



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1997 Volume IV: Student Diversity and Its Contribution to Their Learning

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## **New Movements for Social Justice: The Latino Struggle for Equal Rights (1950s-1970s)**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 97.04.08  
by Joan Rapczynski

The curriculum unit I have chosen will be incorporated into the United States History II course that is required of all eleventh graders in the city of New Haven. The main focus is on three Hispanic groups: Puerto Ricans, Mexicans and Cubans. I have selected these groups because together they represent the majority of Latinos in our school population. The information presented demonstrates the struggle these groups participated in to foster a better life for themselves in the United States.

Students will examine myths and stereotypes about Hispanic groups in the hopes that they will reflect upon their own feelings. Lessons and information are provided to help students learn to appreciate and share the strengths of their diversity. This is done by sharing music, literature, and food from the various ethnic groups. Students will also study the Latino Rights Movement that took shape in the 1960s and 1970s. Latinos pushed to view America more like a multi-cultural rainbow, rather than a melting pot.

It is my hope that students not just learn to tolerate differences, but appreciate and share the strengths of their diversity. All groups contribute to making one united nation, but these groups wish to maintain their unique identity, each keeping much of their own special culture. I expect students to relate to such concepts as ethnicity, multiculturalism, and diversity by studying how others before them dealt with these issues. The past can, in many instances, demonstrate what was successful and what was not. It is my hope that students will gain an awareness of all the wonderful things that unite all our countries and rejoice in our diversity as well.

(Recommended for U.S. History and Caribbean History, grades 11-12)

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