

## HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

## Are They Chicano, Latino or Hispanic?

By Carlos Blanco

A few years ago, the term "Chicano" was in vogue. This term has its roots in the Chicano civil rights movement of the 1960s. It was adopted by many Mexican-Americans who thought "Chicano" was in vogue. This term has its roots in the Chicano civil rights movement of the 1960s. It was adopted by many Mexican-Americans who thought "Chicano" better described their unique experience and reality in the United States. According to some, the term originally had a mildly pejorative significance in Mexico. Today it is less popular.

The term "Latin American" was originally coined by the French in the 1800s. They wanted to increase their influence by appealing to the language kinship they thought existed between France and a region where two major Romance languages (Portuguese and Spanish) were spoken.

The term "Hispanic" was first officially used by the U.S. government to classify individuals for purposes of the 1970 census. The term includes people of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central American, South American, and other Spanish culture or origin.

To grasp this issue, one has to understand that Latin America was colonized in much the same manner as the United States. When the English were settling the thirteen colonies, albeit at the expense of Native Americans, the Spanish were doing much the same thing in regions to the west and south and both were exploiting Africans.

Later, many immigrants from all over the world arrived, both to the English-speaking north and the Spanish-speaking south. Thus, the American continents - English and Spanish speaking - are constituted of nations composed of other nations. However, a major difference is that in the Spanish colonies, Caucasians, blacks, and Native Americans intermarried more freely than in the English colonies.

Within the Spanish colonies, though, differences in the population's

makeup existed and continue to exist today. Due to strong indigenous influences in Mexico and Central America, the region's culture tends to celebrate its aboriginal heritage. However, countries located in the cone of South America, which have experienced major migrations from Europe, have a more European orientation. And African influence is most evident in the music and customs of the Caribbean nations.

When these racially mixed Hispanics migrate to the United States, our national obsession with labels and classifications creates great confusion. The question of what they call themselves - posed to a sample of Hispanics in a 1990 poll - elicited several answers. Among other things, the poll revealed that Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans strongly identify with their own national - origin groups and want to be called "Mexicans," "Puerto Ricans," and

"Cubans." The poll also revealed that members of these groups do not identify themselves as one community, see themselves as being similar culturally and politically, or have much contact with individuals from the other groups.

The fact remains, however, that Hispanics can be of any race. In the 1990 census, most Hispanics chose "white" when answering the race question. However, of those who checked "other race," 98 percent also claimed Hispanic origin on the ethnicity question.

In 1992, the year of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus's fateful voyage, furious debates ensued about what the event signified to Hispanic self-identity, and fissures around this topic were immediately evident in the Hispanic community. To those who are proud to consider Columbus Day

a cultural birthday, the event signified the start of the process that made Hispanic culture what it is today. In the opinion of other Hispanics, however, that same process ruined the potential for an indigenous culture and instead imposed on the region an alien Spanish one. Thus, among some individuals, the term "Latino" is gaining favor over "Hispanic" because it implies that Latin America has a distinctive indigenous culture rather than being just a stepchild of Spain.

The Spanish *conquistadores*, consumed by greed, brought carnage and untold misery to the peoples they conquered. But modern Mexico and Peru would never have existed as they are

now if they had missed the defining Hispanic element in their cultures. Hispanics who denounce the celebration of Columbus Day as an invasion rightly do so, but they cannot deny that they also carry in their veins the heritage of Spain. The common denominator in all Latin American cultures is their bond in the blood, traditions, and language inherited from Spain.

Special thanks to the Oregon Council for the Humanities for allowing us to reprint an article from "Nosotros - The Hispanic People of Oregon." "Nosotros" is a collection of essays and recollections. Copies of the book are available for purchase through the organization. Call 1-800-735-0543.



Photo by Armando "Milo" Cabanilla/ Straight Shooting

## A Profile of Hispanic Oregonians

**A Decade of Hispanic Growth** - Not counting the added impact of the region's annual quarter of a million migrant Hispanics, the Oregon-Washington-Idaho permanent resident Hispanic population and buying power has grown by some 110,000 persons and \$3.1 billion dollars since 1990.

**The Next 6 Years** - The generally accepted conservative projections show an astonishing growth of nearly 180,000 more Hispanic residents in the region by the year 2005. By 2015, the area's Hispanic population will have topped 1 million. In terms of Hispanic buying power growth, Oregon has been leading the region during this decade with +99.1%, the 6<sup>th</sup> highest U.S. Hispanic growth rate.

**Why the Northwest?** - There are three key reasons: 1 - The region has an extremely unique combination of booming employment opportunities in high tech, manufacturing, tourism, as well as the more traditional agricultural employment. 2 - The heavy northward movement of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation California Hispanics continues. 3 - Very high birth rates among NW Hispanic newlyweds.

**Buying Power** - NOT including the migrants, Hispanic Oregonians in the Portland Metropolitan Area have over half a billion dollars (\$597.3 million) in annual buying power.

The following statistics were provided by the Larson Northwest Hispanic Media & Marketing. For more information, call 503/452-1022.

**KENNEDY SCHOOL**  
McMenamins

**SEPTEMBER**

**The Henry Cooper Blues Band**  
CD Release Party · Thursday, September 2 at 7pm

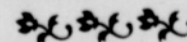
**Alisa Wolfe Band**  
Thursday, September 9 at 7pm

**Evening with an Author**  
Featuring Joanna Rose  
with a Deli Buffet and Edgefield Wines  
Wednesday, September 15 at 7pm  
\$35 per person · 21 and over

**Battle of the Bands: Round 3**  
Steve Bradley vs. The X Angels  
Thursday, September 16 at 7pm

**John Coltrane's Birthday Bash**  
Historical Tribute featuring  
Saxophonist Brian Dickerson  
Thursday, September 23 at 7pm  
Birthday Cake and Sweet Potato Pie

**An Evening in Autumn**  
Music by Chatta Addy · Thursday, September 30, 6pm



**McMenamins Kennedy School**  
5736 NE 33rd · Portland, Oregon · 249-3983  
All ages welcome unless noted · No cover charge unless noted

