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#109: Discrimination – Latino

Latino Discrimination in the United States: A Comprehensive Examination

Discriminatory practices have hindered the economic, political, and educational opportunities of Latinos in the United States. The ethnicity is the fastest growing proportion of the population, so therefore this unfair treatment will be an increasing large issue in the American political sphere.

For the purpose of this study, we will use the terms **Latino** and **Hispanic** somewhat synonymously, both referring to Americans who are Spanish-speaking and whom have origins in the Hispanic countries of Latin America or in Spain. Being labeled one or the other largely relies of self-recognition but in general, Latino or Hispanic American citizens on the east coast of the country prefer to be called Hispanic, while those on the west prefer Latino. Because of the complexity of ancestries and origins, the term Latino has emerged to form more of an **ethnicity** than a race. There are approximately 50.5 million Hispanics or Latinos in the United States, constituting roughly 16.3% of the population (U.S. Census). Although present throughout the country, Latinos are concentrated heavily in the Southwest region; 49% live in either California or Texas. In the last 10 years, the number of Hispanics and Latinos living in the United States has increased by 28%, making this very dynamic issue of Latino discrimination all the more salient as we move in to the future.

The issue at stake is that the Latino minority in the United States has been a victim of discriminatory practices hindering political, educational, and economic participation. A study performed by the Pew Hispanic Center found that 6 in 10 Latinos in the United States say discrimination is a “major problem” (Preston). Title VII of the Employment Rights Act of 1964 deems it illegal to **discriminate** against individuals on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or disability. In a study performed by Rodolfo Espino and Michael M. Franz of Wisconsin-Madison University, it was found that “despite efforts to rid the workplace of discrimination, many darker-skinned Latinos continue to experience more discrimination in the labor market than their lighter-skinned counterpart. This study was performed to assess the superficial judgments of racial and ethnic discrimination in

the labor market (Rodolfo and Franz 620-621). Another study performed in 2009 attempted to analyze labor discrimination even further. The study, done by the Southern Poverty Law Center, found that based on a survey of 500 low-income Latinos across the South, they are frequent victims of theft, workplace discrimination, sexual abuse and violence (Eviatar). A recent survey performed by the Pew Hispanic Center showed that unemployment is about two points higher among native-born Hispanic males and poverty rates are about four points higher (Tafoya). Labor **opportunity** has long been subject to discriminatory practices for Latinos here in the United States.

Unfortunately, discrimination against Latinos is no more prevalent than in the United States educational system. In many schools, Latinos are victim to harsh stereotypes such as low expectations and illegitimate citizenship. The representation on school boards and teaching positions is nowhere proportionate to the percentage of the Latino population, creating insufficient resources to promote a political agenda that would further educational opportunities (Fraga 870-871).

Latinos have made headlines with increasing regularity in the political sphere due to their rising proportion of the population. 5,850 Latinos currently serve in elected offices nationwide, in all levels of government. Some notable Latino politicians include former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, who is of Mexican descent, and Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court Sonia Sotomayor, who is of Puerto Rican descent and is the first Hispanic justice. Although political affiliations differ among Latinos depending on background and geographic location, about 53% claim to be Democrats (Levenson). Even though McCain headed the immigration reform efforts, Latinos still voted for President Obama in overwhelming numbers in the 2008 Presidential election.

Word Count: 589

Keywords:

1. Latino/Hispanic
2. Discriminate
3. Ethnicity
4. Opportunity



Former Governor, Congressman, Cabinet Member, Ambassador, and U.S. Presidential Candidate Bill Richardson

Source: TIME magazine



Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States Sonia Sotomayor

Source: New York Times



Latino Protestors

Source: Blog – “Latinovations”



Classroom along the Rio Grande in Texas

Source: Rio Grande Bible Institute website

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