

Latino in America - CNN & Soledad O'Brien Chronicle How a Minority Group Is Remaking the USA

The Latino population, now America's largest minority, is set to nearly triple by 2050. In fact, the U.S. now has the highest Latino population after Mexico. Their sheer numbers are shaking up America, reshaping schools, churches and neighborhoods and forcing a nation of immigrants to rediscover what it means to be an American.

For two nights, CNN's Soledad O'Brien journeys into the homes and hearts of a minority group destined to change America. Is it the ultimate clash of cultures, or the ultimate melting pot? Witness the evolution of a country as Latinos remake America, and in return, America remakes them.

Before and after viewing these programs, use our free Discussion Questions and Learning Activities to facilitate a conversation with your students.

Latino in America: Part 1 -- Garcias

Program Overview:

The last name Garcia is now the 8th most popular name in America, a sign of the sea change sweeping the country. Through the stories of Garcias from all walks of life, CNN's Soledad O'Brien examines the rich diversity, the struggles and the triumphs of Latinos in America. Latino in America: Garcias airs in HDTV on Wednesday, October 21 at 9 p.m. EDT. [Click here to access Post-Viewing Discussion Questions for Latino in America: Garcias.](#)

Latino in America: Part 2 -- Chasing the Dream

Program Overview:

CNN takes us on a journey as old as this country: the pursuit of the American dream. Latinos are chasing that dream just like all the groups before them. They come from over 21 countries, but in America they forge an identity as Latinos CNN follows their journey in four different communities across the country. Latino in America: Chasing the Dream airs in HDTV on Thursday, October 22 at 9 p.m. EDT. [Click here to access Post Viewing Discussion Questions for Latino in America: Chasing the Dream.](#)

Don't Miss

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Latino in America

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Tracing the rise of the Hispanic population, 1980 through 2008

Before-Viewing Discussion Questions

Before watching Latino in America, ask students to share their responses to these questions:

1. What would you consider to be the potential benefits and downsides of growing up Latino in America?
2. What challenges do you think confront Latinos in the United States today? How are these challenges similar to or different from those that confront all Americans?
3. How would you define the "American dream"?
4. In your opinion: What factors can help a person to achieve the American dream? Is the American dream attainable for all individuals? Explain.
5. Who are some Latinos whom you believe have achieved the American dream? Why would you put them in this category?

Post-Viewing Questions

Latino in America: Part 1 - Garcias

After viewing the first part of Latino in America, offer these questions for student consideration and discussion. There are specific

questions for each story within Latino in America.

Isabel

1. According to the program: How does the prevalence of the name "Garcia" illustrate a trend in the U.S. population? Among minorities in the U.S., where do Latinos rank in terms of population size?

2. Who is Isabel Garcia? Who are the individuals that she represents?

3. Where does Garcia work as a public defender? Who is responsible for enforcing local laws regarding illegal immigrants there? What is Garcia's opinion of the way that Joe Arpaio does his job? Why do her critics say that Garcia has "crossed the line" regarding her opinion of the sheriff? What is her response?

4. In your opinion, was Garcia's attendance at the protest against Arpaio appropriate? Do you support or oppose Sheriff Arpaio's actions? Explain.

5. Who is Araceli Torres? Why was she arrested? Where does her family live? Why might Torres be deported to Mexico? How do you think that her case should be handled? Why does Isabel Garcia continue to defend Torres and other immigrants?

6. What are some of the different perspectives on the issue of illegal immigration that are featured in the segment? With which of these perspectives, if any, do you agree? Explain. In your opinion, how should the issue of illegal immigration be addressed?

Lorena

1. What kind of "empire" is Lorena Garcia building? Why does she believe that being a Latina in America right now is "the best position that we can be"?

2. What are some of Chef Lorena's accomplishments? What challenges has she had to overcome to be successful? What do you think that it means to be a "crossover" success? How is Garcia attempting to do achieve this?

3. What sacrifices has Garcia made to get where she is? Why is she happy that she did not follow some people's advice to lose her accent? To what extent do you think that her decision to stick to her ethnicity has contributed to her success?

Cindy

1, Where is Monica Garcia the school board president? According to the program, what percentage of that district's students do not graduate on time? How is Garcia trying to change this statistic?

2. What percentage of students in Monica Garcia's school district is Latino? What obstacles to their education do many of these students face?

3. How did her education impact Monica Garcia's life? Why do you think that she calls education an "equalizer"?

4. What challenges does Cindy Garcia face in completing her education? How would you characterize the level of responsibility that she has to her family, compared to that of most teenagers? Why does Cindy look to her older sister for inspiration?

5. Why do you think that Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa calls education "the big civil rights issue of our time"? Do you agree or disagree with his view? Explain. According to the video, what was Villaraigosa's educational experience like? Why does he say that he believes there is hope for Cindy Garcia?

6. According to the program: What percentage of Latina girls become pregnant before the age of 20? How can their pregnancy impact their chances to graduate on time?

7. How has Cindy's pregnancy impacted her anticipated graduation? Do you think that it has impacted her determination to graduate? Explain. What support does she have to help her reach her goal?

8. Where is Cindy on graduation day? Why didn't she graduate? What factors contributed to her absences from class?

9. Why do you think that Cindy remains committed to getting her diploma? What could she and others do to make that dream a reality?

Bill and Betty

1. Where do Bill and Betty Garcia live? According to the program, what advantages does this city offer their family? What do they think that they may have sacrificed by moving away from New York?

2. Why do you think that preserving their Latino heritage is a priority for Bill and Betty? What are their sons' priorities? What reasons do Andrew and Brian give for their disinterest in their Latino heritage? Why do you think that there is a disconnect between these parents and children when it comes to preserving their Latino culture?

3. Why are Bill and Betty so happy to go on their trip? Who is "Bobbito"? Why do Andrew and Brian consider him "cool"? Why isn't Bobbito worried about Andrew and Brian's lack of interest in their Latino heritage?

4. How do Andrew and Brian struggle with their Latino identity? Why wasn't this a problem for their father?

5. Betty says that she believes that a person does not have to choose between being an American and being Latino. She says, "You can live the American dream and still keep your roots." Do you think that it is possible to immerse yourself in American culture while preserving your own cultural identity? State your rationale.

Francisca

1. What is the focus of Dr. Luis Zayas' studies? What are his findings?
2. How did Francisca Abreu struggle with depression? What conflicts existed between her and her mother, Isabel?
3. According to the program, how are girls like Francisca "trapped between two worlds"? How does the conflict between Francisca and Isabel illustrate the differences between American and Latino cultures?
4. How did the birth of her child help Francisca to understand her own mother better? Who supports Francisca and her baby? What things has Francisca vowed to do differently from her mother? Why do you think that Francisca is grateful to her mother now?
5. How do Francisca and Isabel get along now? What factors do you think have helped Isabel to understand her daughter?
6. How does Francisca's story illustrate some of the challenges of growing up Latina in America?

Religious

1. What is Pedro Moreno Garcia's position in the Catholic Church? Why does he think that some Hispanics are leaving the Catholic Church? What is he trying to do to reverse this trend?
2. What are some of the views expressed at the Holy Trinity parish council meeting? What tensions do some parishioners see? Why do some Latinos say that this tense climate is fueled by fear?
3. According to the program: What role does language play at Holy Trinity? Why are some parishioners

opposed to masses being conducted in two languages? Why do many Latinos go to the Spanish language mass instead of the English mass? How do you think that this gap might be bridged?

4. According to the video, what percentage of all Catholics in the U.S. is Latino? What impact is the Latino population having on the Catholic Church in America? How did parish leaders at St. Cecilia's respond to the Hispanic population? How did the Hispanic presence help to save St. Cecilia's?

5. In your opinion: Do church services in different languages do more to maintain ethnic identity or to separate parishioners? Explain. Should non-English speaking immigrants living in the U.S. be required to learn English? State your rationale.

Jesse/Celebrities

1. Who is Jesse Garcia? How does he describe his experience as a Latino actor in Hollywood?

2. What is a stereotype? What are some stereotypical roles that Jesse Garcia and Lupe Ontiveros have played? According to the program, why have some Latino performers agreed to play these roles?

3. What other famous Latino performers appear in this segment? What are some of the achievements of each of these performers? How has each contributed to the positive perception of Latinos in the U.S.?

4. How do you think that stereotypes can affect cultural understanding? What do you think can be done to combat stereotyping on television and in the movies?

Latino in America: Part 2 - Chasing the Dream

After viewing the second part of Latino in America, offer these questions for student consideration and discussion. There are specific

questions for each story within Latino in America.

Miami

1. From what country do the majority of Miami's Latinos originate? How has the United States' political relationship with that country influenced life in Miami?

2. What is Boystown Children's Village? According to the report, what are the living conditions like at Boystown?

3. Who is Marta, and why has she been detained at Boystown? What choice does Marta's lawyer give her regarding her court appearance? What do you think might have happened to Marta if she had not taken her lawyer's advice? What do you think that the future holds for Marta?

4. According to the program, what are some reasons why Latinos have immigrated to the United States? Why do you think that some Latinos, like Marta, have fought for the right to stay in America?

5. Who are the "Pedro Pans"? Why were they given that name? What was the goal of the U.S. policy regarding the Pedro Pans before 1962? What historical incident drastically changed the Pedro Pans' situation?

6. Who are some of the Pedro Pans seen in the documentary? How do some of the former Pedro Pans describe their experiences in the United States? Who is Mel Martinez? Why does he say that the situation for children at Boystown today "is probably much more difficult than mine"?

7. What aid does the U.S. government offer to Cubans who reach American soil? In your opinion, should this type of aid be given to people from other countries who come to America? Why or why not?

8. In your opinion, what should be the U.S. government's policy toward immigrant children who enter the United States illegally? Explain.

Pico Rivera

1. According to the program: What events shaped the demographics of Pico Rivera, California through the years? What challenges did the town face after major manufacturing companies left the area? How did the town address these challenges?

2. How did gangs influence life in Pico Rivera in the past? How did the town's residents react to the gang-related death of Maria Elena Hicks?

3. Based on what you have seen in the program, how would you describe the town of Pico Rivera today? How did Pico Rivera transform itself from a gangland to the "Latino Mayberry"? What do you think Pico Rivera's former mayor means when she says, "I can see it as a model city"? Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

4. According to the segment, how do Erica Sparks and her stepfather differ in their opinion of life in Pico Rivera? What actions did Sparks take after moving to Pico Rivera? What reason does Sparks give for her behavior?

5. What is the PRIDE program? What does Sparks say about the program? Do you think that her involvement in the program will change her attitude toward education and life in general? Why or why not?

6. What is the "Together Car Club"? What does Hector Avila say are some of the impressions people have of the club's members? What are some of the conditions for being a member of the club? How does the club contribute to the community?

7. According to the program, in what ways have the Latinos in Pico Rivera been "Americanized"? How do you think that residents of the town would define the American dream?

8. In what ways is Pico Rivera similar to and different from what you might consider to be a typical American town?

Explain.

Shenandoah

1. How is the town of Shenandoah, Pennsylvania described in the segment? According to the program, why have some Latinos migrated to the town?

2. Who was Luis Ramirez? Why did Ramirez move to the United States? How is he characterized by the people interviewed in the documentary?

3. According to Eileen Burke, what were the circumstances surrounding Ramirez's death? According to Crystal Dillman, why was Ramirez killed? Do you think that Dillman's relationship with Ramirez may have played a role in his fate? Why or why not?

4. Who is Lou Ann Pleva? To what does she attribute some of the attitudes toward Latinos by Shenandoah's residents? How would you describe the relationship between Latinos and other groups in Shenandoah?

5. Who is Joe Miller? What opinions does he express regarding Latinos? Why did Miller form "Save Shenandoah"? According to the program, why is he concerned about illegal immigration? What reason does Miller give for supporting the defendants in Ramirez's murder trial?

6. How does Miller respond when Soledad O'Brien asks him what jobs he and his friends have lost to Mexicans? Why do you think that O'Brien questions Miller's statements?

7. Who was eventually charged in Ramirez's death? What was the defense's explanation for Ramirez's killing? What was the outcome of the trial? What were the different reactions among residents of Shenandoah to the verdict in this trial? How do you think that you would have reacted?

8. What do you think can be done to improve relations between Latinos and other groups in American towns like Shenandoah?

Orlando

1. What is "The Relocation"? According to the program, what are some factors that have motivated Puerto Ricans to migrate to Orlando?

2. What examples are given in the documentary of Latino professionals taking lower wage jobs? In your opinion, why might these professionals take jobs with lower pay?

3. Who is Carlos Robles? What was his career in Puerto Rico? What is his current job? What position is he applying for in Orlando?

4. To what does Robles attribute his failing the first time that he took the Florida sheriff's exam? How does he think that he will fare during the re-test? Why?

5. According to Robles, what role does a person's native language play in his or her identity? Based on what you have seen in the program, how do you think that the ability to speak English might impact a person's education and career possibilities? What other challenges do you think that a non-English speaking person might face in the U.S.?

6. What business does Trey Etheridge own? What does Etheridge say might happen to his business if he doesn't reach out to Latinos? In what ways has he reached out to that community?

7. Who is Vanessa Rosas? In what way is she living the American dream? Why do you think that she has been successful? Why does Rosas say that many Puerto Ricans feel at home in Orlando? In what ways does she try to preserve her Puerto Rican heritage?

8. What is the focus of Professor Jorge Duane's research? What does he say are important factors for success among Puerto Ricans living in the mainland U.S.? What does he say happens to many who don't achieve success?

9. Do you think that someone can be successful in the United States without learning to speak English? Do you think that being able to speak both Spanish and English offers someone advantages in the U.S.? Explain.

Post-Viewing Summary Questions

After watching *Latino in America*, offer these questions for in-depth student discussion:

1. What is meant by the phrase "cultural assimilation"? Which do you think should be the priority for Latinos in the United States, cultural assimilation or cultural preservation? In your opinion, is it possible to preserve one's cultural heritage and assimilate? Explain.

2. What role does economics play in immigration? In your opinion, should undocumented workers who want to work in the U.S. be allowed to do so? Why or why not?

3. Which story in *Latino in America* made the greatest impression on you? Why? What did you learn from the story?

4. How would you promote understanding between Latinos and non-Latinos living in the U.S.? What do you think that each group should know about the other?

Post-Viewing Learning Activities

1. Referring back to the program, generate a list of issues facing Latinos in the United States. Choose one issue and conduct research to see what is being done to address it in your community. You might conduct Internet research as well as interview local leaders and experts on the topic to help you explore the issue from all sides.

Present a multimedia report to your class on your findings. Discuss any additional ideas you may have for addressing that issue.

2. You may have heard the United States referred to by some as a "melting pot," while other observers have referred to the U.S. as more of a "salad bowl." What do you think is the difference? Create a 1-2 minute video that answers the question: In your opinion, is the United States a "melting pot" or a "salad bowl"?