



Latino/Hispanic Heritage Resource Packet

September 15—October 15



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This guide was originally produced for use in Washington, D.C., where there is a large Salvadoran population, yet very little information in schools about Central America. Therefore the guide includes a brief history of El Salvador.

Beyond Tacos and Mariachis: Making Latino/Heritage Month Meaningful

School preparations for Latino/Hispanic Heritage month often include finding performers, scheduling cultural events, coordinating assemblies, and planning special menus for the cafeteria. Pulling together these events can take a lot of time out of teachers' already overloaded schedules.

But what do these events accomplish? Ironically, typical heritage month programs and celebrations may do as much to reinforce stereotypes as they do to challenge them. It is important to acknowledge marginalized histories, but special events in isolation can affirm stereotypes rather than negate them. If the events are limited to performances and food, for example, we might be left with the impression that "Latinos only like to dance and eat."

We can challenge ourselves to go deeper. In the same way that educational reform has recognized the benefit of instruction that is holistic and interdisciplinary, a similar approach is called for in addressing cultural heritage. The following are some points to consider when planning Latino/Hispanic heritage events for your school.



1. Determine what you want students to learn from the heritage celebrations.

Spend the first meeting preparing a list of instructional objectives — what is it that you want the school body to learn from these events? Too often we skip this step and go directly to drawing up a list of possible presenters. In developing the list of instructional objectives, spend some time asking students and parents of Latino/Hispanic heritage what they would like their peers to understand about their heritage. The broader school community can provide useful input to identifying the stereotypes that need to be addressed and suggestions for addressing these issues.

2. Recognize the long history of Latinos in the United States and their great diversity.

There is a tendency to treat all Latinos as immigrants, when in reality Latinos have been on this land since before the pilgrims. There is also great diversity among Latinos in terms of ethnic heritage, religion, class, national origin, language, political perspectives, and traditions. There are Latinos of African, European, indigenous, and Asian heritage. Be sure that images of Latinos in the classroom reflect this rich diversity.

3. Address the values, history, current reality, and power relationships that shape a culture.

Heritage months frequently feature the crafts, music, and food of specific cultures. While crafts, music, and food are important expressions of culture, in isolation they mask the obstacles that people of color have faced, how they have confronted those obstacles, the great diversity within any cultural group, and the current reality of people in the United States. A few excellent titles are: *Open Veins of Latin America* (Galeano), *Occupied America* (Acuña), or

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Caribbean Connections: Moving North (Sunshine).

4. Learn about food and dance in context.

Have students or teachers interview parents about the dishes they plan to prepare. Instead of collecting recipes, collect stories. Ask parents how they learned to make the dish and what they remember about the person who taught them the recipe. These cultural texts can be posted next to the dishes at the dinner or bound into a classroom reader. In other words, don't ban potlucks and dance performances; just make them more meaningful.

Students can interview guest dancers or musicians about the stories behind their performances. Additionally, students can learn about the life of an artist in children's books such as *The Piñata Maker* (George Ancona, <http://www.georgeancona.com/>).

5. Introduce leaders in the context of their organizations.

Children are given the false impression that great people make history all on their own. Instead of serving as an inspiration, the

heroes are portrayed as superhuman. Children often cannot picture themselves in this history. Instead, we can teach about organized movements for change. Children must learn from history about how change really happens if the curriculum is to serve as a tool for them to build their future.

For example, thousands of people are responsible for the gains of the United Farmworkers (ufw.org), yet students are given the impression that Cesar Chávez singlehandedly launched the grape and lettuce boycotts.

6. Examine school policies and practices.

Heritage months are often used to divert attention from inequalities in a school's policies. Heritage month posters in the hallways feature African American and Latino leaders, but a disproportionate number of African American and Latino children are suspended each week. Heritage month greetings are spoken in multiple languages during the morning announcements, but no effort is made to help children maintain their native language.

Honor Latino/Hispanic Heritage month by forming a student-parent-teacher taskforce whose mission would be to take a seri-

ous look at Latino/Hispanic students' experiences in the school and to make recommendations for improvement.

7. Examine the school's year-long curriculum.

Are we using Hispanic Heritage month to celebrate the integrated curriculum, or do we try to squeeze all of the Latino/Hispanic History into four weeks? If the overall curriculum is still largely Eurocentric, then one can assume students learn that white people are more important and that everyone else plays a secondary role.

Honor Latino/Hispanic Heritage month by providing time for teachers to deepen their own background knowledge and make plans to infuse Latino history into their curriculums; for instance into class discussions of books or movies.

By Deborah Menkart, based on an article in the Teaching for Change publication *Beyond Heroes and Holidays: A Practical Guide for K-12 Anti-Racist, Multicultural Education and Staff Development*.

Test Your Knowledge:

Latino/Hispanic Heritage Facts Quiz

1. What is the difference between the terms Hispanic and Latino?
2. What percentage of the U.S. population is Latino?
3. Name the three largest Latino groups in the United States.
4. What is the largest group of Latinos living in Washington, D.C.?
5. Are all Latinos living in the U.S. immigrants?
6. Which U.S. states once belonged to Mexico?
7. Are Latinos of European, African, Indian, or Asian heritage?
8. Which Latin American countries have citizens of African descent?
9. What languages do Latinos and people from Latin America speak?
10. Identify one contemporary U.S. Latino/a writer, elected or appointed local or national official, and activist.
11. Describe the socioeconomic conditions for Latinos in the United States with at least three statistics. For example: income as compared to non-Hispanic whites, infant mortality as compared to non-Hispanic whites, incarceration as compared to non-Hispanic whites, etc.
12. When is Independence Day in Mexico and Central America? Who did those countries win independence from?
13. Who were the maroons?

Test Your Knowledge:

Immigration Myths and Facts Quiz

1. In 2004, the poorest immigrants arriving in the U.S. came from:
A) Central America B) Asia C) Africa D) Europe
2. The region with the highest percentage of immigrants in the U.S. with high school degrees is:
A) Europe B) Central America C) Africa D) Asia
3. The immigrant population that earns the highest median household income in the U.S. is:
A) Mexican B) Indian C) English D) African
4. In 1910, the U.S. population was 15% foreign-born. In 2004, the foreign-born percentage of the population was:
A) 3% B) 8% C) 12% D) 22%
5. In 2004, one in how many children in the U.S. had at least one parent who was an immigrant?
A) 1 in every 9 children B) 1 in every 15 children
C) 1 in every 20 children D) 1 in every 5 children
6. In their lifetime, how much more will an average immigrant and his/her family pay in taxes than they will receive in local, state and federal benefits?
A) \$80,000 B) \$10,000
C) \$1,000 D) There is no disparity
7. Nationally, immigrants receive about \$11 billion annually in welfare benefits. Approximately how much do they pay in taxes?
A) \$1.9 billion B) \$25 billion
C) \$61 billion D) \$133 billion
8. Increased immigration tends to:
A) Produce higher wages for immigrants B) Produce higher wages for U.S. citizens
C) Produce lower wages for immigrants D) Produce lower wages for U.S. citizens
9. A 1992 survey found that it was common for Americans to go to Mexico for healthcare: More than 90% of Mexican physicians surveyed had treated Americans. The major reason U.S. citizens go to Mexico for treatment is:
A) They believe that Mexican doctors are more qualified
B) Mexican doctors take all brands of insurance
C) Mexican doctors and prescription drugs are cheaper
D) The climate is better

Note: This quiz was prepared by the Applied Research Center, Oakland, CA.

Answers: Latino/Hispanic Heritage Facts

1. *What is the difference between the terms Hispanic and Latino?*

Answer: Hispanic is a term coined by the federal government for use in the census. It means "Spanish," to describe a person of Spanish descent and fluent in the Spanish language. Many people object to the term because Latinos are also of indigenous and African descent. Latino is more inclusive of this diverse heritage. (Due to public pressure, the *Los Angeles Times*, for example, no longer uses the term Hispanic.) Hispanic and Latino are both broad terms. Many people identify themselves by their heritage as Mexican-American, Cuban-American, Puerto Rican, Salvadoran, etc.--or simply American. Chicano is a term for people of Mexican-American descent that activists adopted during the movement for social justice in the 1960s.

2. *What percentage of the U.S. population is Latino as of 2009?*

Answer: 15.8 % (Source: "State & County QuickFacts, USA," *U.S. Census Bureau*, August 16, 2010.)

3. *Name the three largest Latino groups in the United States.*

Answer: Cuban-Americans, Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans.

4. *What is the largest group of Latinos living in Washington DC?*

Answer: Salvadorans.

5. *Are all Latinos in the U.S. immigrants?*

Answer: No. As Mexican-American filmmaker Luis Valdez noted, "We did not, in fact, come to the United States at all. The United States came to us." Some Mexican-Americans trace their family roots in the United States to before the Declaration of Independence. The Puerto Ricans who migrate to the mainland are

already American citizens since Puerto Rico is a Commonwealth of the United States. Those from Central and South America and the Caribbean are immigrants--but their relationship with the United States is not new. The United States has invaded and greatly influenced the region for the past 100 years.

6. *Which U.S. states once belonged to Mexico?*

Answer: Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, and parts of Wyoming, Colorado, and Oklahoma.

7. *Are Latinos of European, African, indigenous or Asian ancestry?*

Answer: Latino simply refers to one's heritage as being from Latin America. Within Latin America there are people of indigenous, African, European, and Asian heritage. And there are a great many people who are what is called "mestizo," or a mixture of indigenous, African, and European. (Note that we refer to the social category of race since scientifically race as a category does not exist.)

8. *Which Latin American countries have citizens of African descent?*

Answer: All. In fact, the majority of populations in a number of Latin American countries, especially those in the Caribbean, are of African descent.

9. *What languages do Latinos and people from Latin America speak?*

Answer: Many languages. The majority of people in Latin America speak Spanish; the majority of Latinos in the United States speak English or are bilingual. However, in Guatemala, for example, Mayan descendants speak over 20 indigenous languages. (There used to be many more languages, but a succession of repressive governments since the Spanish con-

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quest has destroyed the language and culture of many indigenous groups. For Columbus Day, students could compare the historic and contemporary treatment and resistance of native peoples in the United States and Guatemala. They would find many parallels.) In Brazil, the primary language is Portuguese. In Cuba, the Spanish is influenced by some Yoruba vocabulary and syntax.

10. Identify one contemporary U.S. Latino/a for each of the following: writer, elected local or national official, and activist.

Answer

Writers: There are many. Some writers students particularly enjoy are: Luis Rodríguez, *Always Running*; Nicholasa Mohr, *In Nueva York, Nilda*; Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*; Julia Alvarez, *In the Time of the Butterflies*, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*; Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Albuquerque*; Manlio Argueta, *One Day of Life*; Mario Bencastro, *Shot in the Cathedral*; and Claribel Alegria, *Luisa in Realityland*.

Elected and appointed officials: In total there are over 6,000 Latino elected and appointed officials in the country (Source: "About Us," *NALEO Educational Fund*, 2009); this includes judges, police chiefs, justices of the peace, etc. Included in this figure are 2,170 elected officials in Texas (as of 2007.)

Activists (individuals and groups): Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farmworkers (UFW); Dennis Rivera, president of the Health Care Employees Union and chair of the Rainbow Coalition; MECHA—organization of high school and college students of Mexican American heritage who challenge discriminatory policies against people of color; National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the largest constituency-based national Hispanic organization, serving all Hispanic nationality groups in all regions of the country, formed in 1968 to reduce poverty and discrimination and improve life opportunities for Hispanic Americans.

11. Describe the socioeconomic conditions for Latinos in the United States with at least three statistics. For example: income as compared to non-Hispanic whites; health insurance as compared to non-Hispanic whites; incarceration as compared to non-Hispanic whites, etc.

Answer: *The Ultimate Field Guide to the U.S. Economy* provides substantial data for this question. An example: 21.5% of Latinos were living below poverty in the U.S. in 2007 as compared to 8% of Whites and 24.5% of African Americans. The Children's Defense Fund's *Improving Children's Health Report* from 2006 also provides substantial data. A few examples: 21.3% of Latino children were uninsured in the U.S. in 2002 as compared to 6.8% of White children and 10.1% of African American children; and Latino children were almost twice as likely as White children to not be in excellent or very good health.

12. When is Independence Day in Mexico and Central America? Who did those countries win independence from?

Answer: Central America, now a region, was once its own nation. The countries that made up that nation [Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica] celebrate independence day on September 15 and Mexicans on September 16. These countries won independence from Spain.

13. Who were the maroons?

Answer: The maroons were enslaved Africans in Latin America who escaped from slavery and established their own self-sustaining and self-governing communities. From this base they were able to return and free more people from slavery. Maroon leaders that your students could study include: Bayano (16th century, Panama), Yanga (1524-1612, Mexico), and Alonso de Illescas (1528-1585, Ecuador.)

NOTE: The answers to these questions are not definitive. In some cases, there may be differences of opinion, particularly with regards to questions 1 and 7.

Test your Knowledge:

Immigration Myths and Facts Quiz Answers

1. A.

24% of immigrants from Central America were living in poverty in 2004. (Source: "Foreign-Born Population Reaches 33 Million; Most from Latin America, Census Bureau Estimates," *U.S. Census Bureau News*, Aug. 5, 2004.)

2. C.

Almost 89% of African immigrants have a high school diploma and 42.5% have a bachelor's degree or better, according to a Census Bureau study. Africans, as a group, are also better educated than the general U.S. population: Only 84% of U.S.-born adults have a high school diploma and 27% have a bachelor's degree or higher. (Sources: "African Immigrants in the United States," *Migration Information Source*, February 2009 and "Foreign-Born Exceed the Native-Born in Advanced Degrees," *U.S. Census Bureau News*, Jan. 28, 2009.)

3. B.

The median household income for U.S. residents born in India is \$91,195. Immigrants from Australia, South Africa and the Philippines have the next highest median incomes. Immigrants from Somalia and the Dominican Republic have the lowest median incomes among immigrants. In general, the median household income for the entire United States population is \$50,740, and the median household income among immigrants is \$46,881. (Source: Census Bureau Data Show Characteristics of the U.S. Foreign-Born Population," *U.S. Census Bureau News*, Feb. 19, 2009.)

Question to ponder: If Africans as a group are the highest educated, why is their median household income (\$30,134 in 2004) in the lower half of the income scale?

4. C.

In 2004, the United States was home to 34.2 million immigrants, which made up 12% of the total U.S. population. (Source: "Foreign-Born Population Tops 34 Million, Census Bureau Estimates," *U.S. Census Bureau News*, Feb. 22, 2005.)

5. D.

(Source: "Children of Immigrants: National and State Characteristics," The Urban Institute.)

6. A.

(Source: "Immigrants and the Economy," *National Immigration Forum*, Nov. 30, 2001.) In Texas, for example, undocumented immigrants produced \$1.58 billion in state revenues, which *exceeded* the \$1.16 billion in state services they received." (Source: "Undocumented Immigrants as Taxpayers," *Immigration Policy Center*, Nov. 1, 2007.)

7. D.

(Source: "Immigrants and the Economy," *National Immigration Forum*, Nov. 30, 2001.)

8. C.

"Although wages fell in California during the recent wave of immigration, immigrants absorbed most of the adverse impact." (Source: "The Fourth Wave," by Thomas Muller and Thomas Espenshade, 1985, cited in "Advocate's Quick Reference Guide to Immigration Research," NCLR, Aug. 1993.)

9. C.

(Source: "Going to Mexico: Priced Out of American Health Care," Families USA Foundation, Nov. 1992, cited in "Advocate's Quick Reference Guide to Immigration Research," National Council of La Raza, Aug. 1993.)

Teaching Idea...

More Than One: Famous U.S. Latinos

Researching the life of a famous person is an assignment frequently given to youth during Latino/Hispanic heritage month. These are just a few suggestions of Latinos in the United States that students can research. Students can also be encouraged to interview local community members.

Alma Flor Ada
Children's Author,
Education Professor

Rodolfo Acuña
Historian, Chicano
Studies Professor

Isabel Allende
Writer

Pablo Alvarado
Labor Organizer

Julia Alvarez
Writer

Luis Alvarez
Physicist

Judith Baca
Muralist

Mario Bencastro
Writer

Ruben Blades
Musician

Linda Chavez Thompson
Labor Leader

Sandra Cisneros
Writer

Miriam Colón
Actress

Julia de Burgos
Writer

Jesse de la Cruz
Labor Activist

Oscar de la Hoya
Boxer

Junot Díaz
Writer

Martín Espada
Writer

América Ferrera
Actress

Juan Gonzalez
Reporter

Antonia Hernández
Civil Rights Activist,
Lawyer

Dolores Huerta
Civil Rights Activist

John Leguizamo
Actor, Comedian, Writer

Tania León
Conductor, Composer,
Music Director

Rebecca Lobo
Professional Basketball
Player

Elizabeth Martínez
Author, Activist

Amalia Mesa-Bains
Artist

Nicholasa Mohr
Writer

Cecilia Muñoz
Politician, Lobbyist, Civil
Rights Activist

Gregory Nava
Director, Writer

Adriana Ocampo
NASA Scientist

Ellen Ochoa
Astronaut,
Electrical Engineer

Edward James Olmos
Actor

Eddie Palmieri
Musician

Antonia Pantoja
Civil Rights Activist

Willie Perdomo
Writer

Luis Rodríguez
Writer, Community Leader

Helen Rodríguez-Trias
Pediatrician, Activist

Jimmy Smits
Actor

Hilda Solis
Secretary of Labor

Sonia Sotomayor
Supreme Court Justice

Ana Sol Gutiérrez
Computer Scientist,
Elected Official

Piri Thomas
Writer

Nydia Velázquez
U.S. Representative-NY

So Mexicans Are Taking Jobs Away From Americans

O Yes? Do they come on horses
with rifles, and say,
 Ese gringo, gimmee your job?
And do you, gringo, take off your ring,
drop your wallet into a blanket
spread over the ground, and walk away?

I hear Mexicans are taking your jobs away.
Do they sneak into town at night,
and as you're walking home with a whore,
do they mug you, a knife at your throat,
saying, I want your job?

Even on TV, an asthmatic leader
crawls turtle heavy, leaning on an assistant,
and from a nest of wrinkles on his face,
a tongue paddles through flashing waves
of lightbulbs, of cameramen, rasping
"They're taking our jobs away."

Well, I've gone about trying to find them,
asking just where the hell are these fighters.

The rifles I hear sound in the night
are white farmers shooting blacks and browns
whose ribs I see jutting out and starving children,
I see the poor marching for a little work,
I see small white farmers selling out
to clean-suited farmers living in New York,
who've never been on a farm,
don't know the look of a hoof or the smell
of a woman's body bending all day long in
fields.

I see this, and I hear only a few people
got all the money in this world, the rest
count their pennies to buy bread and butter.

Below that cool green sea of money,
millions and millions of people fight to live,
search for pearls in the darkest depths
of their dreams, hold their breath for years
trying to cross poverty to just having something.

The children are dead already. We are killing
them, that is what America should be saying;
on TV, in the streets, in offices, should be saying
"We aren't giving the children a chance to live."

Mexicans are taking our jobs, they say instead.
What they really say is, let them die,
and the children too.

By Jimmy Santiago Baca

Jimmy Santiago Baca, born in Santa Fe, New Mexico is the author of eight collections of poetry and two memoirs, among other publications. Baca wrote much of his poetry while he was incarcerated, where he taught himself to read and write. He currently conducts writing workshops with low-income and incarcerated youth and adults across the country. (Source: "Jimmy Santiago Baca," *Poets.org: From the Academy of American Poets*, 2010.) Poem reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corporation from *Immigrants in Our Own Lands and Selected Early Poems* by Jimmy Santiago Baca (New Directions Books, 1982.)

Teaching Suggestions...

1. Make two columns on the board labeled: "What they say," and "What is really happening." Working in small groups, have the students fill in the columns based on the poem.
2. Ask the students if they agree with the poet. Do they see similar examples in their neighborhoods?
3. Discuss scapegoating. What is it? Who wins? Who loses?

Para Teresa

by Inés Hernández-Ávila

A tí-Teresa Compean
Te dedico las palabras estas
que explotan de mi corazón¹
That day during lunch hour
at Alamo which-had-to-be-its-
name
Elementary
my dear *raza*
That day in the bathroom
Door guarded
Myself cornered
I was accused by you, Teresa
Tú y las demás de tus amigas
Pachucas todas
Eran Uds. cinco.²
Me gritaban que porque me
creía tan grande³
What was I trying to do, you
growled
Show you up?
Make the teachers like me, pet
me,
Tell me what a credit to my
people I was?
I was playing right into their
hands, you challenged
And you would have none of
it.
I was to stop.
I was to be like you
I was to play your game of
deadly defiance
Arrogance, refusal to submit.

The game in which the winner
takes nothing
Asks for nothing
Never lets his weaknesses
show.
But I didn't understand.
My fear salted with confusion
Charged me to explain to you
I did nothing *for the teachers.*
I studied for my parents and
for my grandparents
Who cut out honor roll lists
Whenever their *nietos* '4 names
appeared
For my shy mother who mas-
tered her terror
to demand her place in moth-
ers' clubs
For my carpenter-father who
helped me patiently with my
math.
For my abuelos que me regala-
ron lápices en la Navidad⁵
And for myself.
*Porque reconocí en aquel en-
tonces*
una verdad tremenda
que me hizo a mi un rebelde
Aunque tú no te habías
dadocuenta⁶
We were not inferior
You and I, *y las demás de tus*
amigas
Y los demás de nuestra gente⁷

I knew it the way I know I was
alive
We were good, honorable,
brave
Genuine, loyal, strong
And smart.
Mine was a deadly game of
defiance, also.
My contest was to prove
beyond any doubt
that we were not only equal but
superior to them.
That was why I studied.
If I could do it, we all could.
You let me go then,
Your friends unblocked the
way
I who-did-not-know-how-to-
fight
was not made to engage with
you-who-grew-up-fighting
Tu y yo, Teresa⁸
We went in different directions
Pero fuimos juntas.⁹
In sixth grade we did not un-
derstand
*Uds. with the teased, dyed-
black-but-reddening hair,*
Full petticoats, red lipsticks
and sweaters with the sleeves
pushed up
Y yo conformándome con lo
que deseaba mi mamá¹⁰

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Certainly never allowed to dye,
to tease, to paint myself

I did not accept your way of
anger,

Your judgments

You did not accept mine.

But now in 1975, when I am
twenty-eight

Teresa Compean.

I remember you.

Y sabes —

Te comprendo,

Es más, te respeto.

Y, si me permites,

*Te nombro — “hermana.”*¹¹

Notes —

1. To you, Teresa Compean, I dedicate these words that explode from my heart.
2. You and the rest of your friends, all Pachucas, there were five of you.
3. You were screaming at me, asking me why I thought I was so hot.
4. Grandchildren’s.
5. Grandparents who gave me gifts of pencils at Christmas.
6. Because I recognized a great truth then that made me a rebel, even though you didn’t realize it.
7. And the rest of your friends/And the rest of our people.
8. You and I.
9. But we were together.
10. And I conforming to my mother’s wishes.

11. And do you know what, I understand you. Even more, I respect you. And, if you permit me, I name you my sister.

Inés Hernández-Ávila is Professor & Chair in the Department of Native American Studies and Director of the Chicana/Latina Research Center at UC Davis. She is Nez Perce on her mother’s side and Chicana on her father’s side.

Teaching Suggestions—

1. Have students read the poem. If the group is not bilingual in English and Spanish, read each section together. Or plan in advance to have a group of students read and prepare to enact the poem for the rest of the group. Even with the translations, some students might have questions. For example, why say “Alamo which-had-to-be-its-name.” (The Alamo was the nationalist battlecry of the U.S. army when they took Texas and then the rest of Mexico’s northern territories, dispossessed great numbers of the now Mexican Americans from their ancestral lands and systematically stripped Mexican Americans of their civil rights.)

2. Discuss the sequence of events. First Teresa and her friends get angry at Inés. Why? What are some of the things the Latino students are probably expected to give up to become “a credit” to their race? What is Inés’ response? Why do Teresa and her friends back off? What did the author mean, “We went in different directions, pero fuimos juntas [but we went together]”?

3. Examine the issue of identity in the school. From what we can see in the poem, the Latino students had the choice of being a teacher’s pet or being defiant. Ask students to discuss which

was the wiser choice and why. Then ask them to consider why students should have to make that choice at all. Ask what the school would need to do to create a third option for the Latino students, an option that is respectful of their identity (language, history, literature, family, etc.) If the point has not been raised, ask students why they think the author chose to write the poem in both English and Spanish.

4. Examine the issues of conflict and power in the poem.

- ✦ The Latino students at Alamo School were getting into fights. Why? What was making them angry enough to want to fight?
- ✦ If you were a reporter writing about the violence in the school, who would you say was responsible?
- ✦ Are the students violent, or are the conditions?
- ✦ Who benefits from the fact that the students are fighting among themselves? Who loses?

5. Compare the conflict in the poem to conditions in your own school. The conflict can be within a race or ethnic group, between groups, between levels of students in a tracked school, or between mainstream/special education or mainstream/ESL. In one DC high school where this poem was discussed, students identified similar conflicts between established and newly arrived immigrant students from Central America; and between African American and Latino students at the same school. Discussing the poem helped students to reflect on their own behavior, recognizing how they were fighting each other while the roots of the conflict were not addressed.

Resource List: Films

This is a small sampling of many films on Latino and Latin American culture and history. There is a list of recent books and more teaching materials at the websites: Zinn Education Project, www.zinnedproject.org and Teaching for Change's Busboys and Poets Bookstore, bbp-books.teachingforchange.org.

Films

- *Salt of the Earth* directed by Herbert Biberman. **Summary:** Tells the tale of a real life strike by Mexican-American miners. The story is set in remote New Mexico where the workers live in a company town in company-owned shacks without basic plumbing. Put at risk by cost cutting bosses, the miners strike for safe working conditions. As the strike progresses, the issues at stake grow beyond that, driven by the workers' wives.
- *Made in L.A* by Almudena Carracedo and Robert Bahar. **Summary:** "follows the remarkable story of three Latina immigrants working in Los Angeles garment sweatshops as they embark on a three-year odyssey to win basic labor protections from a trendy clothing retailer." www.madeinla.com/.
- *The Ballad of Gregorio Cortéz* directed by Robert M. Young. **Summary:** Just who was Gregorio Cortez and what did he do to warrant his 10-day pursuit by posses, sheriffs and rangers across the state of Texas in June of 1901? That is a much contested point in history, in myth and in the film that explores the nexus of the two...At root, Young explores the nature of foreignness and stereotype as well as the disintegration of fact that is a natural part of the storytelling process.
- *El Norte* directed by Gregory Nava. **Summary:** Mayan Indian peasants, tired of being thought of as nothing more than "brazos fuertes" and organizing in an effort to improve their lot in life, are discovered by the Guatemalan army. After the army destroys their village and family, a brother and sister, teenagers who just barely escaped the massacre, decide they must flee to 'El Norte'.
- *If the Mango Tree Could Speak: A Documentary*
- *About Children and War in Central America* by Pat Goudvis. **Summary:** This documentary about children and war in South America offers a portrait of 10 boys and girls growing up in the midst of war in Guatemala and El Salvador. The children speak with honesty and insight about war and peace, justice, ethnic identity, marriage and friendship.
- *The Lemon Grove Incident: A Story of Early Desegregation* by Paul Espinoza. **Summary:** The film examines the response of the Mexican American community in Lemon Grove, California, to a 1930 school board attempt to create a segregated school for the Mexican American children of the district.
- *Mi Familia* directed by Gregory Nava. **Summary:** ...follows a Mexican-American family through three generations, beginning in the 1930s...this movie explores the dynamics of Mexican-American families and culture in a way that's not often presented in mainstream cinema. It also examines issues familiar to immigrants and their

families.”

✦ **Romero.** Directed by John Duigan. **Summary:** This feature film documents the life of depicting the life of assassinated Salvadoran Archbishop Óscar Romero. Romero was named Archbishop of El Salvador at a time that the country was in turmoil. With the naming of Romero as Archbishop the military hoped that Romero will “quiet the masses.” At first, that is what he precisely does. However, when he sees how the military murders and tortures people, including a dedicated priest and friend, Romero starts speaking out. Through radio messages and peaceful marches Romero becomes a leader of the poor. In 1980, at the peak of the civil war in El Salvador, Romero is assassinated when he is saying mass.

✦ **Zoot Suit Riots** by Joseph Tavares. **Summary:** A powerful film that explores the complicated racial tensions and the changing social and political landscape that led up to the explosion on LA's streets in the summer of 1943. To understand what happened during those terrifying June nights, the film describes changes in the city's population -- the influx of new immigrants, the booming war-time economy, the huge number of service men on their way to the Pacific and a new generation of Mexican Americans.

✦ **Return to El Salvador: A Documentary About Life After the Civil War.** Directed by Jamie Moffett. **Summary:** This film is the compelling story of vibrant Salvadoran individuals and communities and the intricate geo-political systems that have so profoundly impacted their lives. www.returntoelsalvador.com.

✦ **Guazapa: Yesterday's Enemies.** By Don North. **Summary:** In 1983, war correspondent Don North went behind the guerilla lines in El Salvador to spend two months in Guazapa, one of the bloodiest battlegrounds of the civil war. Out of that experience came the revealing documentary...which shows the world the real civilian costs of that conflict www.elsalvadorancivilwar.com

✦ **When the Mountains Tremble.** By Pamela Yates and Newton Thomas Sigel. Shot at the height of a heated battle between the heavily-armed Guatemalan military and a nearly defenseless Mayan population. As the first film to depict this previously unreported war, it is firmly anchored by the firsthand accounts of Rigoberta Menchú.

Background...

A Brief History of El Salvador

This guide was originally developed for educators in Washington, DC public schools where the great majority of Latinos come from El Salvador. Therefore we included this brief history of the country.

1000 A.D.

Pipils begin to populate El Salvador. They call it Cuzcatlán, "Land of the Jewels" in the Nahuatl language, because of the country's great beauty and its very fertile land. The Pipils raise bees for honey and cultivate 15 crops including corn, beans, fruits, pumpkins, avocados, guavas, papayas, and sweet potato.

They share and farm the land communally, develop writing and numerical systems, practice monogamy, smoke tobacco, establish a monetary system using cocoa plant seed as the medium of exchange, play sports, and excel as carpenters and masons. The ruins of Pipil temples and villages stand throughout El Salvador today.

1524-1900

Spanish conquistadors, led by Pedro de Alvarado, invade El

Salvador. The Pipils resist and drive them from the area. A year later, Alvarado and his men return. For three years the Pipils fight the conquistadors. After the Spanish victory, many indigenous persons flee to remote areas where they



continue to farm communally. The Spaniards force the remaining natives to work for them under a system called the *encomienda*.

Spain awards huge tracts of land to the conquistadors and the natives have to work for colonists in the new territories. In exchange for labor, the colonists are supposed to protect the Pipils and provide religious guidance. In actuality, in the *encomienda* system the Pipils are treated as slaves. Those that resist are tortured or killed.

By the late 1800s, approximately 80% of the indigenous population in El

Salvador has been killed. The relationship between people and the land has also shifted dramatically. The land no longer feeds the children of those that work on it because the most fertile lands are used to grow indigo and cocoa for Europe.

Central America gains independence from Spain in 1821 and forms the United Provinces of Central America. The provinces form independent provinces in 1838.

Coffee becomes the major export crop. By the end of the 19th century, coffee produces 95% of the country's export earnings. A few families, the oligarchy, own most of the fertile land. They come to be known as *Las Catorce Familias*.

1930s

In 1931 a U.S. Army officer comments that "there appears to be nothing between these high priced cars and the oxcart with its barefoot attendant. Thirty or forty families own nearly everything in the country. They live in regal style. The rest of the population has practically nothing."

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The Great Depression causes coffee prices to decline. The growers halve the wages of the already poor indigenous coffee workers and reduce production, leaving many thousands of indigenous families without work. In 1932, Pipils, armed only with their machetes, challenge the growers in the Izalco region. The indigenous uprising is timed to occur simultaneously with a worker's revolt in the city. The revolt is organized by the Communist party and its leader, Agustín Farabundo Martí.

The government, under the leadership of President General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, violently represses the rebellion. Twenty to thirty thousand peasants, many of them indigenous, are killed. Soldiers tie the thumbs of the peasants behind their backs, take them to the back of the church, and shoot them. Pipil leader José Feliciano Ama's children are released from school and taken to his hanging. American historian Thomas Anderson states: "The extermination was so great that they could not be buried fast enough, and a great stench of rotting flesh permeated the air of western El Salvador."

This massacre is known as *La Matanza*. After *La Matanza*, the surviving Pipil population discard their traditional dress and deliberately mask their

culture to avoid future genocidal bloodletting. During *La Matanza*, the U.S. government stations a military ship offshore to intervene if the government needs assistance.

1960s

There is industrialization and a diversification of agriculture (cotton, shrimp, sugar). However, the income for the majority remains below the poverty level. There is limited access to potable water, health care, employment, and education.



1970s

Students, teachers, labor groups, and religious leaders organize to demand reforms to create a more equitable society. Soon after, Vatican II leads many to take a preferential option for the poor. In 1972 and 1977, progressive candidates are elected, but due to fraudulent elections they are not installed in government.

Many protest marches are organized. One example is the 1975 protest of the Miss University pageant. University students protest the \$1.5 million spent on the pageant, because children all over the country are hungry. Police fire at the protesters, resulting in dozens killed and wounded,

and 24 "disappeared."

Death squads target religious leaders, teachers, and community organizers. One of their slogans is "Be a Patriot, Kill a Priest."

Many students, peasants and campesinos decide that legal opposition is no longer an option in their struggle for justice and decide to take up arms.

1980

Archbishop Romero writes to then-U.S. President Jimmy Carter and requests that the U.S. government stop funding the military and use the money to support the purchase of fertilizer, seeds, school supplies, and medicines to get at the root of the country's poverty. Romero begs the soldiers, "In the name of God, stop the repression." Even after the archbishop's request, the military aid from the U.S. continues. A day later the Archbishop is killed while giving Mass. In December of the same year, three North American nuns and one lay worker are raped, tortured, and killed.

In 1980 the armed opposition groups join to form the FMLN (Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation). The country is besieged by civil war—the most intense fighting occurs between 1979 and

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1984. The government bombs rural communities in order to remove support for the guerillas. During much of the 1980s the U.S. government provides training for the Salvadoran military and police. In addition, it sends \$1 million on average per day to the government of El Salvador to provide for the military battle against the people of El Salvador. The U.S. State Department argues that the opposition is a communist threat.

Many church and grassroots leaders argue that the U.S. government is funding the elite government of El Salvador and protecting the profits of the multinationals who have factories in the country.

1989

A group of highly respected Jesuit priests are murdered during the night. Both the El Salvadoran government and the U.S. government are implicated in their deaths. The FMLN attacks the city of San Salvador, challenging the government propaganda that the military has the upper hand in the war.

Peace talks are finally initiated between the FMLN and the government. However, the negotiations are unsuccessful and the fighting continues. Despite the fighting, both sides agree to meet again.

January 16, 1992

After some 75,000 people have been killed or have "disappeared," El Salvador's civil war comes to an official end. Representatives of the government and of the FMLN formally sign a peace agreement.

December 1992

The United Nations issues a report revealing that of all the human atrocities committed during the long civil war, 85% were the work of the U.S.-backed Salvadoran army. The Salvadoran legislature gives amnesty to those implicated.

1998-2001

Natural disasters hit El Salvador, including Hurricane Mitch and two earthquakes. Over 1,500 people die because of them and over a million lose their homes.

2000

The U.S. retains an increasing military presence in the country in the name of the "war on drugs." Human rights workers are critical.

2002-2004

The U.S. court finds two retired Salvadoran army generals responsible for the human atrocities committed during the civil war and orders them to compensate the

victims who brought the case. More than three hundred Salvadoran troops leave to fight the U.S. war in Iraq. Tona Saca, the right-wing National Republican Alliance (ARENA) candidate wins the March 2004 presidential election amidst public warnings from U.S. government officials not to vote for the FMLN candidate if they want to keep receiving remittances from family members in the U.S. Despite popular dissent, the Salvadoran government signs the free-trade agreement with the U.S. and other Central American countries known as CAFTA in December of 2004.

Present

Although the civil war has ended, people's lives have not improved dramatically. Poverty is high and crime is a serious problem given the high rate of unemployment combined with the presence of arms following the war and the infusion of gang problems from the United States. The country's largest source of income is remittances from family members in the United States.