

# Major Problems in Mexican American History

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## Major Problems in Mexican American History

Mexicans have been a people long oppressed. That is evident not only by the readings edited by Zaragosa Vargas in Major Problems in Mexican American History, but also by the the documentary Chicano!. The Mexicans' past is underscored by conquest of the present-day American Southwest first by the Spanish and then by the United States following the [Mexican](#) American War. With other countries establishing control over them, Mexicans have never really been able to establish themselves. Efforts were repeatedly made to shape them into what others perceived them to be. The language they should speak, the religion they should practice, the things they should learn, and the way they should live, were all decisions that for many years Mexicans did not have the power to control. This lack of power allowed the Spanish and the United States to take advantage of Mexican rights, labor and land. In [addition](#), it also produced a loss of Mexican identity and culture.

Mexican American history began in the 16th century under Spanish colonialism. The Spanish had a goal of conquest and colonization. Evidently, that goal was successfully accomplished because when the Spanish first arrived in 1492 Mexico's population was

fourteen million, but by the end of the 16th century it had drastically declined to one million. Numbers decreased because of the cruel treatment, forced labor, and disease brought by the Spanish. The Spanish eventually controlled most of the territory in the Southwest and over three hundred towns had been established for the purpose of control and conversion. The Spanish imposed conditions on the natives of Mexico that would belittle them. They aimed to convert them in order to make them re...

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...heightened sense of self and group identity. The term [Chicano](#) encouraged Mexican Americans to take pride and interest in their history of struggle in America. It is when dealing with this period in Mexican-American history that the documentary Chicano! steps in for Vargas, better explaining the movement that occurred. Mexican Americans distinguished themselves at home and abroad during World War II and worked toward political, educational, and social equality in the country they defended.

...La Raza! Mejjicano! Espanol! Latino! Hispano! Chicano! or whatever I call myself. I look the same. I feel the same...I cry and Sing the same. I am the masses of my people and I refuse to be absorbed. I am Joaquin...The odds are great but my spirit is strong...My faith unbreakable...My blood is pure...I am Aztec Prince and Christian Christ...I SHALL ENDURE! I WILL ENDURE!

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