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The Search for “Lo Mexicano”

Amongst other races and cultures, the Mexican people have had trouble identifying themselves within the Mexican community. Throughout the various readings, we analyzed and discussed, we see a pattern of confusion and how the Mexican character, many times is criticized for its lifestyle, manners, education and wealth. The character of a Mexicano is depicted wrongfully in American society and for generations those stereotypes have haunted individuals.

In this country like many other countries, we have the notion of “borders” and those borders limit us to the impossible. Borders are geographical boundaries that divide us, and within every country more borders exist based on wealth, education and race. For example, based on your skin color or complexion, you might be treated differently. There are some Mexican descent people who are light-~~complexion~~complexion and are considered Americans and thus they are treated better.

Besides borders, stereotypes also come into play. In Joel Poinsett’s essay, “The Mexican Character,” he has an opinioned view of Mexicans and constantly judges them for their lack of education and at the same time he blames the nation for excluding them from the rest of society. If we pull away and form our own community, we become uneducated and unaware of what is happening to the nation.

The essays regarding being “Mexicano” are somewhat generalized because of the manipulation on stereotypes and their strong depiction of who or what encompasses mexicanidad.

It is a never-ending battle with ourselves and even though we might accept our Mexican heritage, there exists another story, another culture. As a Mexican American and a daughter of Mexican parents it is troublesome to ignore my roots. I have two cultures and both are a part of me. It can also be confusing with so many identities to choose from.

Unlike the Mexican people, who aren't afraid of their culture or heritage, the United States tries to hide our differences. We all have different cultures and come from many places around the globe. People who immigrate to the United States from Mexico are forced to assimilate themselves with a new culture and a new language in order to fit in. At the same time, we forget our own culture. In a way, we are culturally segregated because of our differences and therefore ignored. If race wasn't so controversial in this country, then maybe we would be able to see past our differences. But since this country is so ingrained on all of us sharing the same values and ideals, it is impossible.

Most of us grew up watching Cantinflas and how his character has evolved and keeps evolving based on how the Mexican character is progressing. In Roger Bartra's essay, "Does it Mean anything to be Mexican," he compares two very distinct characters. The first character he uses is Cantinflas. Cantinflas is known for his humor. Although he tends to mock and make fun of Mexican people but we, the viewers accept it. We accept his mockery and appropriate his character because he persuades us it is the correct decision. But we are making fun of our own selves.

Another influential, Mexican intellectual was José Vasconcelos. José Vasconcelos was an important social and political Mexican figure. In his essay, "The Cosmic Race," he views Mexicans as arrogant, shallow, aggressive and lacking spirit. The Cosmic Race is referred to as the "fifth race," and it encompasses the accumulation of all races. The fifth race is the final hope for humanity and possible the only survival because with the fifth race we might be able to figure

out a way to get along and not let race get in the way and as mentioned before race is a very controversial topic and it has created problems since the existence of humanity.

Mexico may suffer economically and violently but what it suffers the most is an identity crisis. In Guillermo Bonfil Batalla's essay, "The Problem of National Culture," he analyzes how we are blended cultures and are forced to assimilate with other cultures, while hiding our true selves. Since the European invasion there has existed opposition within cultures. Eventually, the Europeans ingrained western civilization into the Mesoamerican civilization which destroyed them, and generation after generation started to lose a little bit of themselves and that confusion of identifying who we are is still common. I've read stories in previous Chicano culture courses about the confusion a Mexican American might feel when visiting Mexico. They have this culture in them or an idea about Mexico but when visiting Mexico their family members make them feel like they don't belong and at the same time they feel they'll never belong in the U.S either. It is a battle of understanding who we are despite people's opinions. If we know who are, it is easier to confront people and resist.

[Did you learn anything new about the topic?](#)