policies and there are industrial policies. Meanwhile, the plight of the displaced workers—an enormous chunk of the local population—replicates that of the Yankee mill girls and their immigrant successors.

When the regional industries declined, the city's economy suffered more severely than it might have if a better class mix had been maintained. The boutiques brought in to replace the discount stores went under, and the center-city streets are now lined with shuttered shops. The infrastructure built to support upscale Lowell is falling apart, and it is doubtful the downscale tourists who visit the national park in summer will shore it up again. For some reason, the planners were too shortsighted to see what would happen when the economic and demographic conditions of the early 1980s changed.

Tsongas goes around the country promising high-wage jobs in new manufacturing industries by means of a program of public aid to business for research and development, tax cuts for capital gains and investments, job-training programs and educational reforms, an aggressive policy of opening foreign markets and an easing of antitrust laws. Many of those ideas have been tried in the laboratory of Lowell in local forms, shapes and sizes. The university, publicly funded, contributes a kind of R&D to industries, and other schools and colleges train and track workers into local businesses. The city has given out tax breaks until it's blue in the face. Boosters have touted Lowell's wares beyond the Merrimack, and have especially hard-sold its attractions to tourists, a lucrative kind of "foreign trade."

What's wrong with Lowell is what's wrong with Tsongas's industrial policy: It won't work unless everyone affected by it participates in making the decisions, setting the agenda and allocating the resources. Who decides? is at least as important a question as Who benefits? Certainly the consequences of "planning," in the Tsongoid sense, differ widely as to how those questions are answered. The Harvard researchers who studied Lowell in the mid-1980s saw even then the flaws in the picture: "The revitalization story of Lowell illustrates that the trickle-down aspects of development cannot be assumed; it often requires an engaged citizenry to ensure that the benefits from development are more evenly distributed." In other words, the time when "aggressively pro-business" policies were successful has long passed, and Paul Tsongas might think again about paving over the canals. □

HISPANIC U.S.A.

The Mirror of The Other

CARLOS FUENTES

The U.S.-Mexico border, some of those who cross it say, is not really a border but a scar. Will it heal? Will it bleed once more? When a Hispanic worker crosses this border, he sometimes asks, "Hasn't this always been our land? Am I not coming back to it? Is it not in some way ours?" He can taste it, hear its language, sing its songs and pray to its saints. Will this not always be in its bones a Hispanic land?

But first we must remember that ours was once an empty continent. All of us came here from somewhere else, beginning with the nomadic tribes from Asia who became the first Americans. The Spaniards came later, looking for the Seven Cities of Gold, but when they found none in what is today the southwestern United States, they left their language and their religion, and sometimes their blood. The Spanish empire extended as far north as Oregon and filled the coastal region with the sonorous names of its cities: Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Francisco, Santa Barbara, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, San Bernardino, Monterey, Santa Cruz. When it achieved independence, the Mexican republic inherited these vast, underpopulated territories, but it lost them in 1848 to the expanding North American republic and its ideology of Manifest Destiny: the U.S.A., from sea to shining sea.

So the Hispanic world did not come to the United States, the United States came to the Hispanic world. It is perhaps an act of poetic justice that now the Hispanic world should return, both to the United States and to part of its ancestral heritage in the Western Hemisphere. The immigrants keep coming, not only to the Southwest but up the Eastern Seaboard to New York and Boston and west to Chicago and the Midwest, where they meet the long-established Chicanos, the North Americans of Mexican origin, who have been here even longer than the gringos. They all join to make up the 25 million Hispanics in the United States—the vast majority of Mexican origin, but many from Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Central and South America. It is the fastest-growing minority in the United States.

Los Angeles is now the second-largest Spanish-speaking city in the world, after Mexico City, before Madrid and Barcelona. You can prosper in southern Florida even if you speak only Spanish, as the population is predominantly Cuban. San Antonio, integrated by Mexicans, has been a bilingual city for 150 years. By the middle of the coming century, almost half the population of the United States will be Spanish-speaking.

This third Hispanic development, that of the United States, is not only an economic and political event; it is above all a

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cultural event. A whole civilization with a Hispanic pulse has been created in the United States. A literature has been born in this country, one that stresses autobiography—the personal narrative, memories of childhood, the family album—as a way of answering the question, What does it mean to be a Chicano, a Mexican-American, a Puerto Rican living in Manhattan, a second-generation Cuban-American living in exile in Miami? For example, consider the varied work of Rudolfo Anaya (*Bless Me, Ultima*), Ron Arías (*The Road to Tamazunchale*), Ernesto Galarza (*Barrio Boy*), Alejandro Morales (*The Brick People*), Arturo Islas (*The Rain God*), Tomás Rivera (*Y No Se lo Trago la Tierra*) and Rolando Hinojosa (*The Valley*); or of the women writers Sandra Cisneros (*Woman Hollering Creek*), Dolores Prida (*Beautiful Señoritas & Other Plays*) and Judith Ortiz Cofer (*The Line of the Sun*); or of the poets Alurista and Alberto Rios. Or consider the definitive statements of Rosario Ferré or Luis Rafael Sánchez, who simply decided to write in Spanish from the island of Puerto Rico.

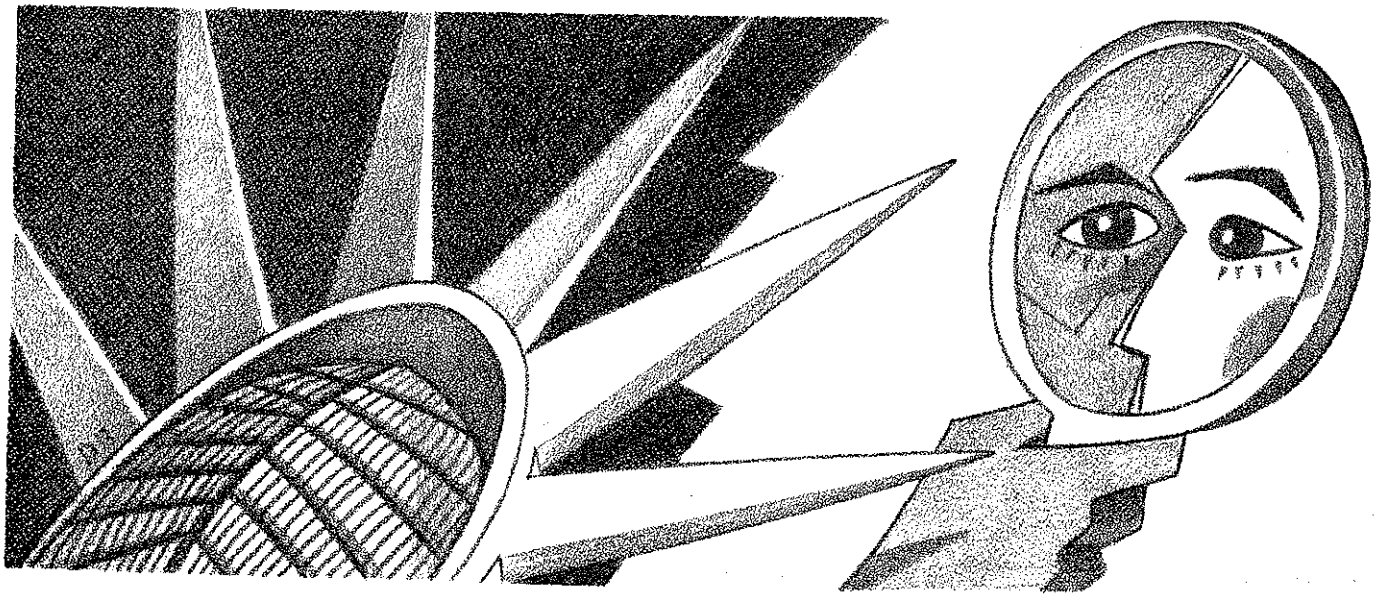
An art has also been created here; in a violent, even garish way, it joins a tradition going all the way from the caves of Altamira to the graffiti of East Los Angeles. It includes pictures of memory and dynamic paintings of clashes, like the car-crash paintings of Carlos Almaráz, who was part of the group called Los Four, along with Frank Romero, Beto de la Rocha and Gilbert Luján. The beauty and violence of these artists' work not only contribute to the need for contact between cultures that must refuse complacency or submission to injustice in order to become alive to one another. They also assert an identity that deserves to be respected and that must be given shape if it is not visible, or a musical beat if it is inaudible. And if the other culture, the Anglo mainstream, denies Hispanic culture a past, then artists of Latin origin must invent, if necessary, an origin. And they must remember every single link that binds them to it.

For example, can one be a Chicano artist in Los Angeles without upholding the memory of Martín Ramírez? Born in 1885, Ramírez was a migrant railroad worker from Mexico who lost his speech and for this was condemned to live for three decades in a California madhouse, until his death in 1960. He was not mad, he was just speechless. So he became an artist, and drew his muteness for thirty years.

No wonder that the Hispanic culture of the United States must manifest itself as forcefully as in a Luján painting; as dramatically as in a stage production by Luis Valdez; with a prose as powerful as that of Oscar Hijuelos with his mambo kings; or with a beat as life giving as that of Rubén Blades in his salsa songs of city woes and streetwise humor.

This vast flow of negation and affirmation forces newcomers as well as native Hispanics to ask themselves, "What do we bring? What would we like to retain? What do we want to offer this country?" The answers are determined by the fact that these people reflect a very broad social group that includes families, individuals, whole communities and networks, transmitting values, memories, traditions. At one end of the spectrum are 300,000 Hispanic businessmen prospering in the United States, and at the other is a 19-year-old Anglo-American shooting two immigrants to death for the simple reason that he "hates Mexicans." If one proudly spouts the statistic that Hispanic-owned businesses generate more than $20 billion a year, one can also, far less proudly, report that immigrants are shot at by Anglos with the paint-pellet guns used in mock warfare games. If one records that whole communities in Mexico are supported by the *remesas*, or remittances, of their migrant workers in the United States, and that these *remesas* add up to $4 billion a year and are Mexico's second-largest source of foreign income (after oil), then one must also record that many migrant workers are run down by vehicles on back roads near their campsites. And if, finally, one realizes that the majority of Mexican immigrants are temporary and eventually return to Mexico, then one must bear in mind the persisting differences between Anglo-America and Ibero-America, as these continue to oppose, influence and clash with each other.

The two cultures coexist, rubbing shoulders and questioning each other. We have too many common problems, which demand cooperation and understanding in a new world context, to clash as much as we do. We recognize each other



more and more in challenges such as dealing with drugs, crime, the homeless and the environment. But as the formerly homogeneous society of the United States faces the immigration of vastly heterogeneous groups, Latin America faces the breakdown of the formerly homogeneous spheres of political, military and religious power through the movement of the urban dispossessed.

In this movement, which is taking place in all directions, we all give something to one another. The United States brings its own culture—the influence of its films, its music, its books, its ideas, its journalism, its politics and its language—to each and every country in Latin America. We are not frightened by this, because we feel that our own culture is strong enough, and that, in effect, the enchilada can coexist with the hamburger. Cultures only flourish in contact with others; they perish in isolation.

People and their cultures perish in isolation, but they are born or reborn in contact with other men and women.

The culture of Spanish America also brings its own gifts. When asked, both new immigrants and long-established Hispanic-Americans speak of religion—not only Catholicism but something more like a deep sense of the sacred, a recognition that the world is holy, which is probably the oldest and deepest certitude in the Amerindian world. This is also a sensuous, tactile religion, a product of the meeting between the Mediterranean civilization and the Indian world of the Americas.

Then there is care and respect for elders, something called *respeto*—respect for experience and continuity, less than awe at change and novelty. This respect is not limited to old age in itself; in a basically oral culture, the old are the ones who remember stories, who have the store of memory. One could almost say that when an old man or an old woman dies in the Hispanic world, a whole library dies with that person.

And of course there is the family—family commitment, fighting to keep the family together, perhaps not avoiding poverty but certainly avoiding a *lonely* poverty. The family is regarded as the hearth, the sustaining warmth. It is almost a political party, the parliament of the social microcosm and the security net in times of trouble. And when have times not been troubled? The ancient stoic philosophy from Roman Iberia is deep indeed in the soul of Hispanics.

What else do Ibero-Americans bring to the United States? What would they like to retain? It is obvious they would like to keep their language, the Spanish language. Some urge them to forget it, to integrate by using the dominant language, English. Others argue that they should use Spanish only to learn English and join the mainstream. More and more often, however, people are starting to understand that speaking more than one language does not harm anyone. There are automobile stickers in Texas that read MONOLINGUALISM IS A CURABLE DISEASE. Is monolingualism unifying and bilingualism disruptive? Or is monolingualism sterile and bilingualism fertile? The California state law decreeing that English is the official language of the state proves only one thing: that English is no longer the official language of California.

Multilingualism, then, appears as the harbinger of a multicultural world, of which Los Angeles is the prime example. A modern Byzantium, the City of the Angels receives each day, willy-nilly, the languages, the food, the mores not only of Spanish-Americans but of Vietnamese, Koreans, Chinese, Japanese. This is the price—or the gift, depending on how you look at it—of global interdependence and communications.

So the cultural dilemma of the American of Mexican, Cuban or Puerto Rican descent is suddenly universalized: to integrate or not? to maintain a personality and add to the diversity of North American society, or to fade away into anonymity in the name of the after-all nonexistent "melting pot"? Well, perhaps the question is really, once more, to be or not to be? to be with others or to be alone? Isolation means death. Encounter means birth, even rebirth.

California, and especially Los Angeles, a gateway to both Asia and Latin America, poses the universal question of the coming century: How do we deal with the Other? North Africans in France; Turks in Germany; Vietnamese in Czechoslovakia; Pakistanis in Britain; black Africans in Italy; Japanese, Koreans, Chinese and Latin Americans in the United States: Instant communications and economic interdependence have transformed what was once an isolated situation into a universal, defining, all-embracing reality of the twenty-first century.

Is anyone better prepared to deal with this central issue of dealing with the Other than we, the Spanish, the Spanish-Americans, the Hispanics in the United States? We are Indian, black, European, but above all mixed, mestizo. We are Iberian and Greek; Roman and Jewish; Arab, Gothic and Gypsy. Spain and the New World are centers where multiple cultures meet—centers of incorporation, not of exclusion. When we exclude, we betray ourselves. When we include, we find ourselves.

Who are these Hispanic "ourselves"? Perhaps no story better renders the simultaneity of cultures than "The Aleph," by the Argentine author Jorge Luis Borges. In "The Aleph," the narrator finds a perfect instant in time and space where all the places in the world can be seen at the same moment, without confusion, from every angle, in perfect, simultaneous existence. What we would see in the Spanish-American aleph would be the Indian sense of sacredness, communality and the will to survive; the Mediterranean legacy of law, philosophy and the Christian, Jewish and Arab strains making up a multiracial Spain; and the New World's challenge to Spain, the syncretic, baroque continuation of the multicultural and multiracial experience, now including Indian, European and black African contributions. We would see a struggle for democracy and for revolution, coming all the way from the medieval townships and from the ideas of the European Enlightenment, but meeting our true personal and communal experience in Zapata's villages, on Bolívar's plains, in Tupac Amaru's highlands.

And we would then see the past becoming present in one seamless creation. The Indian world becomes present in the paintings of Rufino Tamayo, who was born in an Indian village in Oaxaca and whose modern art includes an Indian continuity in the sense of color and the spirit of celebration, in the cosmic consciousness and in Tamayo's capacity to recreate on canvas the dream of a form that *can* contain dreams. A younger painter, Francisco Toledo, also from an Indian village in Oaxaca, gives the ancient Indian fear and love of nature their most physical and visual proximity to our urban lives, while the Cuban Wifredo Lam permits his African roots to grow in his pictures. The Mexican painter Alberto Gironella bitingly recovers the traditions of Spanish art and commerce: His Velázquez spinoffs are framed by sardine cans.

Culture is the way we laugh, even at ourselves, as in the paintings of the Colombian Fernando Botero. It is the way we remember, as when the Venezuelan Jacobo Borges imagines the endless tunnel of memory. But culture is above all our bodies, our bodies so often sacrificed and denied, our shackled, dreaming, carnal bodies, like the body of the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. Our bodies are deformed and dreamy creatures in the art of the Mexican José Luis Cuevas. Indeed, like Goya, Cuevas offers the mirror of imagination as the only truth; his figures are the offspring of our nightmares, but also the brothers and sisters of our desires.

The union of Cuevas in the Americas with Goya in Spain also reminds us that when we embrace the Other, we not only meet ourselves, we embrace the marginal images that the modern world, optimistic and progressive as it has been, has shunned and has then paid a price for forgetting. The conventional values of middle-class Western society were brutally shattered in the two world wars and in the totalitarian experience. Spain and Spanish America have never fooled themselves on this account. Goya's "black paintings" are perhaps the most lasting reminder we have of the price of losing the tragic sense of life in exchange for the illusion of progress. Goya asks us again and again to harbor no illusions. We are captive within society. Poverty does not make anyone kinder, only more ruthless. Nature is deaf to our pleas. It cannot save the innocent victim; history, like Saturn, devours its own children.

Goya asks us to avoid complacency. The art of Spain and Spanish America is a constant reminder of the cruelty that we can exercise on our fellow human beings. But like all tragic art, it asks us first to take a hard look at the consequences of our actions, and to respect the passage of time so that we can transform our experience into knowledge. Acting on knowledge, we can have hope that this time we shall prevail.

We will be able to embrace the Other, enlarging our human possibility. People and their cultures perish in isolation, but they are born or reborn in contact with other men and women, with men and women of another culture, another creed, another race. If we do not recognize our humanity in others, we shall not recognize it in ourselves.

Often we have failed to meet this challenge. But we have finally seen ourselves whole in the unburied mirror of identity only when accompanied—ourselves with others. We can hear the voice of the poet Pablo Neruda exclaiming throughout this vision, "I am here to sing this history." □

MURDER IN A SHANTYTOWN

Shining Path's War on Hope

ROBIN KIRK

The murder of shantytown activist Maria Elena Moyano last month marks a grim new chapter in Peru's eleven years of political violence. Like Brazilian rain-forest leader Chico Mendes, murdered in 1988, Moyano represented a new generation of Latin American leaders—not white, often female, with a solid constituency in the impoverished community where her family had staked its future. But unlike that of Mendes, Moyano's death will provoke little international outrage. Few foreigners feel as strongly about self-help movements in Latin America's "young towns" as they do about the rain forest. Moreover, Moyano's assassins came from the far left—the Communist Party of Peru–Shining Path, Maoist guerrillas who want to build a totalitarian state modeled on the most vicious years of China's Cultural Revolution. The message for Peruvians is that terror, not broad support, is what the Shining Path believes will drive its insurgency into power.

I went to meet Moyano last September in Villa El Salvador, the shantytown where she lived with her husband and two sons. The morning was gray and damp, and Villa lay dark as a shadow beneath the grime-encrusted dunes south of Lima. But despite its grim aspect, for the people who live here Villa means victory. It is a symbol of how poor people, working together, can make for themselves decent, productive lives. No one personified that victory more than Moyano. A black woman with an electric, gap-toothed smile, she was 12 years old when her parents participated in the land takeover that led to the founding of Villa in 1971.

Although both men and women built Villa, the case can be made that women like Moyano dreamed it awake. It was women who defended their few square feet of shifting sand from police evictions, believing in the houses that would one day stand there. Even as they worked sixty-hour weeks as washerwomen and maids, they spent their nights and days off circulating petitions for water, bus lines and electricity.

Over time, Villa's 300,000 residents organized their own government, schools, health clinics and an industrial park that is a model for Third World entrepreneurs. As a youth, Moyano was active in her neighborhood and became president of the Women's Federation. In 1989, at 30, she was elected deputy mayor on the United Left ticket.

Aggressive and eloquent, Moyano was not afraid to lead the marches that often ended in pitched battles with police under stinging clouds of tear gas. Her battles were many: against sexism, racism and economic injustice, but especially against poverty. Recent economic austerity measures have left most Peruvians worse off than they were two decades ago, and small businesses, which once flourished in Villa, have been hit hardest. On the day she was murdered, she had arranged the delivery of tons of donated food to Villa soup kitchens.

But last September, a new enemy emerged. Hurt by recent defeats in rural Peru, the Shining Path has made the shantytowns of Lima its new battleground. Guerrillas blew up a warehouse that supplied ninety-two Villa soup kitchens. Local leaders were threatened and killed. In another shantytown, a man who refused to let the Shining Path use a community loudspeaker was dragged out of his shack and shot. The neighbor who tried to save him was stoned to death.

Moyano came under special attack. Guerrillas called her leftist politics "revisionist" and claimed she had stolen soup-kitchen money, an accusation Villa residents considered absurd. Nevertheless, guerrillas vowed to "annihilate" her.

The assassins had been there for hours, waiting.

The reason the Shining Path, which vows to end injustice, wants to kill people like Moyano lies in its macabre logic of "people's war." The guerrillas want to convert grass-roots organizations into "people's committees," which would become part of an all-out offensive against Peru's government. Rather than feed, educate or heal people, they want to "deepen the contradictions"—that is, create more hunger, disease and death. Then, the theory goes, people will feel compelled to fight on the guerrillas' side.

"For a while, I thought the Shining Path was wrong, but at least they were fighting for justice," Moyano once told an interviewer. "But when they began to attack and kill local leaders, I repudiated them openly. What they want is to stifle independent organization so that malnutrition and death increase, and so favor their push for total war."

Moyano got in their way. After the warehouse bombing, she led the first-ever open march in Villa against the Shining Path. In speeches and interviews, she condemned their tactics. To defeat them, she said, "we must root out fear."

It was a courageous, perhaps foolhardy, move. Many condemn the Shining Path, but few do so with such vehemence because they know that a neighbor or a casual passer-by could be a trained assassin. Senderistas, as they are called, have murdered hundreds of mayors, local leaders and development workers who opposed them.

Moyano never showed up for our September interview. Protected by four bodyguards, she had been varying her schedule so much, to throw off a potential attempt on her life, that it had escaped her memory entirely. Security specialists tell me that 100 bodyguards can't insure a life. On February 15, her bodyguard, police officer Roger Bocanegro, was shot as Moyano chatted with people attending a chicken barbecue meant to raise funds for Villa's hungry children. Some inside knew what was happening, but no one warned her. They were

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"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The

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Hispanic Households Struggle As Poorest of the Poor in U.S.

By CAREY GOLDBERG

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 29 — If he dared tattoo gang symbols on his neck, Myrna Morales warned her strapping 17-year-old son, William, she would burn them off with her iron. Or a frying pan.

Such was the desperation of Mrs. Morales, 41, a naturalized American from Guatemala who has watched three of her American-born children seduced by the worst of inner-city culture and seen her own earnings as a housecleaner shrink in recent years. With her diminishing income, she asked, how can she promise they will prosper like so many immigrants' children before them?

"I tell them go to school and don't be like me, cleaning bathrooms," said Mrs. Morales, who scrubs and vacuums for $300 a week despite her degree as a medical assistant from a local college.

To judge by the latest Census Bureau statistics, Mrs. Morales is right to be worried. The data show that in 1995, median household income rose for every other American ethnic and racial group, but for the nation's 27 million Hispanics, it dropped 5.1 percent. The downturn, which affects the American-born as well as the newly arrived across a broad spectrum of socio-economic indicators, has baffled social scientists. And it has prompted some to warn that many Hispanics, members of the nation's fastest growing ethnic or racial group, may become entrenched as America's working poor.

Census data show that for the first time the poverty rate among Hispanics in the United States has surpassed that of blacks. Hispanics now constitute nearly 24 percent of America's poor, up 8 percentage points since 1985. Of all Hispanics, 30 percent were considered poor in 1995, meaning they earned less than $15,569 for a family of four. That is almost three times the percentage of non-Hispanic white people in poverty. Of the poorest of the poor, those with incomes of $7,500 or less for a family of four, 24 percent were Hispanic.

These are not just statistical blips. Overall, household income for Hispanics has dropped 14 percent since 1989, from about $26,000 to under $22,900, while rising slightly for blacks.

Nor do the data simply reflect the recent influx of illegal Hispanic immigrants. "As we know from the data in other studies," said Manuel de la Puente, the chief of the Census Bureau's Ethnic and Hispanic Statistics Branch, "the immigrants tend to be low-educated individuals, hold service-sector jobs and have little or no English, and all these things contribute to income."

But when Census analysts sep-

Continued on Page A16, Column 3

Hispanic Households Are Poorest of the U.S. Poor

Continued From Page A1

arated out American-born Hispanics, Mr. de la Puente said, they found their income levels declining as well. Statistics indicate that America's Hispanic population is experiencing an almost across-the-board impoverishment.

"It is the American nightmare, not the American dream," said Arturo Vargas, who heads the National Association of Latino Elected Officials, based in Los Angeles. Though the Hispanic middle class has been growing, Mr. Vargas said, most Hispanics are caught in jobs like gardener, nanny and restaurant worker that will never pay well and from which they will never advance.

The declining income among the nation's Hispanic population is little understood and requires more study, researchers say, as do new data showing improved economic well-being among blacks.

Researchers also caution that the Hispanic population, which is an ethnic term and includes some blacks, is an amalgam of people, and their descendants, from nearly 24 countries. They range from typically prosperous Cubans of Miami to Puerto Ricans, largely concentrated in New York and the nation's poorest ethnic group. Generalizations, then, are often of limited use.

Nonetheless, the growing group of scholars who study America's Hispanics point to several factors that affect most of that population:

¶Structural changes in the economy that have drastically reduced well-paid blue-collar jobs.

¶The failures of institutions like schools to retain Hispanic students and provide them with a marketable education, resulting in a widening gap in graduation rates from both high school and college. Hispanics have by far the highest high-school drop-out rate of any group in the nation; 1990 Census figures found that even among American-born Hispanics, only 78 percent finished high school compared to 91 percent of whites and 84 percent of blacks.

¶Discrimination among employers who see Hispanic immigrants, particularly those who speak poor English, as disposable workers.

Experts acknowledge that the influx of millions of Latin American immigrants over the last 20 years — 2 million between 1990 and 1994 alone, the Census reports — have pulled income numbers down because immigrants tend to be poor.

"Everybody's going up the escalator but there's a big queue at the bottom and the queue's getting bigger, so the average number of steps people have gotten up has slipped."

Ed Carreon for The New York Tir

Myrna Morales, a naturalized American from Guatemala, is worried about the effects that her diminishi income and poor Los Angeles neighborhood, will have on her son, William Baldizon, 17.

non-Hispanics; Hispanic students were doing proportionally better in 1975, when 5 percent held college degrees compared with 11.6 percent of non-Hispanics.

Just getting through high school is a challenge for the many Hispanic children in school systems as overwhelmed and underfinanced as the Los Angeles Unified School District, which is 70 percent Hispanic.

Crowding is so bad that 40,000 schoolchildren out of 670,000 must be bused outside their neighborhoods and most schools run on year-round schedules, said Vickie Castro, a member of the school board. Music, art and sports programs have been cut, Ms. Castro said, and with 1 counselor for every 500 children, little drop-out prevention can come from that quarter.

"There's a strong work ethic within Latino families," she said, "and we keep telling them education is the tool to get out of poverty, but their immediate needs overtake it."

Those needs overtook Linda Martinez in Houston, a 23-year-old would-be teacher who dropped out to go to work when she was 15. Her first job was bagging potatoes to help support her parents and younger brother because her father, fresh from Mexico, could not find work.

DEMOGRAPHICS

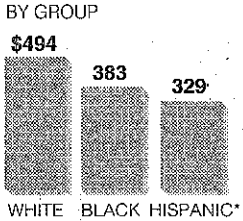
Falling Behind, and Further Behind

Hispanic Americans have roots in more than 20 countries and are the nation's fastest-growing ethnic group. Yet social scientists, reviewing a broad spectrum of social and economic data, fear that the Hispanic population is in danger of becoming an entrenched underclass — the working poor.

Earnings Are Lower . . .

Median weekly earnings for full-time wage and salary workers, 1995 annual averages.

BY GROUP

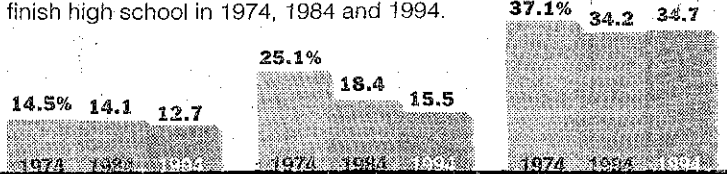


BY SELECTED OCCUPATIONS

	WHITE	BLACK	HISPANIC*
Executive, manager	$701	$585	$562
Engineer	929	812	852
Secretary	394	399	369
Food service worker	260	248	243
Bus, taxi or truck driver	488	389	403

. . . Schooling Ends Sooner

Percentage of each group that did not finish high school in 1974, 1984 and 1994.



said Dowell Myers, a demographer at the University of Southern California who has studied the region's Hispanic population. The arrival of so many job-hungry new workers, many of them illegal and willing to work for pennies, has also driven down wages in low-skill professions like janitor, hurting other Hispanics in those fields, Professor Myers added.

A new study by the University of California at Los Angeles, based on Census data, notes that in the blue-collar industries of California in which Mexican immigrants are concentrated — clothing and furniture manufacture, for example — real earnings declined more than $6,000 a year between 1970 and 1990.

Government demographers also note that immigration and birth rates have weighted America's Hispanic population toward lower-income groups, like Mexicans, at the expense of higher income groups, like Cubans. Also, Hispanics tend to be younger than the population at large and Hispanic women with children are less likely to work.

But for many scholars and community leaders, the main explanation for Hispanics' plight is education — or the lack of it. A 1994 study by Frank D. Bean, a University of Texas demographer, and his colleagues found that in several age groups, Mexican-Americans whose families had lived in the United States for three generations or more received slightly less schooling than their parents did. And people of Mexican origin account for the biggest portion of the Hispanic population.

Another study, by the Census Bureau in 1995, found that Hispanics have been falling further behind non-Hispanics in rates of college attendance. In 1994, only 9 percent of Hispanics over age 24 held college degrees, compared with 24 percent of

Now, Ms. Martinez is attending community college while working part-time at a community center. She hopes to finish soon, she said, but knows that her education may be interrupted again.

Some Hispanic scholars and community leaders are suggesting that many problems afflicting the nation's Hispanic population stem from the fact that members of the poor, ill-educated immigrant segment tend to settle in crime-ridden, gang-infested inner cities, where a culture of easy money might be difficult to resist.

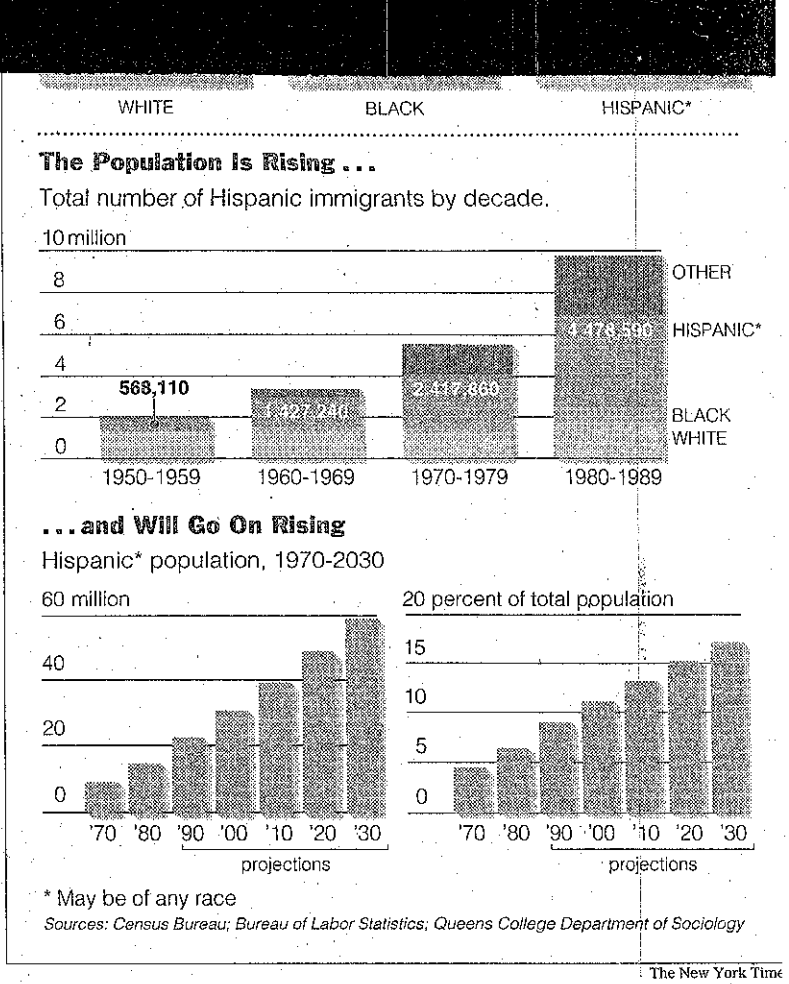
William, Mrs. Morales's son, for example, has left the Alley Cats 13 gang and reformed, helped by Youth Fair Chance, a training and counseling program that is soon to lose most of its Federal financing. But he says he remembers what the world looked like when he dropped out of high school and had gang symbols tattooed on his back (never his neck).

"I saw friends that didn't graduate from high school robbing and getting money," said William, who works as a peer counselor and is finishing school at Youth Fair Chance in downtown Los Angeles, "And I kept thinking, 'They didn't finish high school and look at all their money!' "

He was seduced by the cash and the parties and the girls, he said, but in the end, "I didn't want my mother crying every night."

She already had plenty to cry about. William's twin sister is the unmarried mother of a toddler now trying to finish high school while waitressing at a steak restaurant, and his older brother, age 20, has been in jail on a gang-related murder conviction since he was 15.

Mrs. Morales, who immigrated illegally in 1973 and received a green card through a family whose disabled son she helped raise, is no quitter. But she is thinking of allowing her husband, a painter who earns



The New York Time

about $300 a week, to take their youngest, a 4-year-old son, back to Guatemala and raise him there, "away from all this."

Over Christmas, for example, William was shot in the neck in a street confrontation. He is in rehabilitation for lingering paralysis of the arm.

"I wish I had a better job, lots of money, so I could buy a house outside this neighborhood,' Mrs. Morales said of the menacing section of downtown Los Angeles where she lives. But the clinic where she worked closed and housecleaning pays less than it used to because of the competition from new immigrants, she said: Employers who used to offer $70 a cleaning can now often get away with $40.

Because so many businesses have moved to suburbs, "finding their way outward has become harder for many urban-dwelling poor and minorities," Rebecca Morales and Frank Bonilla write in "Latinos in a Changing U.S. Economy" (Sage, 1993). And Hispanics are already more urbanized than most, they note, with 90 percent living in cities compared with 75 percent of the population at large.

Even those who do escape, like Joe Aravena, 40, a plant utility engineer who moved his family from the South Bronx to the ethnically mixed Castle Hill section five years ago, say they seem to be working harder to keep a toehold in middle-class life.

Born in America of a Chilean father and a Puerto Rican mother, Mr. Aravena has seen his $34,000 salar at the state hospital stagnate fo years, held up by union negotiation and wage freezes. These days, h said, he can afford to send his 11 year-old son to Catholic school onl by putting in frequent 16-hour shift

"We're running just to stay i place, and sometimes I fall behind,' Mr. Aravena said. ."

The general problem of Hispani poverty, researchers agree, begin with the low education and skill lev els with which most Hispanic immi grants arrive in the United States But the most critical barrier to im migrants' success, numerous studie suggest, is language. A Rand Corpo ration study released over the sum mer found that Hispanic immigrants come to America speaking less Eng lish than their European or Asian counterparts, and never catch up.

"Limited English proficiency is the single most important obstacle to upward mobility among Mexican im migrants," said Wayne Cornelius, the director of the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at the University of California at San Diego.

Without a command of English, Professor Cornelius and other schol ars said, it matters little how indus trious a Hispanic person is. "Clear ly," researcher Vilma Ortiz com mented in "Ethnic Los Angeles," a just-published U.C.L.A. study, "the traditional ethnic saga of hard labor followed by rewards does not apply to Latino immigrants."