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The Search for “Lo Mexicano”

The Mexican culture has been created by the influence of other cultures and the mix of people of different places. The way a Mexican is described nowadays is derived from all the stereotypes that has been generated for many years. Some of the most common stereotypes that are used to described Mexicans are uneducated, criminals, lazy, etc. All those stereotypes have been generalized toward all the Mexican society, but what really is to be a Mexican? Mexicans are identified by their traditions, food, folklore dancing, music, art, their sense of humor and the way they welcome people from other places. Mexicans created a society that makes them different from others but at the same time very similar. In addition, the Spaniard colonization played an important role in the way Mexicans are now.

The Spaniard colonization made the indigenous people change the way they live. The Spaniards came to impose new ideas and traditions totally different than those of the indigenous people of Mexico. One politician that make severe critics against Spaniards and Mexicans was Joel Poinsett. He criticized Spaniards of being part to the aristocracy and the clergy while obligating indigenous people of being their slaves. In addition, Spaniards forced indigenous people to do hard labor, leave their lands and kept them uneducated. Poinsett stated that, “The Indians are laborious, patient and submissive, but are lamentably ignorant (Joseph and Henderson 13). Poinsett described Mexico as a country that lacks of knowledge and civilization.

Also, he pointed out that Mexico is a country with a lot of minerals, beautiful stones, rich on land but people there were ignorant due to the ignorance of the Spaniards. Poinsett compared white people with Mexicans and determined that Mexicans had a low education skills and they do not have the same infrastructure as United States. In some way the entrance of Spaniards modified the infrastructure and transformed Mexico little by little in a modern country. However, the way they treated indigenous people was unfair, and we can see it still when we saw the injustices that the government did against indigenous people.

On another hand, the mix of Spaniards and Indians created a new type of people called mestizos. The development of mestizos in America broke out all the boundaries that separate people from different cultures. José Vasconcelos, a philosopher and politician, considered that mestizos are the ones bringing unity, love and abundance to the every society. He described mestizos as generous and their sympathy toward strangers (Joseph and Henderson 17). Vasconcelos believed that mestizos will be the race that will end with all the differences that people have against each other. Also, he criticized the way Anglo-Saxon wanted to destroy Native Americans society instead of making them part of their society. Vasconcelos described mestizos as people of good spirituality compared to white people that just care about materialism and do not mix with people in order to preserve their wealth. The combination of the European characteristics and the Indians characteristics make mestizos to become a great people that welcome people from different places. The main point of Vasconcelos is that the term race does not exist. All people around the world form one society that should not care about other people's differences such as the color skin, the place you came from, etc. People need to be considered with others and integrate people from other place into your society in order to become one.

However, Mexicans do not identify themselves either as Spaniards or Indians. The identity of the Mexican is defined by their past cultural roots which involve the relationship between Hernan Cortez and the Malinche. Octavio Paz, poet and diplomat, compares a mythical woman with the word Chingada in order to understand the origins of the Mexicans. The Chingada is the mother forcibly opened, violated or deceived (Joseph and Henderson 22). The word Chingada makes the Mexican society be divided between the strong and the weak, where the weak side was represented by the Malinche. The Malinche became represented as the woman who has been violated and seduced by the Spaniards. Also, Paz mentioned that the masculine figure is always the one that has power over women and minorities. The reason because Mexicans do not identify themselves as mestizos is because it will make them to go back to their cultural roots and remember the cruelty Spaniards used with Indians. Also, Mexicans see themselves as autonomous because they disapproved the way Spaniards came to rule Mexico.

The Spaniard conquest played an important role in the development of the Mexican culture. The Spaniards made Mexico a modern country. Also, the mix of races that originated the mestizos create the amazing things Mexico has now. Mexicans are identified by the way they welcome other people and their sympathy for strangers. However, the way Indians were treated at that time of the conquest hurt Mexicans' feelings because in order to become a mestizo a lot of injustices were committed against Indian people by the Spaniards.

Work Cited

Joseph, Gilbert M., and Henderson, Timothy J. *The Mexico Reader*. Duke University, 2002.