963 my mother and my sister arrived in Miami from Cuba via Mexico. We moved into this small apartment in the N.W. section of Miami known as Wynwood. One of the first things that I did as I entered the apartment was to open the refrigerator door and stand in front of it smiling. When my mother asked me what I was doing, I said, “Nothing” and then I hugged her. I was finally home. In 1965, two years later my father arrived penniless after the government confiscated his businesses. I later learned through my father that my mother cried herself to sleep every night during my absence.

Since then I have lived and made Miami my hometown. After St. Johns, I graduated from Robert E. Lee Jr. High, Miami Jackson High School and the University of Miami.

My father, mother and sister have all since passed away and are buried side by side here in Miami. I left them behind when I left Cuba and now they have all departed and left me behind, but I know that someday we will be reunited again.

I am now married to another Pedro Panner who is the mother of two wonderful sons and the grandmother of three beautiful grandchildren. We are both registered architects practicing in Miami. I will always be eternally grateful for and to my parents, the USA, the Catholic Church and to all the people that God has sent to help me through this winding road we call life. It is sad to see how our beloved Cuba has become an impoverished third world country with no resemblance to the prosperous society of my black and white memories that I hold so dear. I can't even imagine what my life would have been like in Cuba.

From “Guillermo Ricardo Paz Vazquez,” Operacion Pedro Pan: The Cuban Children's Exodus, n.d., Operation Pedro Pan Group Inc., pedropan.org

Source 13: Excerpts from Sherezada “Chiqui” Vicioso, “Discovering Myself, Un Testimonio,” 2010

I first came to the United States in April 1967. Initially, I had wanted to be a lay nun and work in the barrios. Marriage repelled me, especially when I looked at my aunts, practically all of whom were divorced. I couldn't stand the idiocy of the whole scene: the danger of getting mixed up with someone when you were thirteen or fourteen, worrying about not having a boyfriend when you were sixteen. To me, becoming a nun was my path to freedom. I also wanted to study medicine. The one year I planned to stay eventually became seventeen.

My mother, who had left a year earlier, said I should go to the States in order to improve my English and to get to know the world before embarking on becoming a nun. I was very angry with her at the time, but she was right.

I come from a very special family with an intellectual background. On my father's side, my grandfather was a journalist and a writer, and my father is a poet and a well-known composer. My mother is a better poet than I am, but has never dared to write. She is the daughter of a peasant woman who worked in a tobacco factory and a Dominican oligarch who owned the factory and literally bought her when she was sixteen. My mother is a hybrid of two very distinct classes. I felt this when I went to school in Santiago.

In spite of having studied English in school, I found out, on my arrival in New York, that I didn't know very much. Like most Dominicans who come to the United States, I went to work in a factory: first a hat, and then a button factory (the acetone in which we had to wash the buttons damaged my eyes so that I have had to wear glasses ever since). I went to night school for a while, and then was accepted into a city-sponsored intensive English program, where I was paid to study.

My next job was a telephone operator, and I quickly acquired a reputation as being extremely courteous to the customers, as my English still wasn't all that good and I said “Thank you” to everyone, even if they insulted me. Then Brooklyn College opened its doors to minority students. They responded to a policy, initiated under the Johnson administration, whereby colleges were paid federal funds to admit minorities. I was one of eight Dominican students admitted to Brooklyn College.

Since there were only eight of us, and it was very tough to survive in such a racist atmosphere, we joined up with other minority students, principally Puerto Ricans, blacks, other people from the Caribbean—we formed a Third World Alliance.

This was a real threshold for me; I had never known the people from Barbados or Trinidad, etc. My concept of the Caribbean, up to that time, had been limited to the Spanish-speaking part, and I discovered my identity as a caribeña in New York.

I was also racially classified at Brooklyn College, which was an interesting experience for me. In Santo Domingo, the popular classes have a pretty clear grasp of racial divisions, but the middle and upper-middle classes are very deluded on this point. People straighten their hair and marry “in order to improve the race,” etc., etc., and don't realize the racist connotations of their language or their attitude. In the United States, there is no space for fine distinctions of race, and one goes from being “trigueño” or “indio” to being “mulatto” or “black” or “Hispanic.” This was an excellent experience for me. From that point on, I discovered myself as a Caribbean mulata and adopted the black identity as a gesture of solidarity. At that time, I deeply admired and identified with Angela Davis, and ever since then, I have kept on identifying myself as a black woman.

This opened another door; I learned about Frantz Fanon and other Caribbean theoreticians, and that finished Europe for me. I learned about the triangular trade and how we had financed Europe's development. I realized that capitalism was an impossible model to follow in our development. For me, this was discovering a universe. I only became a feminist much later.

When I first became more radical I was very much put off by feminism and people like Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan—to me they were representatives of the white U.S. middle class who were busy telling us how we were being screwed up by machismo. In a first stage I rejected this and . . . I also had a false sense of solidarity with our men, who were racially oppressed as well. I felt that if we women criticized our men, we were only providing the racists with ammunition. This created a conflict of loyalties for me.

Discovering myself as a woman came much later. First I had to discover that I was part of certain geographical area, and then, that I was Latin American. The great majority of the Latin American exiles converged on New York at that time—the Argentinians, the Uruguayans, the Chileans (Allende fell during those years)—so that for me, New York became a kind of great doorway to this Latin American world.

Being in New York was very essential to my development. I would not be the woman I am today had I not gone to New York. I would have been the classic fracasada (failure) in my country because I know that I would not have found happiness in marriage and having children. I would have been frustrated, unhappy in a marriage, or divorced several times over because I would not have understood that within me was a woman who needed to express her own truths, articulate her own words. That, in Santo Domingo, would have been impossible.

Nevertheless, for the first ten years that I lived in New York, I was engulfed by a great silence; I could write nothing at all. . . .

Still, all these experiences were being stored up inside of me. It's that kind of a process; things go in stages.

It was going to Africa that restored my essence as a caribeña for me. I went for three and a half months to work on coordinating the first meeting of ministers of education of the Portuguese-speaking African nations. . . .

When I returned to the States, I was a different person; I suffered from severe depression, which I now realize marked the death of one Chiqui and the birth of another. . . .

I had to go back to Santo Domingo because, after a few years, living in the United States gave me a kind of physical malaise. . . . When you first get here from your country, full of strength and energy, you get involved in a first stage of learning, absorbing, discovering. Then comes a time when you have to go back in order to revitalize yourself. If you stay in New York too long, you begin to get worn down by it. Anyone who is in the least sensitive can't help but feel bruised by the destruction of our people. Really. I saw it all the time in the Dominican community. . . .

The New York experience, which was so crucial to my discovery of my Caribbean and racial identity, has made me a very, very critical person with respect to my own society. Things I never noticed before, I now see. Like racism, for example. Class differences. Santo Domingo is a very societally structured city. The situation of women is atrocious. I get almost rude about this because I can't stand the kind of sexist behavior that exists in my country. And for that, you pay the price of ostracism. It's really hard. By dint of having lived in the United States, I am considered a "liberated woman," which means that the men feel they have a green light to harass me sexually while the women distrust me. That's the most painful part. . . .

Because so many of my potential readers live in New York I am definitely moving . . . toward publishing in the United States. I think people on the island would be interested as well. . . . We cannot avoid the “invasion” of the Dominicans from the U.S. The whole country is changing: English is spoken all over—you feel the influence of the Dominicans who come back everywhere. I also think there will be interest in my writings in the States, first of all, because there are so many of us there, and second, because I will approach things with the particular viewpoint of a woman. I have a lot to tell about what New York did to my family.

From Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores, eds., The Afro-Latin@ Reader: History and Culture in the United States, Duke University Press, 2010.

Source 14: Excerpts from Adriana Rodriguez, “I Had Never Thought of Leaving My Country,” 1985

My name is Adriana Rodriguez. I am twenty-seven years old. I was a nursing student, but could not finish my training because of the problems in my country, El Salvador. I was forced to leave the country in 1982.

In 1981 I was studying to be a nurse in San Salvador, and had the opportunity to help people who had fled from the war zones in the countryside. They were refugees inside El Salvador. These refugees were mainly elderly people, women and children who had left their homes in the countryside and towns around the capital, San Salvador. They were forced to come to the city for refuge because their home towns had been destroyed by army bombings.

I started working with three other nursing students at the San José de la Montaña Refuge. It was the refugee camp that Monsignor Oscar Romero had been planning to open, before his murder in 1980. The refugee camp was in a seminary, twenty minutes south of the capital. We used to take medicine from the hospital and our school to the camp. It offered food, clothing and moral support to the refugees because the government was refusing to provide any aid. They were happy to see us because it meant that someone cared about them. . . .

Each person there had lived a tragedy. They had all gone through traumatic experiences, such as the murder of a husband, child or parent. They had seen their relatives die after being tortured and burned. Some were the only survivors in their families. They suffered psychologically as well as physically. Seeing this suffering made the four of us realize that it was our duty as human beings, as Christians and as nurses, to help the refugees as much as we could, even though we were only students.

The director of our school, a conservative, bitter woman, called us into her office. She said that the work we were doing was subversive. She threatened to suspend us if we did not stop working at the camp. I answered, “In school we are told that it is a nurse’s duty to tend to those who need help. I feel that to be a dedicated nurse I must use what I am learning to help those whose rights have been taken away.”

We continued our work at the refugee camp, thinking that she wouldn’t carry out her threat. But she did. She expelled us when we had only one year left of nursing school. Since I had learned the basics during the first two years of school, and my friends and I had plenty of practical experience from our work with the refugees, we went on working at the refugee camp.

It was at this time that one of three other students I worked with was captured. She was carried off in a truck by heavily armed men. We never heard from her again. Her mother went crazy looking for her, hoping at least to find her remains. The rest of us were frightened. We realized that the army wasn’t kidding, and that our fate could be the same. . . .

I continued to work with the nuns and other religious people who ran the small clinic at the camp. We had medicine, first aid equipment and fluids to treat diarrhea. Mostly we educated people about how to prevent diarrhea.

One afternoon a boy came to us asking for medical help. He said that someone was needed in Aguilares, a little town about thirty minutes outside San Salvador that had been bombed. So a nun and I went by car. We sent medicines with the boy, who traveled on foot through the hills, because we were afraid of being stopped and searched on the highway. If the army found medicines in our possession, they would have accused us of being rebels.

When we arrived, we found a lot of wounded. . . . The army claimed that it had been conducting a “cleanup operation” to rid the town of guerrillas. But in reality the army bombs towns where the

people are unarmed. There were many such bombings in 1981. . . .

At that time I was living in San Salvador, where I rented a room from a woman. One night some men came looking for me. I wasn't there because sometimes I spent the night at the refugee camp. Angry at not finding me, they took the woman's seventeen-year-old son. The people I lived with weren't related to me, and had nothing to do with my work, although we had become close friends. The boy resisted, and they shot him until his intestines fell out.

He died right there, outside his house. His mother came looking for me, to warn me because she knew they wanted to kill me.

Then they captured my fiancé. We had planned to get married in 1981. He was twenty years old. They grabbed him as he was walking down the street. It was a death squad, heavily armed plainclothesmen. They killed him, stabbing him repeatedly, in front of people walking by on the street. Neither I nor his family claimed his body. We were afraid. We didn't understand why they had to kill him. He was only a student. He wasn't involved in anything. We don't even know where he is buried—perhaps in a common grave with twenty others.

My family, too, was persecuted. My father, who was fifty-two years old, was killed in 1981 in Morazán, where my family came from. It was another “cleanup operation.” They bombed the town of Morazán—they obliterated it. After they bombed it with napalm and 200- and 500-pound bombs, the troops arrived. They took my father and some other elderly people away. They burned my father alive, along with eleven others.

I became very frightened after all these deaths. I knew they were looking for me. I had done nothing except help those who needed medical attention, but I had to leave the country to survive. I had no idea of where to go. I had never thought of leaving my country. . . . I went to Mexico with a dozen other Salvadorans who were in the same situation. . . .

I had a distant cousin living in Texas. I called him to ask him for help, for money. He said the only thing I could do was to come to the United States. He sent me money for a “coyote”—that's a guide across the border. . . . It took ten days. We had to walk for five nights. It was raining and our feet were covered with sores. . . .

After a year in this country, I began to work with the Committee of Central American Refugees (CRECEN). I still wanted to be a nurse, and they told me there was a health project, a clinic, where I could work. I worked there for a year, and then moved on to Long Island, New York, to work on a similar project—establishing a clinic there for refugees. . . .

I have to clean houses to earn money. I'd like to resume nursing studies, but I'm undocumented and don't speak much English. The Sanctuary Movement can help me find work and help with other problems, like getting medicine, but they can't get me a visa. . . .

CRECEN is working to get political refugee status for us. After all, we are political refugees. We left our country because of the war, because it's dangerous to live in the middle of a war, even if one is not actively participating in it. Providing health care to people who need it the most is a crime in El Salvador. It is because of the war that we had to leave.

That makes us political refugees.

From A Dream Compels Us: Voices of Salvadoran Women (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1989), pp. 211–215. Originally published in Links 2, nos. 1 and 2 (1985), “Three Faces of Salvadoran Nursing,” National Central America Health Rights Network (NCAHRN), New York, NY.

Source 15: Nicaraguan Woman Recounts Her Undocumented Journey, 1988

“I talked with Miguel, who said he wanted to go because he believed, from what Leticia and other people had told him, that it’d be like going to another world, to a paradise where everything would be within our reach. . . .

“I called Leticia right back and said yes. . . .

“I didn’t sleep much. I talked with my brother Omar. He said, I’m not telling you to go or stay. You’re responsible for your own actions and you know what you want. . . . Personally, I wouldn’t like to go because people tell me it’s a lie that you can have anything you want. Anywhere in the world, you have to work hard to have something. . . . It’s true I don’t live well, but we’re more or less all right. If I get sick here, I get paid. If you get sick there, they aren’t going to pay you.’ . . .

“We spent a long time at the Honduran border. . . .

“We traveled all day through Honduras. . . . The place seems sad. No country is nice when you have to stay there a long time, only your own country. . . .

“Since we got to the Honduran-Guatemalan border early, we had to wait until it opened, which was some time after seven in the morning. There was no problem, really, because we were on the shopping excursion bus. The tour leader charges a lot in order to pay off officials, both in Honduras and in Guatemala. The visa allows you to stay only a week or so, but the bribe is for Immigration. They know that some people aren’t there just to shop, that some of them, like us, won’t return. But they don’t know which ones. . . .

“We left Guatemala City with Uncle Mundo. I carried a bag containing one change of clothes for each of us: a blouse, pants, and underwear. ‘We have to get moving. Walk fast. Let’s go!’ he yelled at us. We hurried to a bus stop. . . . Mundo warned us not to talk with anyone on the trip. Nothing, we should say nothing.

“We reached Tecún Umán on the Guatemalan-Mexican border around two or three o’clock that afternoon. It’s a nice town, simple and pretty. People use bicycles for taxis. . . .

“At the river, Mundo told us to act as if we were looking around and to pretend he wasn’t with us. Since we rarely said anything out loud and instead communicated by small gestures and glances, he motioned for us to go to the group of people washing clothes on the river’s edge and blend in with them.

“When we got there, a woman approached us, asking, ‘Are you crossing to the other side?’ . . .

“I said yes to the woman, but added that we were with a relative. She whispered, ‘Then watch out because la migra’s close by. They [Immigration officials] can catch you and take you up there, up to the prison. Be careful.’ . . .

“The Immigration officer, dressed in his uniform, stopped us. ‘What are you doing here?’

“Marisa answered. ‘We’re just looking around,’ she said. ‘We like it here, and my little sister is swimming.’ . . .

“The Immigration officer . . . took our passports, and told us that we had to go with him. . . . I told the officer that . . . I first had to dry off and dress Nora. I was trying to stall him, trying to give Mundo time to cross the river.

“Mundo arrived while I was still dressing Nora. ‘What happened?’ he asked me.

‘This man from Immigration said we had to show him our papers, our passports.’

‘Don’t move,’ he mumbled. ‘I’ll take care of it. All he wants is money.’

“Mundo was right. He went to talk with the officer, gave him some money, and returned with our passports. We waited for a half hour, got on the raft, and crossed to the other side, to Mexico.

“The crossing itself was scary. The river is narrow but deep. Since we had to sit close to the edge of the raft, we all thought we’d fall in. Some people swam with the raft, pulling and pushing it. When we reached Mexico, we got off quickly, ran past the Immigration office, and once more got on bicycles that were taxis. . . .

“By the time we arrived in Mexico City, we had spent so much time in buses that we didn’t know what day it was. I just remember it was dark, although it was morning. At first, I thought it was going to storm or rain, but it was just dark, cloudy, and polluted. . . .

“The six of us and Mundo traveled by bus for probably the next two or three days. We went through many towns, but I don’t remember the names. . . .

“We got off somewhere near Tijuana. . . . We took another bus to Tijuana, and then another one to a place near the border crossing. We arrived at a hotel around four o’clock in the afternoon, and Mundo got Cokes and bread for us. . . .

“We left somewhere between six and half past. . . . Mundo warned us and said, ‘As soon as the taxi stops, get out quickly, and follow me.’ The taxi stopped, and Mundo got out and went through an opening in the chain-link fence that divides Mexico from the United States. Beyond the fence is a riverbed, and beyond that, up a little higher, is a road where the Immigration vehicles go back and forth, making sure that no one gets across. We were tired of the cold. The entire trip had been horribly cold. . . .

“There must have been twenty to twenty-five people just where we were, and even more farther on. In the riverbed we saw, near a stream of dirty water, lots of empty cartons and bags. But we also saw a dead man, or it could have been a woman. No one paid any attention to the body. It seemed to be a common occurrence. . . .

“Uncle Mundo called a taxi from a woman’s house, and an hour later we were in a San Diego park. It must have been around noon because people were having lunch. . . . It was January 1, 1989, but none of us knew that. Maybe Mundo knew, but the rest of us were confused about the time, day, everything. . . .

“Sergio arrived. . . . It had been nearly two years since Sergio had seen his daughters. He had forgotten their ages and didn’t know the dates of their birthdays, so he said to each one, ‘How old are you? Oh, so grown up!’ He didn’t keep up with their ages, their birthdays, that sort of thing, as other fathers do. . . .

“He drove us to Los Angeles. I didn’t expect the city to look like that. I had seen postcards that people sent to Nicaragua. Some of them had tall buildings with beautiful lights and the card said ‘New York,’ so I thought all cities, no matter what they were called, looked like that. But Los Angeles wasn’t like that at all. . . .

“Sergio’s whole family—mother, brothers, sisters—and Leticia were waiting for us in an apartment. We were relieved and happy to finally be there. Leticia was emotional, crying and hugging us. She’d been afraid that something would happen to us in the crossing, as has happened to many people. But there we were. We all made it. . . .

“I didn’t understand the situation. . . . The problem was that I didn’t know if Sergio and Leticia had their own apartment or not. I knew Leticia didn’t like to live with Sergio’s family since they’ve never gotten along well, so it seemed strange to me from the very moment I saw all of them in that one-room apartment. Maybe they had just gotten together for our arrival. I simply didn’t know. It hadn’t occurred to me that they all, including Sergio’s two brothers, two sisters, and mother, lived in one room. . . .

“The apartment was . . . just a tiny box of a room that had a bathroom, a closet, and a kitchen along the wall. There was no furniture, no bed, nothing. . . . It was so small and cost four hundred fifty dollars a month. Just looking at it, as we say in Nicaragua, I felt my batteries go low. I was demoralized, without the strength to go on, and with the urge to cry.

“Leticia couldn’t explain it. She tried, but for me it was too much of a surprise. Miguel gestured, showing that he was as astounded as I was. The apartment didn’t matter to the girls, and really not to me, either, but the lie mattered. What we had been told, the lie, was the biggest surprise.

“I didn’t tell Miguel, but I thought about how I had my bed in Nicaragua, I had my room, my house where Miguel could shout and play with the boys in the little yard. There we could talk with our neighbors, but here, no, there was nothing. Miguel couldn’t play because Sergio wouldn’t let him go outside and didn’t want him to disturb the neighbors. You always had to be quiet. . . . It was like when you want to sing a happy song and you can’t because it bothers the people next door.” . . .

From Dianne Walta Hart, Undocumented in L.A.: An Immigrant’s Story (New York: Scholarly Resources Books, 1997), pp. 9–29.

NAME _____

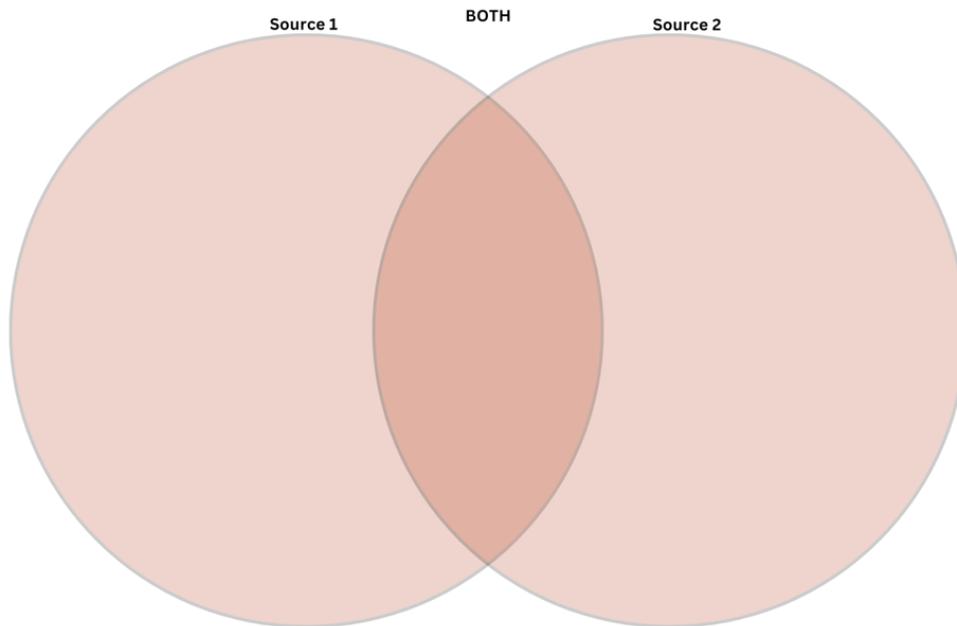
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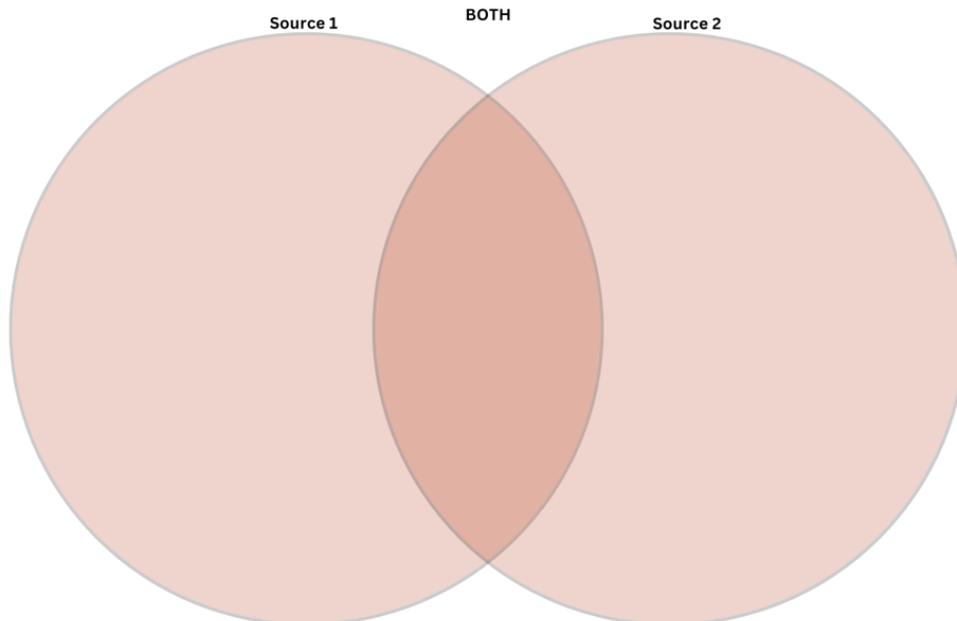
Activity Sheet 5: Compare and Contrast

Instructions: After you re-read the historical background and your small group has selected sources from Lessons 1–4, jointly perform the following three tasks and write a short response to demonstrate your understanding of Latino immigration experiences in the United States.

Task 1: Create a Venn diagram that compares reasons for Latino immigration to the US in two of your documents.



Task 2: Create a Venn diagram that compares opportunities afforded to Latinos in the US in two of your documents.

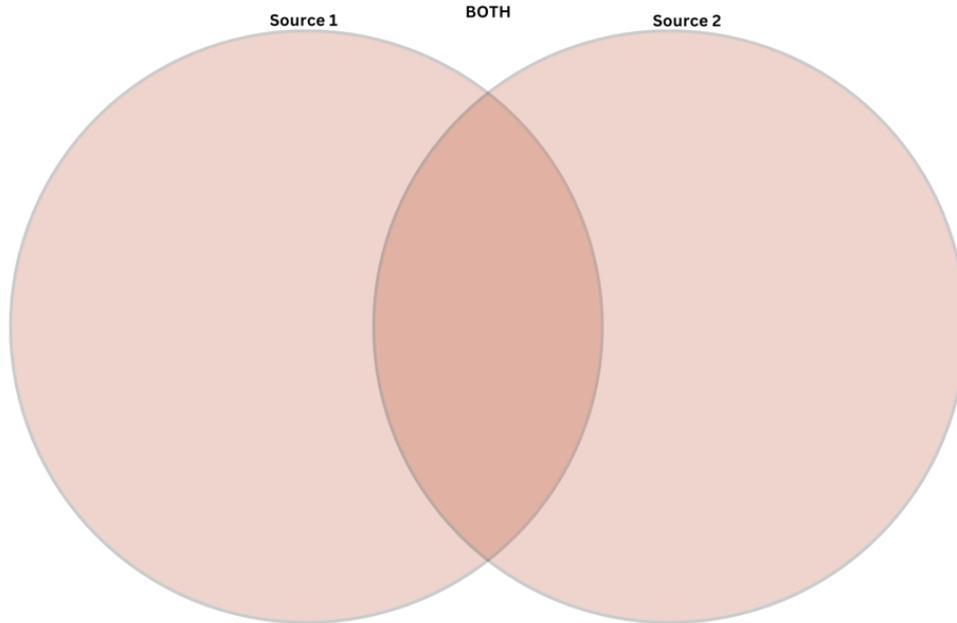


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Task 3: Create a Venn diagram that compares challenges encountered by Latinos in the US in two of your documents.



Short Response: Write two paragraphs comparing and contrasting the experiences of Latino immigrants in the United States during the twentieth century. Cite specific textual evidence from your selected sources to support assertions and include explanations for the similarities and differences.

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