

Preface To
Hispanic-American Baseline Essays
1993



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Foreword

by Luis Machorro

The Hispanic Baseline Essays, a project of Portland Public Schools, are a series of reference documents each written by one author/scholar in a specific subject-matter area (e.g. language arts, mathematics, music, social sciences). Scholars from different disciplines, specialists from the Portland District and a planning/advisory committee with significant representation from the Hispanic community of Portland reviewed each essay.

The Baseline Essays Project, an effort initiated as a response to the quest for fundamental equity originated by the African American Community of the City of Portland, instigated a nationwide discussion on the nature of Multicultural Education and its value in American Schools. This is perhaps, more than any other, its greatest contribution.

The Hispanic Baseline Essays, the 4th in the series, following the African-American, the American Indian and the Asian American, while tackling what are at times controversial issues, attempt to share in a holistic sense the concepts of Comunidad and Familia which pervade throughout the Hispanic Baseline Essay Series and allow an individual to weave a common thread among all the people of Hispanic origin.

This writer, born in Mexico and with an extensive Mexican family tradition, like most Latin Americans was not a Hispanic until he came to the United States, where due to the pervasive and integral part that Hispanic contributions play in U.S. Society, the Office of the Census was forced to create an all encompassing term: **Hispanic**; that included Mexicans, the largest number of Hispanics in the United States, and also Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Nicaraguans, Guatemalans, Argentineans, Venezuelans, and all other individuals of Latin American descent. This region includes all former residents or descendants of the vast Atlantic territories, stretching from the San Juan Islands to the Canadian Border and Florida, including Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Southeast, and Punta del Fuego in the South. In this region, the Spanish Language has shaped the culture and traditions of the people and the culture has, in turn, been shaped by the men and women of the 27 nations where Spanish is spoken, including the United States, which is now the third largest Spanish Speaking nation on Earth.

As people who are also descendants of Africans, it is perhaps fitting that the major impetus for this effort came from the African-American Community, for Hispanics, in the western Hemisphere, are an ethnically diverse people, a unique union of Indigenous, European and African descendants. Dr. Garfias' essay on Latino Music, perhaps most clearly illustrates the ethnic diversity of Hispanics in the United States, and coupled with the Social Studies essay from Dr. Erasmo Gamboa relates the evolutionary nature of the culture and history of native and immigrant Hispanics.

It is also important to remember that each essay represents the individual effort of the author to contribute his/her perspective to a subject that was and is not only his or her area of expertise but also his or her love for the subject at hand. These essays represent

mainly a work of love both for the authors, who got little compensation, and the committee members who got none for months and even years of arduous reading, and re-reading, discussing and attending meetings, for it was essential that these Hispanic Essays represented all of us.

Each author and indeed the committee members of the Hispanic Advisory received the following instructions regarding the content of the baseline essays:

- Content should include a brief survey of the history, culture(s) and contributions of all Hispanics as a geocultural group.
- Voices and perspective(s) of the people whose antecedents originally come from this continent, North and South America (or tied to this continent by culture or heritage) should be reflected in the document.
- Information should be informative and uplifting.
- The essay should include references and other support information presented in the Baseline Essay, but it was important to limit the length of the essay and to remember that an essay was not a research paper, a book or a thesis. Expert and informed opinion was encouraged.

The four essays that follow conform to these guiding principles and recurring themes.

Dr. Gamboa's Essay reflects the many events, interactions and policies that have affected the full participation of Hispanics in the U.S. economic, social political and cultural spheres, and those of Drs. Luis Franco, Roberto Garfias, and Nicolas Kanellos better illustrate that the Hispanic Experience is often reflected in the work of Hispanic authors, writers, composers and artists.