

Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945: A Historical Overview

The term "Chicano" is a self-identified label used by Mexican Americans in the United States. It emerged in the 1960s as a term of empowerment and pride, but its roots can be traced back to the early 1900s. This article provides a historical overview of the development of Chicano ethnicity, culture, and identity in Los Angeles from 1900 to 1945. It examines the factors that contributed to the formation of a distinct Chicano identity, including the experiences of immigration, discrimination, and the rise of social and political movements. The article also discusses the ways in which Chicanos expressed their identity through cultural practices such as music, art, and literature.



Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945

by George J. Sanchez

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The Early Years: 1900-1920

The first wave of Mexican immigrants arrived in Los Angeles in the early 1900s. They came primarily from rural areas of Mexico, seeking economic opportunity in the United States. Many of these immigrants worked in low-paying jobs in the city's factories and farms. They faced discrimination from both Anglo-Americans and Mexican Americans who had already established themselves in Los Angeles. This discrimination was often based on their ethnicity, language, and culture.

Despite the challenges they faced, Mexican immigrants began to develop a sense of community in Los Angeles. They established their own neighborhoods, churches, and schools. They also began to develop their own cultural traditions, including music, art, and literature. These traditions were often a blend of Mexican and American influences.

The Interwar Years: 1920-1940

The 1920s and 1930s were a period of rapid growth for the Mexican American community in Los Angeles. The city's Mexican American population grew from 20,000 in 1920 to over 100,000 in 1940. This growth was due in part to the continued arrival of Mexican immigrants, as well as the migration of Mexican Americans from other parts of the United States.

During this period, Mexican Americans began to make significant strides in terms of economic and social progress. They established their own businesses and organizations, and they began to participate more actively in politics. They also continued to develop their own cultural traditions, and they began to produce their own music, art, and literature.

The World War II Era: 1940-1945

The outbreak of World War II had a profound impact on the Mexican American community in Los Angeles. Many Mexican Americans served in the U.S. military, and they fought bravely in both the European and Pacific theaters of war. Their service helped to break down some of the barriers that had separated them from Anglo-Americans.

After the war, Mexican Americans began to demand a greater voice in society. They organized protests and boycotts to demand better wages, working conditions, and housing. They also began to push for greater political representation. In 1945, Edward Roybal was elected to the Los Angeles City Council, becoming the first Mexican American to serve on the council.

The period from 1900 to 1945 was a formative period for the development of Chicano ethnicity, culture, and identity in Los Angeles. The experiences of immigration, discrimination, and the rise of social and political movements shaped the way that Chicanos viewed themselves and their place in American society. They developed their own cultural traditions, and they began to demand a greater voice in society. By the end of World War II, Chicanos had emerged as a distinct ethnic group with a strong sense of identity and purpose.

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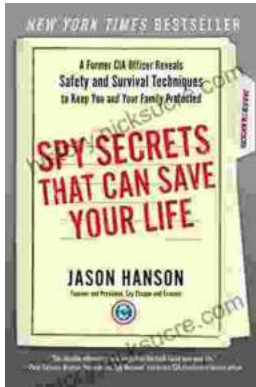
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