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Abstract
Mexican Americans/Chicanos have been on a historical quest for equality in the United States. This essay outlines important Mexican American Chicanos’ roles in the development of the United States, especially in the Southwest. It addresses issues and patterns of migration as well as the important forces for colonization and the environment. In addition, it reveals the importance of Mexican American women in education and employment.

Introduction
The quest for equality is a daily struggle for Mexican Americans living in the United States. The journey toward higher education is a precarious path that only students with high-resiliency factors survive (Benard, 2004). In the 21st century, educational attainment continues to be a challenge for Mexican immigrants and United States citizens of Mexican heritage (Hill, 2004). Mexican-heritage women seemingly struggle on two fronts; they struggle for ethnic status and gender equality. To describe this phenomenon, I use a historical lens to highlight some of the struggles Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans have endured to achieve professional status in higher education. To understand the present status of Mexican-heritage women in higher education, it is necessary to trace historical moments and events that created obstacles to achievement for its people.

Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans/Chicanos hold an important historical role in the development of the country, particularly in the Southwest. The Mexican American War of 1848 and the rapid development of the Southwest are perhaps the two most significant factors contributing to the socialization of the Mexican in the United States. The 1848 War and the booming development of the Southwest
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are the primary factors accounting for the social reconstruction of citizenry of Mexican heritage. These factors, forgotten by many citizens, contribute to the derailment of students on educational tracks. The relations established during the postwar years are evident in current public educational institutions across the nation.

**Historical and Social Context**

**Migration patterns: Historical overview.** An advantage of historical research is that it enables the observer to trace and identify historical moments, movements, and patterns. It enables researchers to observe how migrations rise, stabilize, and decline. Shortly after the great encounter between the Old and New Worlds, European migrants streamed westward, populating regions of the Western Hemisphere. A review of contemporary migratory patterns reveals steady migration streams from southern to northern countries of the globe (Castles, 2004). Current forced migrations are caused primarily by war, violence, chaos, and violation of human rights. Castles (2004), of the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford, claimed that it is difficult to distinguish asylum seekers from economic migrants, “Yet in many conflict situations it is difficult to distinguish between flight because of persecution and departure caused by the destruction of the economic and social infrastructure needed for survival” (p. 3). Based on United Nations estimates, 175 million people live outside their countries of birth, accounting for 3% of the world’s population (Castles, 2004).

In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, colonialism and globalization have had a dramatic impact, resulting in human migratory patterns. A sampling of the impact of globalization can be observed in the increase of Malay female factory workers. Economic migration data tracked women into the manufacturing labor force. The multinational company that hired them exploited them and used tactics to assimilate the women into a consumer mentality (Buang, 1995). Through weekend parties and beauty contests, they were also encouraged to see themselves as sex objects (Buang, 1995). The women deviated so
much from their cultural norms that their family and friends rejected them. The women’s lifestyles were altered by what Freire (1970/2002) identified as cultural invaders. In African countries, colonization and decolonization are root causes for displacement and forced migrations. Civil unrest forces families to take refuge in secure areas.

Globalization has had a dramatic impact on recent Mexican people. Economic immigrants have been displaced by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Bilateral negotiations between the United States and Mexico established free trade between the two countries. NAFTA went into effect January 1, 1994. Ten years later, the benefits of NAFTA appeared to be more unilateral than a “partnership for prosperity” (Alba, 2004). The Institute for Policy Studies (Anderson, Cavanagh, & Lee, 2000) reported that farmers who were once able to feed their families were uprooted and forced to leave their land. This statement was confirmed by a professor of government at Harvard in a recent article published in the New York Times “Mr. Kapur notes that one reason so many Mexicans flee to the Untied [sic] States is that the North American Free Trade Agreement subjected them to low-price American agricultural competition that is subsidized by the government” (Madrick, 2004, p. C2). This economic structure forces thousands of Mexican families to flee to the United States seeking employment.

In retrospect, significant to this study are the migratory patterns of settlers in the Western Hemisphere, particularly migrants who settled along the eastern seaboard and the southwestern regions of the country. The early American colonists’ migrations were motivated by the desire to have freedom of cultural and religious expression. With the exception of the Irish immigrants who suffered famine in their native land at the turn of the century, European immigrants came primarily seeking the “American Dream” (Min, 2002). The United States is, as many have acknowledged, a nation comprised of immigrants.

Like the United States, Mexico experienced heavy streams of migrations from the Iberian Peninsula. In an in-depth investigation, Elizondo (1978) revealed striking differences between the two migra-
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tion groups. The migrants who settled along the eastern coast of the United States were primarily Anglo-Saxon Protestants, were a self-governing group and prized their cultural traditions. Miscegenation or mixed marriages was as unacceptable in the founding years (Elizondo, 1978) as it was in the late 19th century (Randolph, 2001). Conservation of White Anglo-Saxon Protestant values was and continues to be a priority. In contrast, the migrants who settled in Mexico were Iberian peninsular Catholics, loyal to the Spanish Crown. Although they prized their cultural heritage, they intermarried with the natives, giving birth to a new human race; *mestizaje* (descendent of European and Mexican parents; Elizondo, 1978).

**Spanish conquest encourages migrations to Mexico.** In the mid-16th century, Spain was one of the most powerful European countries. Expansion and colonization were encouraged and sponsored by the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabela. Consequently, Cortes received the military support needed to conquer Mexico, and in 1521, overtook the Aztec Empire under the auspices of the Spanish Crown. The political, social, and cultural order enjoyed by the Aztec Empire was displaced by the Spanish monarchy.

Spanish colonialism caused radical political, socioeconomic, and cultural changes in Mexico. A society that prior to the conquest prospered from compulsory education (Leon-Portilla & Davis, 1963/1990) received not even basic instruction for its people, except for evangelical purposes (Ricard, 1933/1966). The postconquest era was a period of confusion and instability. Amidst the turmoil, the new rulers left imprints that radically changed the country. Vigil (1984) described four significant changes: (a) intermarriage between Spanish, Indian, and African migrants, giving birth to a new biological race, (b) integrated racist practices affecting social class and mobility, (c) promotion of a program of Spanish racial and cultural superiority, and (d) instituted racial and cultural marginality. Vigil claimed the new political order, “brought economic and sociocultural problems” (p. 53). The indigenous people, who enjoyed respectable social status prior to the conquest, now became subjugated to Spanish rulers. The
natives were fixed at the lowest rung of the new social ladder whereas the Spaniards reigned at the highest. The new rulers prospered and benefited from the natives through forced, inexpensive manual labor. With the native defeat, the conquistadores deemed themselves superior to the native populations, and race was used as an instrument to maintain the natives in a subservient position. The seeds of prejudice and discrimination were planted by the victors.

Mexico continued to experience political and social instability, as evidenced by numerous major wars. In 1810 people fought for their independence from Spain. Approximately 38 years later, the country was invaded by the U.S. military, initiating the Mexican American War. Shortly after the invasion, people fought against the French invasion in 1862, and then in the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Education was neglected. At the onset of the Mexican Revolution, approximately 80% of the population could not read or write. Democracy, land rights, and education were the demands of the poor and common people. The revised constitution guaranteed compulsory education up to the sixth grade (Staples, 1985). Today, education is compulsory up to the ninth grade.

The 1910 Mexican Revolution caused streams of migrations as people sought refuge along the border towns of the Southwest. Most Mexican refugees arrived with just their cultural heritage and their historical roots. Ironically, upon arriving in their adopted country, they became immersed in the historical development of the Southwest. The Mexican immigrants who experienced colonial adaptation in their native land, arrived in their former territory governed by a new group of colonists.

**1848 Mexican American War.** In the mid-1800s, the U.S. government desired territorial expansion. The eastern seaboard was heavily populated by European immigrants. They were quite industrious and eager to possess their own land. The government encouraged families to establish settlements in what is now the Southwest. Disputes between Mexicans and the new settlers were common. Undeniably, the underlying thrust of the westward movement was land possession.
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To facilitate territorial claims, negative journalism about the Mexican people was employed in the East. Negative sentiments coupled with strong notions of manifest destiny prompted citizens to create a united force, overcoming the sparsely populated regions of the Southwest (Acuna, 1988; Balderrama & Rodriguez, 1995; Bean & Tienda, 1990; Elizondo, 1978; Vigil, 1984).

In 1846, President Polk declared war on Mexico and ordered the military to overtake the Mexican capital. On February 2, 1848, peace treaty negotiations ensued and Mexico ceded more than half its territory to the United States (Elizondo, 1978). Researchers (Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2003) delineated that Mexico ended the U.S. occupation with a payment of “$18.3 million, Mexico surrendered the present-day states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas, along with parts of Colorado, Nevada, and Utah” (p. 24). The 1848 Peace Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo officially ended the Mexican American War. People who enjoyed respectable social status prior to the war were now subjected to a new political system, new social order, and new cultural heritage. Mexican Americans living in the Southwest carried not only the history of the 1521 conquest, but were now immersed in the history that resulted from the 1848 Peace Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

The relations that developed during the postconquest era are still evident 166 years later, as evidenced by the poor treatment of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans/Chicanos in the workforce and in educational institutions (Balderrama & Rodriguez, 1995; Bean & Tienda, 1990). The expansionist movement, grounded in manifest destiny, motivated European immigrants to settle in the Southwest. The discovery of gold in California in 1849 prompted new waves of European migrations, accelerating the development of the Southwest.

Two tendencies were apparent in the social reconstruction of the Southwest. First, the Mexican people were subjugated through enforcement of new laws. Domination over the Mexican people immediately placed the Mexicans in permanent subservient positions. Second, the Mexicans who were used to making their livelihood from
family farming were now forced to take jobs for wages. In contrast, the Mexicans who had been displaced and devalued struggled to maintain their self-respect and identity. In observing the conquered or colonized status of many indigenous minorities, the educational anthropologist Ogbu (as cited in Larson & Ovando, 2001) argues “that such groups tend to maintain such differences over time as a natural response in defense of their identity, which continually subjected [them] to unequal treatment by the dominant society” (p. 17).

The rapid expansion of the Southwest placed heavy demands for cheap labor. Researchers (Bean & Tienda, 1990) stated, “racism was employed to pursue economic interests (all racial minorities in the areas were subjected to similar treatment); although Mexicans are white, their brown skin and indigenous features encouraged racism and discrimination by the Anglo majority” (p. 18).

When the American railroad industry, agribusiness, and construction industries were short on manual laborers, recruiters were sent to Mexico to recruit from the States of Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacan, San Luis Potosi, and Zacatecas (Massey et al., 2003). Furthermore, “Recruiters arrived in towns and villages throughout this region with tales of high wages and untold riches to be had by working in the north” (p. 27). This covert recruitment method evolved into the coyote (border crossers) business. Covert and overt recruitment arrangements of workers are recorded in historical accounts (Bean & Tienda, 1990; Massey et al., 2003).

The World War II era created another shortage of workers. The 1942 Bracero Program, an overt labor-recruitment program, was negotiated in a bilateral agreement between Mexico and the United States to supply Mexican workers. The exploitation of these contracted workers became so widespread over time that the program was discontinued in 1964.

Although Mexicans had a reputation as efficient and responsible workers, they were not welcomed in mainstream society. In 1933 women working in the canneries and the garment factories in the Los Angeles area experienced ongoing exploitation. A survey revealed
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that approximately 40% of the women in the garment industry earned less than $5 a week for 60 hours of work; in contrast, women earning minimum wage earned $16 to $17 per week for the same labor (Balderrama & Rodriguez, 1995). Unfair labor practices were still evident in the 1960s and 1970s. In an interview, a college professor revealed her mother earned the family’s livelihood working in a garment factory. The single mother earned meager wages in a manufacturing sweatshop. She was paid a penny for each piece of material sewn onto a garment. Seeing her mother painfully labor every workday for a small income convinced the daughter that formal education was the only certain route out of poverty (Morales, personal communication, October 18, 2004).

Approximately 5 million Mexicans were contracted for manual labor during the Bracero era (Estrada, Garcia, Macias, & Maldonado, 1988, p. 48). The researchers claimed that once the government established its labor pool of hard workers, it took measures to deport the surplus workers. In 1954, the Immigration and Naturalization Service created “Operation Wetback.” As a result, “An astonishing 3.8 million Mexican aliens (and citizens) were apprehended and expelled in the next five years” (Estrada et al., 1988, p. 49). Mexican workers no longer needed in the workforce were gathered in groups, put on boxcars, and returned to Mexico (Balderrama & Rodriguez, 1995).

Winds of change. World War I and World War II created a strong sense of patriotism. These sentiments were channeled through a variety of venues in schools and communities. Mainstream Americans accepted English as the language that unified the country. Cultural expressions outside of mainstream Anglo traditions were considered to oppose the spirit of that time. Goldberg (as cited in Min, 2002, p. 146) found that in the country’s push for “Anglo conformity,” a countermovement for cultural pluralism developed. Pluralism and multiculturalism gained momentum in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The change in policy was influenced by ethnic groups and minority movements: the Black national movements, the Chicano student movements, the Third World student movements, and
the women’s movement (Min, 2002). Traditional views of education were challenged by minority groups.

**One hundred twenty-six years of documented oppression.** A 1974 report of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights entitled, *Toward Quality Education for Mexican Americans: Report VI: Mexican American Education Study* unveiled educational practices for Mexican-heritage students in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. The series of reports revealed 126 years of educational neglect for Mexican American students. The U.S. Commission documented ways in which public education had silenced and suppressed the voice of Mexican-heritage people in the classroom, in the curriculum, and in policymaking decisions (U.S. Commission, 1974, p. 71). The report also reported that (a) Mexican-heritage students had higher grade-repetition rates; (b) were tracked in lower ability groups; (c) had higher placement of educable mentally retarded classes; and (d) had underrepresentation of Spanish-speaking teachers in schools with high Latino enrollment.

The U.S. Commission found that in Texas and California, Chicanos “are more than twice as likely as Anglos to be placed in these educable mentally retarded” classes (U.S. Commission, 1974, p. 72). Based on the U.S. Commission’s findings, a series of recommendations for relevant curriculum instruction and materials were suggested. The recommendations included such areas as prohibited unnecessary grade retention, prohibited long-term ability grouping, and provisions for strict placement guidelines in educable mentally retarded classes. Recommendations and guidelines were issued to increase the number of Latino teachers. Finally, the U.S. Commission recommended bilingual and bicultural education supported by federal guidelines. The Civil Rights Movement was the first serious attempt to incorporate Mexican Americans in the educational process and to include Mexican-heritage families in mainstream America. One hundred twenty-six years passed before the welcome mat was placed at the foot of educational institutions for students of Latino and Mexican heritage. In 1995, a progressive change occurred for
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California’s minority children when all American history textbooks submitted for adoption were expected to give fair representation to minorities (Hendrick, 1980, p. 76).

**Chicano Leadership Opened Doors to Self-Awareness and Higher Education**

The Civil Rights Movement was a historical moment for Mexican immigrants and their descendants. Chicano university students undertook leadership roles demanding ethnic studies and bilingual education. This was an educational advancement for Latinos and Latinas. Their strength was in their shared goals and was evidenced in their accomplishments. Living in a bicultural society can be a complex reality for the immigrant student. At home, children’s identity is clearly defined, but outside the home, students struggle to assert themselves in a world that does not accept their values and cultural heritage. For the child raised in a home with strong spiritual values, strong concepts of family, and a strong sense of respect and fellowship, and when those values are contradicted in school or the community, internal struggles result (National Alliance for Hispanic Health, 2000). Mexican immigrant families are preoccupied with adaptations and survival and are concerned with competition, individualism, and materialism. Gonzales (1972), a popular poet during the early years of the Chicano movement, echoed sentiments of conflict and confusion brought about by living in two opposing cultures. The poet spoke on behalf of many Mexican immigrants in the epic poem, *I am Joaquin*

The stylistic arrangement of the partial poem gives the impression of someone who is seeking and searching for the self. The poet speaks of the cultural tensions and contradictions of two worlds, their paradoxes, their ironies, and their ambiguities.

**Chicano-Movement Affirmation of a New Image and Actualization**

During the mid 1960s, the name Chicano became a symbol for reaffirmation of oneself, validation of historical roots, and of cultural heritage. Hurtado (1995) found that although assimilation is the path
some immigrants chose, many descendants of Latino heritage opted for acculturation. Unlike the turn-of-the-century immigrants from Eastern Europe who assimilated into American society (Min, 2002), third- and fourth-generation Latinos chose to preserve their cultural heritage (Hurtado, 1995). The Civil Rights Movement gave minority students a platform to have a voice on social issues. Students demanded ethnic studies and multicultural education. Change, equality, and justice were slogans of Chicano social reformers.

Change was apparent in the judicial system and in education. The 1974 Supreme Court decision, *Lau v. Nichols* declared that students with limited English proficiency be given supported services in their primary language. The court determined that English instructional programs denied equal access to education to students who spoke languages other than English (Escamilla, 1989). The court decision hinged on the Bilingual Education Act of 1974 (Crawford, 1991).

**Cuban Refugees Institutionalize Bilingual Education**

Escamilla (1989) found that as early as 1959, Spanish bilingual-education programs were implemented in Florida for Cuban refugees with remarkable success. Citing research by Gonzalez, Escamilla (1989) indicated that the instructional practice drew national attention for its effectiveness. At the same time successful outcomes of bilingual education were discussed, educators in the Southwest and in Washington DC were discussing the escalating dropout rates among Hispanic populations. Bilingual education was perceived as a solution for Hispanic students living in the Southwest. Educators, legislators, and policymakers were aware that they had to find solutions “about the schools’ negligence toward children with limited English skills” (Crawford, 1991, p. 12). Thus, the 1968 Title VII Bilingual Education Act was passed as a new provision of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965. Crawford (1991) contended that in the early years, bilingual education was a leap of faith; 20 years later, it had supported a richer knowledge base, and was reflecting current
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research on linguistics and cognitive psychology. Crawford (1991) asserted, bilingual education

brought enormous advances in curricula, methodologies, materials, and teacher training. No longer stigmatized as slow learners, language-minority children are achieving at or near grade level by the time they leave well-designed bilingual programs, even in urban schools where failure was once the norm. (p. 12)

Opposition to Bilingual Education

By 1986, California public opinion shifted in support of English-only policies. Opponents of multiculturalism and bilingual education organized in a concerted effort to challenge liberal policies. According to Crawford (1991), the U.S. English national organization, “spent more than $700,000 to get Proposition 63 passed, [and] had carefully timed the campaign to coincide with the expiration of California’s bilingual education statute” (p. 53). The English-only organization succeeded in making English the official language in California. In the fall of 1986, proposed legislation for bilingual education, AB 2813, passed in the State Assembly but was vetoed by Governor Deukmejian (Crawford, 1991). The bill, presented for renewal, was forced to sunset by the conservative governor. By the 1990s, conservative views were gaining popularity as promoters were now aggressively campaigning to oppose liberal policies.

Deconstruction of Bilingual Education

A scholarly review (Ryan, 2002) in the Boston College Law Review outlined the provisions of the Unz Initiative. In 1998, Unz, a Silicon Valley millionaire, proposed dismantling bilingual education in public schools. Proposition 227 was authored by Unz and passed by California voters. The passage of the proposition was a clear vote against bilingual education as a method for teaching English. The new provisions of the English language law stipulated
• the student best learns English through instruction conducted entirely in English
• schools must place English learners of different ages and of different native language in the same classroom when their level of English proficiency is similar
• parents have the right to sue teachers who do not engage in English-only instruction
• waivers from inclusion in the immersion program can be granted in special circumstances where parents grant permission and students fall within certain categories. (p. 5)

**Bilingual Education Suppressed**

Bilingual education was attacked at the state and national levels. The G. W. Bush administration openly expressed opposition to bilingual education and the preservation of minority languages. The Bush administration replaced the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 with the English Language Acquisition Act of 2001 (Spring, 2004). The act makes newcomers vulnerable to the conditions that existed prior to bilingual education, when students were experiencing high dropout rates and were subjected to a policy of unsupported effort.

**Racism as Instrument of Exclusion**

I suggest that racism can be described as prejudice and discrimination founded on assumed superiority by one ethnic group over another; that is, one race is pitted against another. It is face-to-face aggression and a divisive instrument used not just on Mexican-heritage students, but on ethnic groups along the periphery of the mainstream.

It is often disguised in subtle ways. Research by Larson and Ovando (2001) revealed how unfounded assumptions made by a White school community can alienate racial groups. In the Jefferson Heights case study, federal legislation mandated the desegregation of city schools forcing some Black students to be bussed to an overwhelmingly White school. Black students who reported grievances were dismissed and ignored. They literally had no venue for voicing their issues and complaints. Racial tensions built and exploded in a confrontation
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between Black and White students in which the Black students were dismissed. Before and after the explosive incident, students lacked a platform to express their grievances, and when they tried to express them, they were ignored. The parents who could have helped resolve the clash lived outside the school community. The researchers commented, “The miles separating the Jefferson Heights township from the Black community meant that the forms of networking and informal, interpersonal, connections that could have helped Black leaders influence the administrators or school board members, did not exist” (Larson & Ovando, 2001, p. 50). Regardless of ethnicity, the impact racism and alienation on all children is devastating. In a separate study, Varma-Joshi, Baker, and Tanaka (2004) reported, “Rather than school providing an opportunity for participants to experience the joys of childhood friendships, racial harassment catapulted many of the victims into a shell of isolation” (p. 195). Clearly, institutionalized racism is a violent gesture of exclusion.

In contrast are White female allies who, out of respect for themselves and the dignity of others, fought for justice. Historically, White women have sacrificed their lives and jobs to ensure justice for Blacks. In 1831, one antislavery advocate was Quaker Crandall, who “admitted a black girl to her school in order to prepare her to become a teacher. When the community forced Crandall to close the school, she attempted to open a black teacher-training school” (Solomon, 1985). Women of color and White female advocates for equality, continue to work united for justice, demanding civil and human rights. Solomon pointed out that “experiences in the antislavery cause finally sparked a small group of activists into furious awareness of their unfair and unequal treatment” (p. 41). The era of the Civil Rights Movement was characterized by pluralism and diversity. Again, “women’s consciousness was catapulted to a new level by black people’s demands for equality” (Solomon, 1985, p. 201). A milestone was achieved for people of color in the passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, “making sexual, racial, and religious discrimination illegal” (Solomon, 1985, p. 201).
Current Barriers for Hispanic Women in Educational Attainment

In spite of the investigations and recommendations by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1974), Latinos continue to lag in educational attainment. Harvey (2003) reported Hispanics showed the largest growth in business degrees—298%—but Whites still make up 71.6% of all bachelor’s degrees given in business. Atwell (2003) offered reasons for the lagging trend, suggesting that some colleges are not providing minority students support services such as tutoring, mentoring, and advising. The scholarships once accessible to minority students are limited or nonexistent, and the increase in tuition fees in public institutions are beyond the financial capabilities of many minority students. The merit-aid program has made enrollment more competitive: Priority is granted to students with the highest grades and highest test scores. Furthermore, the attack on affirmative action has weakened colleges’ responsibility for hiring minority personnel. These factors impact the number of students enrolled in doctoral programs. Finally, Atwell asserted, “It is clearly the case that higher education competition on the basis of the test scores of entering students works against low-income and minority students” (p. 2).

Melendez (2003) attributed the low rate growth of Hispanics in the workforce primarily to the decline in financial-aid assistance to needy families, stressing,

Hispanics also represent a significant and disproportionately increasing segment of the labor force, at a time when jobs require higher levels of literacy, numerical ability, and computer literacy. There are more workers in Hispanic homes, and they work more hours than any other group, but they are, on the whole, the lowest earners. (p. 6)

Melendez was astonished by the low representation of full-time Black and Hispanic faculty. Hispanics account for 2.9%, whereas Blacks comprise 5.1% of college faculty. Few are represented in higher education administration with 3.2% for Hispanics and 8.9% for Black Americans. Wilson (2003) offered still other reasons for the disparity
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between Whites and Hispanics in higher education, “These trends represent the stubborn persistence in our society of poverty, racism, inferior schools, and limited life opportunities” (p. 13).

Vargas (2002), a leading voice for women of color in higher education, suggested that the disparity in minority women in academia is more a sociopolitical problem than it is a personal technical deficiency. There is a growing body of research supporting and substantiating Vargas’ claim (Larson & Ovando, 2001; Luthra, 2002; Mabokela & Green, 2001; Solomon, 1985; Vargas, 2002; Wilson, 2003).

Summary

Migrations are inevitable and are an integral part of the human experience. People and groups migrate for a variety of reasons. For the colonized individual and group, identity is crucial for one’s self-concept and actualization. Both the conquerors and the conquered tend to cling to their heritage roots. The most destructive migration trends have been motivated by colonialism and invasions. Perhaps nothing is more devastating and destructive to human life than wars and invasions. Recent proof of human devastation is offered in 11,170 testimonies by people who witnessed the September 11, 2001, attack on New York’s Twin Towers as reported in the 9/11 Commission Report (“September 11 Digital Archive,” n.d.). A single attack has impacted thousands, perhaps millions of lives around the world. Wars affect families in fundamental ways: deaths, destroyed means for survival, loss of homes, dysfunctional lives, uprooted families, deconstruction of the social order, shell shock, starvation, neglect, violence, underdevelopment, and the destruction of family life. Some of the long-term consequences are annihilation, disempowerment, and indefinite devaluation of the conquered and colonized people. The seeds of prejudice and discrimination planted in the 1848 South-west invasion are pervasive in first-, second-, and third-generation citizens. Violence and aggression are threatening to human life and when prolonged, infuse internalized feelings of inferiority. Inferiority becomes deeply engrained in the colonized people. Larson and
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Ovando (2001) summed this pervasive view: “Oppression creates a psychic cage that imprisons us in a partial, distorted, way of being” (p. 78). Prejudice and discrimination, prevalent in mainstream society, permeate the classroom, textbooks, and the curriculum. What chance does a child of oppression have in such an environment? Who sets up these structures and who is blamed for students’ failures? The child of color is the product of double victimization.

From Despair to Hope

Some educators believe conciliation is a viable option that can and must take place between opposing groups in the school community. In the Jefferson Heights community, a platform for discussing racism and inequalities was established allowing both sides of the controversy to heal. Speak-outs gave a voice to Blacks and Whites and began to dissolve the stereotypes assumed by White parents (Larson & Ovando, 2001). Literature units and video presentations on issues of race and color can also promote human understanding (Larson & Ovando, 2001).

Another team of researchers, Varma-Joshi et al. (2004), shared recommendations offered by parents: School personnel must condemn racist name-calling and threats because “minimizing or ignoring racial slurs implies a covert endorsement of racism to young victims” (p. 200). Other recommendations were to offer school staff training to enable members to recognize and address racism. A final recommendation was to teach educators and students to value diversity through the use of multicultural materials.

In institutions of higher education, Vargas (1999) recommended sensitivity sessions on race and gender issues through workshops, teaching circles, and support groups. Women of color can be instrumental in raising awareness in White faculty and administrations through active voice. More importantly educators should, “envision ways of helping all students to experience their encounters with Other Teachers and transformative learning” (Vargas, 1999, p. 379).
Varma-Joshi et al. (2004) advocated transformative and conciliatory efforts and asserted that educators and professionals who fail to train staff to address racism commit an act of violence. Freire’s (1970/2002) professional career was devoted to greater awareness of human life. Freire’s words resonate well in a world where human destruction is a commodity, “But while both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is the people’s vocation” (p. 44).

Luthra (2002) has found reflection a powerful strategy for coping with gender and race issues in the classroom. The author offered a fresh view on coping with controversial issues. Luthra thrives on challenges and sees them as opportunities to foster change, “The class burns with energy at such moments. It is these moments that sustain me” (2002, p. 121). In seizing such opportunities, teacher and students reconstruct schemas of hegemonic tendencies. For the Hispanic/Latina, professional actualization and emancipation is a collective struggle with family and community to seek justice and equality.
References


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