RESOURCES

American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music

- Vocabulary: Cultural Terms
- Vocabulary for American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music
- Vocabulary: Music, Dance Styles and Instruments
- Historical Background Essay
- Related Web sites on music and Latino art, culture and history
VOCABULARY: CULTURAL TERMS
American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music

Latinos are a diverse group of people. Use the definitions below to understand better the diversity among Latinos.

The terms Hispanic and Latino have different meanings but are often used interchangeably. Hispanic, however, is more often used to refer to specific heritage or descent from Spain, whereas Latino is closely associated with Latin America. Latin refers to the ancient Indo-European language.

- **Californio**: Spanish-speaking settler in Alta California (circa 1840s), including descendants of European settlers from Mexico and Spain and native peoples
- **Chicano**: a person of Mexican descent born in the United States; a term of self-identity that expresses pride in being Mexican American
- **Boricua**: a person of Puerto Rican heritage; a term of self-identity
- **Hispanic**: a person who descends from Spanish heritage or from a culture that owes its origin to Spain; a person whose primary language is Spanish
- **Latino**: a person living in the United States who is of Latin American descent
- **Norteño**: a person from the north part of Mexico
- **Nuevomexicano**: a Spanish-speaking settler in New Mexico
- **Nuyorican**: a blending of the words New York and Puerto Rico; a term used predominantly in or around New York; a second-generation Puerto Rican who is born and raised on the mainland of the United States
- **Tejano**: the Spanish word for Texan; a Mexican settler in Texas
VOCABULARY FOR AMERICAN SABOR: LATINOS IN U.S. POPULAR MUSIC

**Acculturate:** adapt to another culture

**Acclimate:** to adapt to a new situation

**Affirmation:** a positive assertion; the act of being affirmed

**Americana:** things typical of America; materials concerning or characteristic of America or its culture

**Ancestral:** relating to or inherited from an ancestor

**Arrangement:** an adaptation of a musical composition by rescoring

**Assimilate:** to make similar; to absorb into the culture or mores of a population or group

**Avant garde:** a pushing of the boundaries of what is accepted as the norm, or the status quo, primarily in the cultural realm

**Barrio:** a Spanish slang term for neighborhood

**Big band:** a type of musical ensemble associated with playing jazz music and which became popular during the Swing Era from 1935 until the late 1940s

**Boricua:** a person of Puerto Rican heritage; a term of self-identity

**Chicano:** a person of Mexican heritage born in the United States; a term of self-identity

**Caló:** slang used by Mexicans that incorporates Spanish, initially spoken in the early part of the 20th century

A sample of caló and its English translation:

- **Bola** A dollar
- **Bolo** Party
- **Bronca** Trouble or a problem with another person
- **Chante** House
- **Choclos** Shoes
- **Drapes** Zoot Suit and Clothes
- **Guizar** Girl, Girlfriend
- **Ranfla** Car
- **Vato** Guy; a “dude”

**Citizenship:** the status of being a citizen; the quality of an individual’s response to membership in a community

**Civil rights movement:** political activism in the mid 1950s that sought equity for African Americans

**Community:** a group of people living near each other and share common interests

**Corrido:** a narrative song in Spanish; corridos vary in topic from social justice to history to everyday life

**Diaspora:** a group of people forced to leave their homeland

**Disenfranchised:** to be deprived of the right to vote or civil privileges

**Displacement:** being moved aside or away
Economy: a system of interaction and exchange of goods and services

Emigrate: to leave one’s country or place of residence for another place

Ethnocentric: a viewpoint that is strongly based on one’s own culture; a predominant position that assests one’s own culture is superior to others

Exile: the state or a period of forced absence from one’s country or home

Expatriate: to leave one’s native country to live or settle elsewhere

Fusion: the merging of adjacent sounds or syllables or words; in music, combining different styles

Genre: a category of artistic, musical or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form or content

Heritage: something acquired from a predecessor or passed on to an heir

History: a record of events and time periods

Hybrid: of two different cultures or traditions

Identity: a person’s self-affiliation; a distinguishing character or personality; personal characteristics

Immigration: the act of coming to a foreign country to live

Improvisation: the act or art of improvising or creating spontaneously

Industrialized: industry having been introduced on a large scale

Influence: the act of causing or effecting

Jibaro/a: a term used to describe the people and culture of rural Puerto Rico

Lounge music: a genre of music played in the lounges and bars of hotels and casinos, or at standalone piano bars

Mainstream: dominant or prevailing (as in activity, culture, expression, etc.)

Migration: to move from one place to another; usually country or location

Minority: a group that does not constitute a politically dominant demographic of the total population

Movement: in political or social context, a movement is an action by a group

Nationalism: loyalty and devotion to a nation

New world: a term used beginning in the 1500s to refer to the Americas from a European point of view. The use of the term new world to refer to the Americas has been contested because it does not recognize that the Americas existed before the 1500s (given that the Americas and its people were not “new”).

Nuyoricans: Puerto Ricans born in New York; a term of self-identity

Oral history: interview of personal experience or recollection
**Pachuco:** Mexican American youth subculture during the 1930s and 1940s, distinguished by dress and use of slang (caló)

**Political exiles:** people who leave a country for political reasons

**Polyrhythmic:** the simultaneous use of two or more independent rhythms

**Pop culture:** culture or cultural expression that is widely accepted, acknowledged, or practiced

**Pop music:** contemporary music or a popular form of music in contemporary culture; pop is an abbreviation of the word popular

**Popularize:** to make popular; to cause to be liked

**Punk:** a music genre (and culture) first popular in the 1970s; associated with antiestablishment views

**Regionalism:** consciousness of and loyalty to the interest or characteristics of a distinct region

**Resistance:** the act of being in opposition; denying or rejecting

**Sabor:** the Spanish word for “flavor,” the word is often used to describe an energy (positive) or a vibe

**Symbol:** something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention or accidental resemblance

**Westward expansion:** a term used to describe the migration of people from the East Coast to new regions in the West Coast of the United States in the 1800s. To use westward expansion when discussing Latino migration would be incorrect.
VOCABULARY: MUSIC, DANCE STYLES, AND INSTRUMENTS

American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music

**Accordion:** a musical instrument that is played by compressing and expanding while playing its keyboard; a portable musical instrument with keys and bellows

**Bajo sexto:** a 12-string guitar

**Ballad:** a story, usually a narrative or poem, in a song

**Banda rap:** hip hop fused with brass instrumentation and style of Mexican banda

**Bomba:** Afro-Puerto Rican musical tradition of percussion, song and dance

**Bongo:** a small drum

**Boogaloo:** a genre of Latin music and dance popularized in the United States in the late 1960s. Boogaloo originated in New York City among teenage Cubans and Puerto Ricans

**Brass:** type of wind instruments including trumpet, tuba, trombone

**Charanga:** musical group that interprets cha cha cha and danzon

**Claves:** percussion instruments; played in pairs that create a sound when one strikes against the other

**Conga:** a tall, narrow, single-headed Cuban drum of African origin

**Conjunto:** a genre of Mexican music that usually played by groups including bajo sexto and the accordion

**Corrido:** a narrative ballad or a song reflecting the history and people; a genre dating to the 1800s and uses an accordion as its main instrument

**Cumbia:** music and folk dance from Colombia

**Dance band:** a music band that plays music or rhythms to dance to

**Güiro – guido:** a “scraper” instrument that makes a hissing or scratchy sound; looks like a vegetable or cheese grater; small percussion instrument

**Hip-hop:** an urban music genre and a cultural movement created in New York starting in the 1970s, predominantly by African Americans and Latinos

**Mambo:** Cuban musical form and dance style

**Maracas:** a percussion instrument; usually a gourd shell filled with seeds or beans; played in pairs

**Merengue:** a dance and music of the Dominican Republic

**Norteño (music):** music of northern Mexico; also, a person from northern Mexico
**Organ:** A wind musical instrument played with a keyboard

**Orquesta:** Spanish word for orchestra

**Pachanga:** a type of Latin American music and dance originating from Cuba in the 1950s

**Percussion:** an instrument that is hit, which produces a vibrating sound

**Plena:** a narrative song; folk music in Puerto Rico associated with agricultural workers on coastal regions of the island

**Reggaetón:** a form of urban music which became popular with Latin American (or Latino) youth during the early 1990s; music blends Jamaican dancehall with hip-hop and other Latin American music types such as merengue, plena, bomba

**Rumba:** Cuban music and dance with origins in Africa

**Salsa:** a term to describe a group of musical styles having their roots in the Caribbean and Latin America; an urban musical genre that came after merengue

**Son jarocho:** musical style from Veracruz, Mexico; incorporates African beats

**Tex Mex:** musical genre that combines polka and traditional Mexican music

**Timba:** Cuban musical form with origins in salsa and comprised of several genres

**Timbale:** a shallow, single headed drum
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ESSAY

AFRICAN ROOTS

Latino music has its roots in European, Native American and African musical forms. Africans were brought to the Americas by the slave trade beginning in the 1500s. For nearly 300 years Africans were taken by force from their homelands to the Caribbean Islands and North, Central and South America.

African slaves conserved and passed on their music through oral tradition and work songs. Songs often communicated hope for freedom, family and life experiences. In many cases slaves were not allowed to practice their native religions so they adapted Christian hymns. While indigenous African music was taking new forms through the influence of European and Native traditions, African strains of song, dance and prayer persisted strongly. African roots are deeply infused in Latino and Latin American music. They can be seen in, for example, bomba and jibaro in Puerto Rico, the rumba in Cuba and son jarocho in Mexico.

THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

As settlers from the Atlantic coast moved west, the United States government adopted a policy of aggressive territorial expansion fueled in part by the theory of Manifest Destiny, a widely held belief that it was God's will for the United States to expand from coast to coast. Significant events in the Southwest began with the Texas Revolution of 1835; its causes included suspicion by U.S. settlers of control by the Mexican government and the influence of the Catholic Church, as well as an interest by some Texans in legalizing slavery, an institution the Mexican government opposed. Eventually the Mexican government agreed to grant Texas its independence on condition that it remain separate from the United States. In 1845 the United States annexed Texas and by 1846 the United States and Mexico had declared war. Two years later the Mexican War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in which the victorious United States claimed what is currently the Southwest. The new possessions included the areas now in the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. Overnight, millions of former Mexican citizens found themselves living in the United States. The treaty guaranteed Mexican citizens full U.S. citizenship, the right to speak Spanish, and the right to keep their lands among other promises. However, the United States government shortly began to question the legal status of Mexican landowners. By 1900 most of the Mexican-heritage landowners had lost their land to squatters, developers or the courts, in particular because of court decisions that refused to recognize verbal agreements between neighbors or documents from the Spanish crown. In general, like African Americans, Americans of Mexican heritage were denied many of the rights due them as citizens in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The United States government also looked to the Caribbean for new territory. In 1898, the United States defeated Spain in the Spanish-American War and occupied Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. In 1900 the Foraker Act ensured that Puerto Rico would remain under the political control of the United States. In 1901, the Platt Amendment imposed a new Cuban constitution. It granted the United States the right to intervene to preserve order in Cuba and to establish a naval base there. As a result of the Platt Amendment, Cuba became a protectorate of the United States.

By 1910, Mexico was in revolution. Many Mexicans fled from their country to the United States because of the civil unrest and a poor economy and became the first major wave of Mexican immigration. These laborers found wide employment, partly because they commanded such low wages. As Mexicans settled in the United States, the first barrios (Latino neighborhoods) were established with Los Angeles having the largest. By the 1920s thousands of Mexican-born residents could be found in Los Angeles and by 1925 Los Angeles had more Mexicans than any other city except Mexico City.

WORLD WAR I AND POST-WAR ERA

During World War I, many Latinos served in the United States’ armed services. Nearly 20,000 Puerto Ricans fought for the United States as citizens after the Jones-Shafroth Act of 1917 granted them citizenship. At the same time, the United States closed its borders to most immigrants except for allowing Mexican laborers to enter the country and work.

After the First World War, the United States experienced a period of isolationism from the rest of the world; at the same time the economy went first through boom years in the 1920s and then entered the Great Depression of the 1930s. In 1924, the U.S. Border Patrol was created with dual purposes: first, to intercept alcohol entering the country from Canada and Mexico during Prohibition; and second, to prevent Mexicans from entering the country illegally.
WORLD WAR II

During World War II, there was tremendous political and economic activity in the United States by Latinos. Latinos were drafted for the war and volunteered as well. Approximately 500,000 Latinos served in the armed forces and a few were awarded Congressional Medals of Honor. Even though Latinos were vital to the United States’ war effort, many found themselves discriminated against and treated as second-class citizens when they returned home. In 1943, white sailors and Mexican-American youths clashed in the Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles, reflecting rising tensions between whites and Latinos.

In 1942, the United States created the Bracero Program, a contract program between the U.S. and Mexico to bring Mexican laborers to U.S. factories and fields. Nearly 5 million Mexicans participated until 1964 when Congress terminated the program. While some Mexicans returned home, for many the U.S. had become their adopted homeland.

AFTER WORLD WAR II

After the war, new community leaders began to organize around labor issues and to advocate equal rights. In 1947, Mendez v. Westminster led to the desegregation of Mexican children in California schools. The case set a precedent for the historic Brown v. Board of Education decision in 1954; Latinos also joined the civil rights protests of the 1950s. Professional associations, cultural groups and alliances formed that would foster Latino expressions in political activity and art. For instance, the United Farm Workers of America (UFW), a union based in central California that advocated for farm workers’ rights and adopted principles of non-violence, was formed in 1962 by Dolores Huerta, Cesar Chavez and others.

Latino communities and activists blossomed around the country. Increasing Latino populations were changing the cultural landscape of the United States as New York attracted Puerto Rican immigrants, the Southwest’s connection with Mexico continued and Cubans settled in Florida. Like the Bracero program, Puerto Rico’s Operation Bootstrap encouraged movement to the mainland. Operation Bootstrap brought companies to the island to build factories that, it was hoped, would help Puerto Rico transform itself from a predominantly agricultural to a wealthier industrial society. Operation Bootstrap was more than an economic program; it was a bridge that connected Puerto Rico to the United States.

The 1960s was a defining era for many Latinos as they began to speak out about being underrepresented or misrepresented, if included at all, in many facets of civic life. The Mexican American community in California and Texas fueled the Chicano Movement, the Latino rights movement. Among the actions of the Chicano Movement was protesting the Vietnam War’s Latino casualty rate. Mexican Americans were not the only group seeking to achieve equality in the United States; Puerto Ricans in New York formed a group called the Young Lords with a similar purpose.

The 1970s saw a wave of immigrants from Central America because of civil war there. By the 1980s Latinos were becoming more visible in the United States due to the sheer numbers as populations increased. Latinos represented a substantial force in the U.S. economy. Latino politicians also gained more prominence. For example, Henry Cisneros became mayor of San Antonio in 1983 and would later take a role with the Clinton Administration. Latinas also made advances in the political arena; Gloria Molina became the first Latina and woman to win an elected seat as a Supervisor for Los Angeles County in 1991. The corporate world also saw more Latino leadership such as the Cuban-American Roberto C. Goizueta who became chief operating officer and chairman of the board of the Coca-Cola Company in 1981.

By the year 2000 Latinos had surpassed African Americans as the largest minority in the United States. There are some 41 million Latinos in the United States today. That number translates to economic, political, social, educational and cultural capital—power and voice.

The growing number of Latinos in the United States population has seen a parallel increase in their participation and representation in other areas such as food, sports, art, social issues, music and popular culture. One has only to look to the highest rated television shows in the major cities or listen to the radio to hear the proliferation of Spanish language and Latino themed programs. Further, Latino history and culture have won increased attention from corporations, academia, and museums with the rise of programs, exhibitions, publications, studies and marketing campaigns.

Latinos have impacted life in the United States and continue to do so. American Sabor: Latinos in U.S. Popular Music tells yet another story of the influences Latinos have had on our culture and our common heritage.
RELATED WEB SITES IN MUSIC, SOCIAL STUDIES, AND LATINO ART, CULTURE AND HISTORY

The organizations listed below each offer programs related to Latino art, culture or history as well as general resources in music and social studies. Further, each organization offers educational programs (music workshops, ideas for art making, teacher lessons) and links to even more resources.

**El Museo del Barrio** ([www.elmuseo.org](http://www.elmuseo.org))
A resource that offers exhibitions and programs about Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Fiesta Broadway** ([www.fiestabroadway.la](http://www.fiestabroadway.la))
A resource to one of the largest Latino music festivals in the United States.

**Corridos** ([www.corridos.org](http://www.corridos.org))
A resource of the Smithsonian Institution about corridos called Corridos sin Fronteras (Ballads without Borders). The interactive timeline of Latino history featured in this Web site is highly recommended.

**Cuban Music** ([www.mamborama.com/cuba_music.html](http://www.mamborama.com/cuba_music.html))
A resource of musical components about Cuban music.

**Hispano Music and Culture of the Northern Rio Grande** ([http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/rghome.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/rghome.html))
A resource on the religious and secular music of residents of rural northern New Mexico and southern Colorado.

**International House of Blues** ([www.ihobf.org](http://www.ihobf.org))
A resource that includes access to The Roots of Rhythm: World Drumming for Fifth and Sixth Grade Classrooms, Make an Impression Guitar Initiative, and the House of Blues Learning Center featuring a collection of folk art.

**Lalo Guerrero** ([http://markguerrero.net/8.php](http://markguerrero.net/8.php))
A resource Web site dedicated to Lalo Guerrero by his son Mark Guerrero.

**Latino Center, Smithsonian Institution** ([http://latino.si.edu/](http://latino.si.edu/))
A resource for Latino art and culture, including but not limited to, exhibitions about Celia Cruz, Andean music, Latino artists and much more.

**Latino Public Broadcasting** ([www.lpbp.org](http://www.lpbp.org))
A resource that presents Latino (content) programs about film, radio, video and other media and genres on public broadcasting stations.

**Museum of Making Music** ([www.museumofmakingmusic.org](http://www.museumofmakingmusic.org))
A resource celebrating the history of and encouraging the future of music making.

**Music and Musical Instruments, Smithsonian Institution** ([www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/History_and_Culture/Music_History.htm](http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/History_and_Culture/Music_History.htm))
A resource of links to music and musical instruments.

**National Museum of Mexican Art** ([www.nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org](http://www.nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org))
A resource on the fine and visual arts created by Mexican and Mexican Americans. Past exhibitions include *The African Presence in México: From Yanga to the Present*.

**PBS (Public Broadcasting Station)** ([www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org))
A resource for teachers that includes lesson plans in various subjects, including the arts and social studies. Search under Life and Times for additional programs.

**Program in Latino History and Culture at the National Museum of American History** ([http://americanhistory.si.edu/about/dept-detail.cfm?deptkey=119](http://americanhistory.si.edu/about/dept-detail.cfm?deptkey=119))
A link to the Smithsonian’s office for Latino programs in history and culture that includes collections, research opportunities and links to related exhibitions.

**Puerto Rico, A Vision of Puerto Rico: The Teodoro Vidal Collection** ([http://americanhistory.si.edu/vidal/](http://americanhistory.si.edu/vidal/))
A resource that documents the history of Puerto Rico from the 16th to the 20th century through a personal collection.

A link to the exhibitions of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. Past exhibitions include hip hop and museum collections include artifacts from rock.

(This list does not endorse any of the listed resources. It is provided to serve as an educational resource.)