



**DETROIT:**  
**OUR**  
**HISPANIC**  
**STORY**



# DETROIT: OUR HISPANIC STORY



Two miles from downtown Detroit is one of Michigan's most ethnically rich and vibrant Hispanic neighborhoods. A vibrant colorful

community also known as "Mexicantown". The area known as Southwest Detroit has been home to many of our Hispanic brothers and sisters since the 1920s.



In 1910, the State of Michigan had fewer than 100 Mexicans. They started to migrate to Detroit from the states of Jalisco, Chihuahua, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, Durango, and Michoacán, and Mexican Americans migrated from southern states. Michigan was first entering the industrial revolution and there was a high demand for labor. Sugar companies were on the rise and began recruiting their employees from Mexico and Southern Texas to tend the state's sugar beet fields. Those who did not work in the sugar beet fields found work maintaining railways and assembly lines in the automobile plants.

In 1920, a severe recession left the beet workers stranded in their camps with no work wages. Mexicans moved to Detroit to get industrial jobs, including Henry Ford's \$5 per day jobs. The community of Mexicantown, originally known



as "La Bagley", was established to provide Mexican-oriented goods and services. In the 1930s, during the Great Depression, Michigan officials felt that they needed to come up with a solution for the lack of jobs reserved for "Americans", and the solution was to execute a kind of "ethnic cleansing",

# DETROIT: OUR HISPANIC STORY

*story continued*

with the focus on the Mexican population. Instead of providing family assistance to Latino families, the Detroit welfare department, the federal government, and the Mexican Consulate collaborated to financially support the deportation of unemployed workers. This was also known as the Mexican Repatriation, where millions of American citizens were unjustly deported to Mexico between 1931 and 1933. As a result, the Detroit Mexican population decreased significantly from 15,000 to a mere 1,200.

Around the 1950s/1960s, the second and third generations of Mexicans had been born in Michigan and their presence caused the size of the Metro Detroit Mexican community to increase to over 106,000.

The Basilica of Ste. Anne de Detroit and the Most Holy Redeemer Church have been the spiritual homes of the Hispanic community since the 1960s. Today, about 550,000 Hispanics reside in Michigan. Within Metro Detroit overall, Mexicans are the third-largest immigrant group.



Through the Hispanic community's dedication to their homeland's traditions, we as Detroiters have benefited greatly, as we have been invited to celebrate alongside them in their rich cultural traditions such as Cinco De Mayo (May 5th), Dia de Los Muertos (the Day of the Dead), La Navidad (Christmas) and the miracle of Our Lady of Guadalupe.



In 2025, Detroit's Hispanic community will be the focus of our Detroit Public TV / PBS film, *Detroit: Our Hispanic Story*. Documentary film producer / director Keith Famie will step into the lives of many of Metro Detroit's multi-generational Hispanic families to tell the story of how a neighborhood community helped shape Southwest Detroit through their rich culture of food, art, music and faith.





April 9, 2024

Keith Famie  
Filmmaker  
Visionalist Entertainment  
28345 Beck Road  
Wixom, MI 48393

Dear Keith,

It was great meeting you to discuss *Detroit: Our Hispanic Story*.

Celebrating the contributions of the various and diverse ethnic communities in metro Detroit is a subject of great importance in our area and we are pleased to include it in our broadcast plans for 2025.

Detroit PBS is committed to covering issues in the public interest, including those surrounding local history and events. PBS has always had a fine tradition of offering unique documentary programming like *Detroit: Our Hispanic Story* and it is our sincere hope that working together this program will become part of that tradition.

Looking forward to working with you on another partnership that would allow us to continue our work on important topics like this one. Let's speak again soon, and in the meantime, let's align a plan to bring this film to public television.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred".

Fred Nahhat  
Senior VP, Production  
Detroit Public TV



April 10, 2024

Hon. Roberto Nicholas Vasquez  
Mexican Consulate of Detroit  
1403 East 12 Mile Rd  
Madison Heights, MI 48071

Hon. Vasquez:

I am writing a letter of support to produce a local film called Detroit: Our Hispanic Story.

Detroit has been enriched by the immigration of people from many states in Mexico and other Latin American countries.

Around the 1950s/1960s, the second and third generations of Mexicans had been born in Michigan and their presence caused the size of the Metro Detroit Mexican community to increase to over 106,000.

Msgr. Clement Kern, was the first priest to go to Mexico to learn Spanish in the 1950's. Consequently, Most Holy Trinity Parish in Corktown became the first spiritual home of the Mexicans. The Basilica of Ste. Anne de Detroit and the Most Holy Redeemer Church have also become spiritual homes of the Hispanic community since the 1960s. The Hispanic community is the dominate culture in Southwest Detroit with restaurants, stores, and many businesses. Today, about 550,000 Hispanics reside in Michigan. Within Metro Detroit overall, Mexicans are the third-largest immigrant group.

Through the Hispanic community's dedication to their homeland's traditions, we as Detroiters have benefited greatly, as we have been invited to celebrate alongside them in their rich cultural traditions such as Cinco De Mayo (May 5th), Dia de Los Muertos (the Day of the Dead), La Navidad (Christmas) and the miracle of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

In 2025, Detroit's Hispanic community will be the focus of the new Detroit Public TV/PBS documentary, Detroit: Our Hispanic Story. Documentary film producer / director Keith Famie will step into the lives of many of Metro Detroit's multi-generational Hispanic families to tell the story of how a neighborhood community helped shape Southwest Detroit through their rich culture of food, art, music, and faith.

I am very supportive of this new film production. I hope that the Consulate of Mexico in Detroit can also be supportive.

Sincerely yours,



Very Rev. Msgr. Dr. Charles Kosanke



# DETROIT: OUR HISPANIC STORY

## -FILM NOTES-

### **ART**

#### **Diego Rivera**

Murals in the Detroit Institute of Arts

#### **Elton Monroy Duran**

Murals in Mexicantown

### **MUSIC**

#### **Mariachi Femenil Detroit**

Michigan's first five-member all-female mariachi band

#### **El Ballet Folklórico Estudiantil**

Dance program teaches students the artistry of folkloric dance originating from Mexico

### **FAITH**

Basilica of Ste. Anne de Detroit

Most Holy Redeemer

Most Holy Trinity Parish

Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish

St. Gabriel Parish

St. Hedwig Parish

### **MEDIA**

#### **El Central Hispanic News**

Michigan's #1 oldest, largest, and only bilingual Hispanic news source





# DETROIT: OUR HISPANIC STORY

## -FILM NOTES-

### RESTAURANTS & VARIOUS FOOD STYLES

#### **Mexican Village**

Detroit's oldest Mexican restaurant

#### **Antojitos El Catracho Restaurant**

Obed Hernandez (originally from Veracruz, Mexico) and Sandra Padilla (Negrito Yoro, Honduras)

#### **Armando's**

Established in 1967 by their friend Armando Galan (inventor of botana), the Hernandez family took over in 1986

#### **Los Galanes Mexican Restaurant**

Established by Armando Galan and taken over by his son

#### **Taqueria Lupitas**

The Lopez Family runs the show at Taqueria Lupita's and is the second generation of ownership. Her parents migrated to Detroit from Guadalajara.

### CELEBRITIES

#### **Miguel Cabrera**

Venezuelan first basemen for the Detroit Tigers

#### **Ozzie Rivera**

Puerto Rican musician and activist

#### **Sixto Diaz Rodriguez**

American musician from Detroit, Michigan. He was the sixth child of Mexican immigrant working-class parents. In most of his songs, Rodriguez takes a political stance on the difficulties that faced the inner-city poor.





# DETROIT: OUR HISPANIC STORY

## -FILM NOTES-

### **BUSINESS**

#### **Honey Bee Market**

One of the first Mexican-owned grocery stores in Detroit. Helps provide the Latin community with ingredients for traditional foods.

#### **La Jalisciense Supermercado Y Taqueria**

One of the first tortilla factories in Detroit and is still in operation to this day.

#### **El 7 Leguas Western Wear**

Cuadra, Wild West Boots, Los Altos Boots, and Denver Boots. The entire selection of boots are imported from Leon Guanajuato, Mexico

#### **Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation**

Angela Reyes, DHDC's Executive Director, had been working with youth in Southwest Detroit since she was a teenager in the 1970s and founded the Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation in her living room in 1997 because she "was tired of burying children."

#### **Ideal Group**

In 1979, Frank Venegas, Jr. bought a raffle ticket at the Livingston County Builders Ball for a Cadillac Coupe DeVille. With a little bit of luck, he won the Cadillac and drove it for nine days and before selling it for seed money to fund his first business. Today, the Ideal Group companies manufacture products you see everywhere; from bollard covers at a local ATM and constructing buildings throughout the Midwest, to managing inventory in major manufacturing facilities.







# DETROIT: OUR HISPANIC STORY

## -FILM NOTES-

### **SOCIAL SERVICES**

#### **LA SED - Latin Americans for Social and Economic Development**

501c3 non-profit agency serving Hispanics and residents of Southwest Detroit since 1969. LA SED assists people of all ages with a variety of bilingual services. LA SED's leadership efforts are realized through the development of programs that address the diverse ethnic groups living in our community.

### **FACTS ABOUT MEXICO**

- The World's Largest Pyramid Is in Mexico
- The Mexican Flag Represents the Legend of Tenochtitlan
- The official name of the country is the United Mexican States or Estados Unidos Mexicanos in Spanish.
- Tomatoes Originate in Mexico
- Chocolate Originates in Mexico
- Mexican Tequila Is Made From the Blue Agave Plant
- Popcorn Was First Domesticated in Mexico
- Mexico is part of the Ring of Fire, an area in the Pacific Ocean basin known for strong volcanic and seismic activity. It stretches over 40,000 kilometers (25,000 miles) and is home to nearly 75% of the world's active volcanoes.
- Mexico's National Sport Is the Charrería
- Millions of Monarch butterflies migrate from the United States and Canada to Mexico every year between August and October

