

LATINO PHILADELPHIA AT A GLANCE

Puerto Ricans

Population: 91,527 estimated by the U.S. Census, 2000

As of 2000, Philadelphia had the third largest Puerto Rican population outside of Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rican population continues to grow both from within and through continued migration from Puerto Rico.

Where they are living: Presently, the greatest concentration of Puerto Ricans live in North Philadelphia along the 5th and 2nd Street corridor running from Girard Avenue to Roosevelt Boulevard. There are also enclaves of Puerto Ricans in the Spring Garden and East Poplar neighborhoods, in South Philadelphia between Washington and Snyder Avenues and Front and 18th Streets, and in the lower Northeast Philadelphia neighborhoods of Frankford and Juniata Park. Other Puerto Ricans live throughout the city and suburbs. There is also a sizable Puerto Rican community in Camden, New Jersey.

Philadelphia history: Puerto Rico and Philadelphia were linked primarily through trade in the 18th and 19th centuries. Merchants, cigar makers, trades people, laborers, and students, as well as pro-independence exiles and organizers, were among the Puerto Ricans living in Philadelphia from the latter half of the 1800s through the first half of the 1900s. During World War II, a limited number of Puerto Ricans came as contracted war workers, mostly to food processing plants in southern New Jersey and to the Campbell Soup factory in Camden. After the war, these numbers began to increase. Between 1950 and 1970, the Puerto Rican community grew dramatically to over 60,000. Puerto Ricans worked in factories, as well as in other areas of employment, and created the neighborhoods, businesses, and organizations recognized today as the Puerto Rican/Latino community. Since 1970, Puerto Ricans have arrived in Philadelphia from Puerto Rico, New York, and other cities with Puerto Rican communities. Throughout their history in Philadelphia, many Puerto Ricans have practiced circular migration,

spending periods of time living in Philadelphia and on the island.

In 1917, the Jones Act made Puerto Ricans U.S. citizens. As citizens, Puerto Ricans do not experience the legal challenges facing Latin Americans who immigrate to the United States. However, the experience of migration is much the same as that of immigration. Though Puerto Ricans are “migrants” in a legal sense, they are “immigrants” culturally and emotionally.

Mexicans

Population: 6,220 estimated by the U.S. Census, 2000

The Mexican population is experiencing rapid growth in Philadelphia and in 2003 was estimated to have surpassed 12,000.

Where they are living: The most visible and largest concentration of Mexicans in the city is in South Philadelphia between Washington and Oregon Avenues and Front and 18th Streets. Mexicans are also creating small enclaves in North Philadelphia (including Kensington and Olney), Northeast Philadelphia, West Philadelphia, and Southwest Philadelphia. Mexicans are also establishing communities in suburbs and neighboring towns.

Philadelphia history: A handful of Mexicans were among the Spanish-speaking people documented in Philadelphia during the 19th century. In the 1910s and 1920s, small numbers arrived in the area from Mexico and Texas to work in agriculture, construction, and on the railroads. The community that was formed joined the already existing Puerto Rican

and Spanish community. During World War II, Mexican men were recruited to the area through the “railroad *bracero* program”; most returned to Mexico at the end of the war, though a few remained. In the 1970s through the early 1990s, other small groups of Mexican men and women settled in Philadelphia, working in restaurants, hotels and private homes, opening small businesses, and starting North and South Philadelphia enclaves. After 1998, larger numbers of Mexican men and women arrived from



Young Lords serving breakfast at the Lighthouse, 1971. Courtesy of Temple University Libraries, Urban Archives.

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Mexico, as well as from New York City and the outlying areas of Philadelphia, rapidly expanding their communities.

Dominicans

Population: 4,337 estimated by the U.S. Census 2000

As of 2000, Philadelphia had the 14th largest Dominican population in the United States. The Dominican population continues to grow as a result of migration from New York's Dominican community and the documented and undocumented immigration of many Dominican nationals.

Where they are living: Dominicans are settling largely in North Philadelphia among the Puerto Rican community. There are also small numbers of Dominicans settling in West Philadelphia and the Northeast.

Philadelphia history: Prior to 1990, there were very small numbers of Dominicans living in Philadelphia. After 1990, the Dominican community experienced rapid growth as large numbers of Dominicans moved to Philadelphia from New York seeking work, affordable housing, and safer neighborhoods. Dominicans created an enclave during the 1990s and opened *bodegas*, travel agencies, money houses, and other businesses in North Philadelphia and other parts of the city. The community continues to grow as relatives from the Dominican Republic move to reunite with family members in Philadelphia and others come seeking economic opportunities and higher education.

Cubans

Population: 2,730 estimated by the U.S. Census 2000

The Cuban population is growing slowly in comparison to other Latino groups in Philadelphia. As of 2000, Philadelphia had the 50th largest Cuban population in the United States.

Where they are living: After 1959, many Cubans settled

in Olney and other adjacent areas. Though they have since dispersed throughout the city and neighboring suburbs, North and Northeast Philadelphia is still home to a portion of the Cuban population.

Philadelphia history:

Cuba and Philadelphia were linked through extensive trade in the 18th and 19th centuries. Cuban pro-independence exiles and organizers, merchants, cigar makers, trades people, students, and others lived in Philadelphia between the late 1800s and early 1900s. Before 1959, small numbers of Cubans lived and studied in the Philadelphia area. Many Cuban exiles arrived in Philadelphia between the years of 1959 and 1965, as a result of the Cuban Revolution. Some connected with family and friends already in Philadelphia and others relocated from Florida. Many from this wave of Cubans have created social and cultural groups that are still active in promoting solidarity and Cuban culture. Small numbers of Cuban refugees have come into the city since the 1980s.

Colombians

Population: 2,414 estimated by the U.S. Census 2000

This population is increasing as some Colombians look to Philadelphia as a destination where they can seek opportunities and flee increasing violence and terrorism.

Where they are living: The largest Colombian enclaves are in and around Olney and in the Northeast section of the in the city. There are also Colombian households dispersed throughout the city and surrounding suburbs.

Philadelphia history:

Little is known about the Colombian presence in the city before the last century. However, Colombians have been coming to Philadelphia for studies since at least the 1920s. The first sizable number of Colombians to settle in Philadelphia arrived in the 1960s when many Colombian women and



Dominicans organizing relief supplies for hurricane victims in the Dominican Republic. Courtesy of Felix Espino.

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men came seeking work in Philadelphia as a result of changes in the 1965 Immigration Act. This early group established families and intermarried with other Philadelphians. A second wave of Colombians arrived in Philadelphia from New York and Colombia in the 1970s and 1980s and has since established enclaves in Olney and Feltonville. In the last ten years, Colombians have come to join family members in Philadelphia, seek educational and economic opportunities, and to escape the ongoing violence created through civil strife and narcoterrorism.

Other Latino Populations in Brief

Central Americans

Populations: 518 Guatemalans; 501 Costa Ricans; 544 Nicaraguans; 466 Hondurans; 378 Panamanians; 337 Salvadorans estimated by the U.S. Census, 2000.

Guatemalans, Costa Ricans, Nicaraguans, Hondurans, Panamanians, and Salvadorans respectively make up the city's 7th, 8th, 9th, 11th, 14th, and 15th largest Latino populations.

Where they are living: People from Central American countries are living throughout the city and suburbs. In Philadelphia, many are living among existing Latino communities in North and South Philadelphia. For example, a number of recently arrived Salvadorans and Hondurans are settling among the Puerto Rican and Mexican community in the Spring Garden area. Olney, Feltonville, Logan, Spring Garden, the Northeast, and West and Southwest Philadelphia are also home to many. Some members of these communities may be difficult to identify because they are often assumed to be Mexicans by outside observers.

Philadelphia History: Central Americans were reported among Philadelphia's "Spanish American" colony in 1910. Small numbers of Guatemalans and other Central Americans are known to have come to Philadelphia after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. The number of Central American immigrants in the area remained relatively small until political conflicts, civil war, oppressive governments, and U.S. interventions in the countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua in the late 1970s and 1980s created unbearable circumstances. Many fled their countries, and some settled in Philadelphia. Small numbers of

immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from these countries have continued to settle in the area. Since the 1990s, numbers of Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, Costa Ricans, Hondurans, and Panamanians have come to Philadelphia as part of the current wave of immigration, seeking temporary and permanent opportunities and reunifying with families in Philadelphia.

South Americans

Populations: 531 Argentinians; 471 Peruvians; 420 Ecuadorians; 409 Venezuelans; 182 Chileans; 55 Bolivians; 86 Uruguayans; 38 Paraguayans estimated by the U.S. Census 2000.

Argentinians, Peruvians, Ecuadorians, Venezuelans, Chileans, Bolivians, Uruguayans, and Paraguayans respectively make up the city's 6th, 10th, 12th, 13th, 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th largest Latino populations.

Where they are living: People from South American countries are living throughout the city and suburbs. In Philadelphia, numbers of South Americans are living in Center City, West Philadelphia, and among established Latino communities in North and South Philadelphia. For example, small numbers of recent Ecuadorian, Argentinian, and Uruguayan arrivals have moved near other Spanish speaking communities in South Philadelphia and Olney. Southwest Philadelphia and the Northeast are also home for many.

Philadelphia History: South American revolutionaries, merchants, and scholars are known to have visited Philadelphia in the 18th and 19th centuries. South Americans were also reported among Philadelphia's "Spanish American" colony in 1910. Small numbers of Argentinians, Colombians, Peruvians, Chileans, Bolivians, Venezuelans, Paraguayans, and Uruguayans are known to have come to Philadelphia after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Small numbers of mainly Colombians, Argentinians, Peruvians, Ecuadorians, and Venezuelans settled in the area in the 1970s and 1980s. Since the 1990s, globalization, economic restructuring and crises, and political instability in South American countries have contributed to the increasing number of South Americans seeking various opportunities and reunifying with families in Philadelphia.