

OREGON COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS
ANNUAL REPORT 2007 and 2008

LATINOS (HISPANICS) IN OREGON: A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Between 1990 and 2000 the number of Latinos residing in Oregon increased from 112,707 to 275,214, an increase of 144%. In 2007, the American Community Survey lists 379,034 Latinos in Oregon. While this is an impressive phenomenon of demographic growth for this population, we should not extrapolate from these figures the idea that the presence of Hispanics is a new phenomenon in Oregon.

Latinos—primarily of Mexican origin--have been present in Oregon in significant numbers since the 1940s. There is also evidence of a lesser presence of *mexicanos* prior to that time. Among the earliest were 37 Mexicans who, in the capacity of mule packers, served as support troops with the Second Regiment Oregon Mounted Volunteers in the Rogue River Wars of the mid-19th century (Gamboa 1991). The 1860 Oregon Census lists 20 individuals born in Mexico—let us keep in mind that this could include individuals born in California or other Southwestern States which belonged to Mexico until 1848—among them 5 women. These individuals list the following as their occupations: miner, mule packer, washerwoman, seamstress, laborer; and they resided in Oregon City, the Dalles, Fairfield, Salem, Rogue River and Josephine County. A ten month old infant girl, Julia Billardo, born in Oregon to Mexican parents, may have been the first child of Mexican ancestry born in Oregon. (Oregon Census 1860).

There is also documentation of the first Mexican cowboys to come to Oregon. They came from California where, under the flags of Spain and Mexico, there had developed a robust *vaquero* culture, the accouterments and practices of which form the foundation of contemporary U.S. cowboy culture. Bob Boyd informs us that this culture was brought to Oregon in 1869 by John Devine who brought with him “a herd of trail-worn cattle, a dozen California vaqueros, and the outfits cook and chuck wagon” (1996, 31). Vicente and Juan Ortega, Francico Chararateguey, Juan and Jesus Charris, Prim Ortega, and Joaquín Chino were among those who taught the art of taming horses and herding cattle to Anglo Americans

who worked the P. Ranch in the High Desert of Oregon. (Boyd 1996). In the early twentieth century another Mexican cowboy, M. Morales, made a name for himself through his saddle making business in Pendleton (Morales 1925).

The Oregon census provides some valuable additional information, enumerating 569 Mexicans under the category of “foreign-born adults” in 1920. Eighty three Mexicans are listed as World War I draftees. The majority of them—37-- resided in Multnomah County. Peterson del Mar (2003) notes that the 1930 census recorded more than 1,500 people of Mexican-decent in Oregon, and García and García (2005) cite the exact number at 1,568, noting that this figure does not include individuals present in the area only part of the year.

But it was during World War II the presence of Mexicans became significant in the State, this as a result of the bilateral guest worker program established between Mexico and the United States. This program, known today as the *Bracero* program was designed to help American farmers meet their labor needs while American men were away at war. More than 15,000 Mexican workers came to Oregon as braceros between 1943 and 1947, and their legacy can not be underestimated. As a result of their stint in Oregon agriculture, growers became very fond of Mexican labor and this encouraged them to recruit Mexican labor to replace braceros after the war, when the program ended in the Pacific Northwest. (It, however, was extended until 1964 in other parts of the country.) They recruited Mexican Americans from Texas and undocumented workers from Mexico. The Mexican Americans from Texas would begin settling out in the late 50’s and 60’s, and today they represent a fourth and fifth generation in Oregon. These early settlers would, over the years, carve out spaces in the economic, social, and civic fabric of the state and lay a strong foundation and infrastructure (in the form of social service agencies) for the many Hispanic immigrants who would come to the state in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries. Their successful levels of integration in sectors such as human services, small businesses, the service sector, and education, however, have not been duplicated in representation in the political arena; that is, elected offices, political appointments, representation on state boards, etc.

Another group is made up of workers who were granted amnesty under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, including the many families that followed workers who were given amnesty. Member of this group have worked primarily in

agriculture, tree planting, nurseries, food processing, and domestic work. Like the early settlers, they have raised families here, and currently they are represented by a third generation.

A more recent group arrived during the last decade. Among this group we find several thousand indigenous migrants who have come from isolated villages in Mexico and Central America, where already they are stigmatized because of their ethnic and cultural difference and, consequently, are marginalized from mainstream society. Because many indigenous immigrants speak their native languages—among them Mixtec, Tzotzil, Zapotec, Maya, Triqui, Nahuatl--rather than Spanish, they are not able to access services delivered in Spanish in social service agencies and in the public schools. In Oregon they find themselves even more marginalized than in their homeland, often discriminated against not only by the dominant culture but by non-indigenous Mexican immigrants as well. Given their very low levels of human capital, indigenous immigrants endure a level of poverty that exceeds that of their non-indigenous compatriots, and indeed lead vulnerable and marginal lives.

A smaller group, also arriving during the last decade, is represented by skilled workers and professionals who have been able to come with special work visas. This group has higher levels of human capital than their compatriots who also came in the last decade, and their experience leans toward success and integration.

It is important to understand the history of the presence of Latinos in Oregon if we are to capture the full ramifications of the conditions which impinge on the quality of their lives in this state. There is a long-standing population that after several decades of struggle has integrated itself in the broader social landscape, particularly in Eastern Oregon, in Washington County, and in the Willamette Valley. Among this population of early settlers we find doctors, lawyers, teachers, government workers, bankers, business owners, and even a few farm owners. Many of the children and grandchildren of these early settlers have attended and are currently attending colleges and universities in Oregon. We also have a large percentage of new immigrants who, because of their undocumented status, live in the shadows of our society, their lives marked by anxiety, fear, **and hope**. Yet, all, through their labor and their spending power, contribute to the creation of wealth in the state of Oregon. When all groups are combined, their cumulative impact on Oregon is significant, including vital cultural contributions such as Spanish language newspapers and radio and television

stations, food, theater, dance and musical groups, cultural centers, artists, writers, and scholars.

EDUCATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

“Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.” - JOHN F. KENNEDY

The state of Oregon’s future economic, social, and cultural success will be largely dependent upon whether or not its largest and fastest-growing ethnic group, Latinos, graduate from high school and attain college and post-graduate degrees. Achievement in the education arena will encourage Latinos to become active participants in our state’s public, private and non-profit organizations and our economic business enterprises as their numbers continue to grow. Although Latinos have shown remarkable strides in recent years, the dropout rate in both our public schools and our institutions of higher learning are still at unacceptable levels. Latinos aspire like anyone else to become teachers, nurses, doctors, entrepreneurs, lawyers, engineers and public officials, but these goals will not be realized if they are not provided equal education access, economic incentives to remain in Oregon, and legal rights protected under the law. Understanding the status of Latino education in Oregon is better understood when we view it from the perspective of numbers.

Although Latinos have become the largest and fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States, growing from 12 percent of the population in 2000 to 15 percent of the total U.S. population in 2007, Oregon’s numbers offer similar trends. At the county level, Latinos have increased five to six times more than whites in the Portland metropolitan area; in Multnomah and Clark counties, the number of Latinos showed the largest increase--by 7 percent in 2007--while Washington and Clackamas counties each saw a 6 percent increase. During the past decade the Latino population in Washington County has more than tripled. The county now has the second largest Latino population of any county in Oregon, comprising more than 11.2 percent. Much the same, Marion County’s Latino population increased by 5 percent and two out of three new residents in the county were listed by the

census as Latino, making up more than 20 percent of county residents. In the 2000 census, 17 percent of these residents identified themselves as Latino in comparison to just 8 percent in 1990. Between 1990 and 2000, the Latino population in Marion and Polk counties increased 162 percent, reaching 55,000 residents. In Rural parts of the states, the most notable growth was in Deschutes County, where Latinos grew by more than 9 percent and currently make up more than 6 percent of the population. Jackson County saw growth of 6 percent and Wasco County Latinos comprise more than 9.3 percent. Latinos account for 16.8 percent of Oregon students enrolled in public schools. At the current growth rate, Latino students will make up 28 percent public school enrollments by 2020.

Although Latinos have become the largest and fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States, growing from 12% of the population in 2000 to 15% of the total U.S. population in 2007, the education gaps extend through the lifetime of Latino children into adulthood. They have less access to early childhood education. Eighth-grade reading scores lag. Only about 60 percent of Latino students are graduating on time; only about 30 percent complete advanced math courses in high school; and they are still less likely than other students to enroll in higher education or get a bachelor's degree. In Oregon, the number of Hispanic students has increased over 200% since the early 1990's (up 700% from 1980), and the minority population overall has doubled since the 1995-96 school year. The percent of non-native English speakers has also risen from 2.7% in 95-96 to 11.5% in the 2006-07 school year.

A recent report issued by the Oregon Department of Education indicates that we have seen a decrease in achievement gap. For example, in the 1994-95 school year, almost 18% of Hispanic students were classified as dropouts. In 2005-06 this rate was down to 8.4%. These improvements in drop-out rates notwithstanding, the graduate rates for minorities in Oregon lag considerably behind those of the general population, and also behind the national rate. In a recent report released by the Oregon Progress Board the Latino graduation rate lagged behind that of whites and Asian/Pacific Islanders, but ahead of Native Americans and African Americans. (See Table 1 below)

Graduation Profile 2002-2003

By Ethnicity	Oregon	National
American Indian & Alaska Native	37.3	47.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	68.1	77.0
Hispanic	55.1	55.6
Black	25.0	51.6
White (Non Hispanic)	70.0	76.2

Table 1. The Graduation Project 2006, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

In addition to a troubling graduation rate, there has been little improvement in college completion since 1990, placing Oregon behind the national statistics in this category. In terms of performance in the areas of math and English, scores recorded by the Oregon Progress Board demonstrate that this population still finds itself at levels substantially lower than those of the general population.

EDUCATION <i>Negative</i>
<i>Adult high school completion</i> rate increased from 1990. However, the rate lagged behind Oregon's overall rate and that of Hispanics nationally.
<i>Adult college completion</i> rate changed little since 1990 for Hispanic Oregonians while nationally the rate of Hispanics with a college degree has improved
<i>Eighth grade reading</i> improved over the near term of 2005-2007. However, there is a substantial divide that needs to be overcome to reach Oregon's overall rate. The percent of students achieving <i>eighth grade math</i> increased in our one year measure. Yet, 20 percentage points separate the Hispanic Oregonians eighth grade rate from that of Oregon's overall rate
<i>High school dropout rate</i> has decreased substantially since 1992. However, the rate in 2006 was roughly double that of Oregonians overall.

Table 2. Source: Oregon Progress Board, 2008 Oregon Benchmark Race and Ethnicity

Given that by 2020 Latino students will make up 28% of public school enrollments (Oregon Dept. of Education), these findings raise concerns about the preparedness of Oregon schools to adequately meet the needs of a significant portion of this population and to prepare it for successful participation in the economic, social, and civic life of the state. Of special concern are those students who do not have legal documents. Despite the fact that scores of them have spent years in this country and have received most of their education in Oregon public schools, at the moment there are no windows of opportunity for them. (Not only is college attendance out of their reach, but they are unable to obtain drivers license.) This, of course, is a very complex issue as numerous factors—among them poverty, lack of English language skills, social marginalization, and lack of incentives to do well in school (i.e. the promise of college enrollment)—stand between them and the opportunity to attend college; but this lack of opportunity is especially tied to their undocumented civil status (Gonzales-Berry, Mendoza, Plaza 2007). The state can not by itself remedy their citizenship status; it can, however, train its teachers and administrators in multicultural competency so they are better equipped to deal with this population, and provide dual immersion language programs that have the added advantage of developing the Spanish language skills of non-Hispanic children. And, if it is able to grasp the seriousness of this problem, it can also do something about creating opportunities for them to enroll in state colleges and universities and to receive financial aid. It is time for the State Legislature to pay serious attention to this matter. Failure to do so will result in the creation of a large underclass of young people in our state. This is not good for the economy, the government, or the social climate of Oregon.

HEALTH

Health access is certainly a serious problem for Hispanics; according to The Progress Board Hispanics lag behind significantly in terms of insurance coverage.

<p><i>HEALTH AND SAFETY</i> <i>Mixed</i></p>
<p><i>Health insurance</i> rates appear to be moving in the wrong direction since 2000. Nearly one third of Hispanics lack health insurance. This mirrors a nationwide estimate (Appendix A, Table 7b). The Hispanic uninsured rate is roughly double that of Oregonians overall</p>

Table 3. Source: Oregon Progress Board, 2008 Oregon Benchmark Race and Ethnicity

Once again, the citizenship status is a major factor but one that is difficult to influence at the state level without federal support. However, the state must recognize that there is a convergence between the social and political well-being and the mental and physical health of Oregon's population. Income inequalities affect health and undermine civil society. In other words, if people are not healthy they can not participate in the political, social and economic life of society. So long as undocumented migrants, who live and work among us and who form an important—albeit marginal—strand of our society are denied access to health insurance and health care they will remain an underclass unable to engage in productive civic participation. The state needs to find ways to incorporate this population in such a way that they not have a negative impact on the state's health and social profile even though they may not have residency status. Furthermore, the state can work proactively to ensure that native-born children are insured through state funded programs.

Other health care issues include the language barrier and cultural competence amongst health providers. These are areas that can be improved through proper training and through the hiring of more bilingual medical personnel and staff. In order to have a pool of qualified bilingual/bicultural health care providers, we need to pay serious attention to growing our own. This need loops back to the education issue discussed above. A positive indicator is that many county health programs throughout the state have in recent years turned their attention to this problem and have made some gains through programs such as those that employ bilingual personnel to serve as *promotoras de salud* (health promoters) and through the establishment of bilingual health clinics.

LABOR AND ECONOMIC ISSUES

A very troubling finding by the Board of Progress is the fact that poverty amongst Hispanics has worsened since 2000.

FINANCIAL STATUS
<i>Negative</i>
<i>Poverty</i> rates worsened from 2000 to 2006. Hispanic Oregonians are in poverty at rates roughly double that of Oregon's average. Additionally, Hispanic Oregonians were more likely to be in poverty than Hispanics nationwide. (Chart 10)
<i>Home ownership</i> rates improved over the last 15 or so years, but were roughly half that of the overall Oregon rate. Hispanic Oregonians trailed the national Hispanic average

Table 4. Source: Oregon Progress Board, 2008 Oregon Benchmark Race and Ethnicity

This phenomenon is no doubt linked to the increasing arrival of undocumented new immigrants, but is also indicative of the growing economic crisis in this country which tends to have a significant impact on ethnic minorities. One issue that we need to be very cognizant of is the ramification of the deportation, through immigration raids such as the one at Del Monte, of working men who leave behind unemployed wives and children. The latter are left with absolutely no recourse, as—with the exception of those children that were born here-- they are ineligible for social services.

The table below shows that between 1990 and 2000 there was a notable increase in household income among the Mexican origin population in Oregon. The progress recorded in this period sustains our argument that the increased in poverty since 2000 are related to the conditions affecting the lives of newer, undocumented immigrants.

Annual Income	1990 Total Num. Households	1990 Percent Total Pop.	2000 Total Num. Households	2000 Percent Total Pop.	1990-2000 Percent of Change
Under \$24,999	15,829	58%	18,991	36.8%	20%
\$25,000 to	8,781	32%	19,625	38.0%	123%

49,999					
\$50,000 to 99,999	2,396	9%	11,000	21.3%	359%
\$100,000 and over	312	1%	1,973	3.8%	532%
Total	27,318	100%	51,589	100%	89%

Table 5. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census

Table 6 below gives us a very clear picture of the occupation distribution of the Mexican-Origin population in Oregon. Of special interest, is the fact that this population, which historically has come to Oregon to work in agriculture and related sectors, is no longer dependent on this sector for employment. The low number in management and professional occupations documented below bears witness to the urgency attached to reducing the educational opportunity gap.

	Total population in Oregon 2005	Mexicans in Oregon 2005
Total civilian population employed 16 years and over	1,713,126	129,617
Occupations		
Management, professional & related	33.0%	10.0%
Service occupations	16.1%	25.5%
Sales & office	25.7%	15.4%

Farming, fishing & forestry	1.8%	12.6%
Construction, extraction, maintenance & repair	9.8%	13.1%
Production, transport. & material moving	13.2%	23.5%

Table 6. Source: 2005 American Community Survey, U.S. Bureau of the Census, Table S0201, Selected Population Profile of the Mexican Population in Oregon

LEGAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES

Discriminatory attitudes in the larger society also extract a high price on the Latino population. The recent decision regarding requirements for acquiring a driver's license has already begun to have negative consequences in that people are having a difficult time getting to their jobs, and those whose jobs require a license have been dismissed. (A recent report by William Jaeger indicates that this regulation will also have a negative impact on the economy of the state). We must question the moral imperative attendant to this issue. Is it just for this state to rely on people for their labor, yet not give them the ability to get to their jobs.

Measure 58 which appeared on the state's election ballot in 2008 is another concrete example of the anti-immigrant sentiment in the state. (That the ballot was defeated also demonstrates that not all Oregonians hold this sentiment.) In Columbia county, 2 ballot measures were prompted by anti-immigrant sentiment. The more blatantly nativist aspects of these measures required construction sites to post large signs declaring that they did not employ illegal immigrants. To the credit of the citizens of this county, this measure did not pass, but a measure imposing a \$10,000 fine on employees who hire undocumented workers did receive a majority of the vote. It remains to be seen how this measure will impact the economy of that county. In some areas of the state (notably the Medford area), reports of racial profiling and harassment by police officers have been repeatedly reported. In addition

to these real and measurable conditions currently affecting in a very negative manner the lives of recent Latino immigrants, there have been incidences of hate crimes throughout the state. The beating of two Mexican males by young people out for a good time summer before last is one of the more glaring examples.

Immigrants are also vulnerable to scams and predatory sales representatives and lenders. Used Automobile dealers are notorious for hiking car prices for immigrants. In one recent scam, the Attorney General's Office found that an English language audio program advertised in Oregon listed low prices for the tapes; the charges for handling and mailing, however, were \$500! Since there is no law in Oregon requiring up front admission of such charges, the state is an easy target for this sort of scam.

Two bright spots are revealed in the Progress Board's report. One has to do with the decrease in the arrest rate of Hispanics. That report shows that the arrest rate among Latinos dropped substantially since 1990, to near the overall. This decrease is perhaps related to the improved training of law officers in the area of cultural sensitivity and competency. However, we need to be very vigilant of abuses of police power that might accompany the growing, national anti-immigrant sentiment, and especially guard against the practice of state police officials doing the work of the office of Immigration Control. And while the decrease in arrests is a good sign, serious problems are reported vis-à-vis the judicial system. There are problems of lack of linguistically and culturally competent officials to do intake interviews. There are issues related to the validity of Spanish translations of psychological assessment instruments. And there is a deeply ingrained belief among undocumented immigrants that they will not receive fair treatment or due process in the courts because the latter are inherently biased against them because they are undocumented.

WORK OF OCHA IN 2007-2008

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNOR

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