

**Habla español?: working with Spanish-speaking
victims/survivors in a rural setting**

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Who are Latinas/os?

As an organization begins to explore developing outreach/victims-services to Spanish speaking populations, it is important to develop a deeper understanding of the community. As you read through this information, please keep in mind that there are exceptions to every rule and that there is great diversity in the Latina/o/Spanish speaking community. *Disclaimer: In every group of people, there is a vast amount of diverse characteristics, values and norms. This information presented merely highlights basic norms, values and concepts in the "traditional" Latina comunidad and clearly does not account for all Latin@ families.*



TOOLS FOR CULTURAL COMPETENCE for greater capacity to meet the needs of Spanish speaking victims/survivors

Hispanic or Latin@?

The term "Hispanic" is not universally embraced or well received by all the diverse populations who are today often classified in the United States society as Latinas/os. Self definition is an important aspect of the rite of naming oneself. "Latinas/os" make up a diverse group of Spanish speaking language heritage, Native American - European and African descendants. Many Latinas/os perceive the term "Latinas/os" as having been imposed on us by the United States Census bureau.

Latinas/os/ should not be thought of as a race. Latinas/os make up an ethnic group that share common roots in all race and come from 20 unique countries having different values and traditions but share a common language, possible religion or influence of religious history and family structure.

From the Mexican native resident of the United States, European, South American, Central American and the Caribbean all of us celebrate diversity in ourselves. There are 500 million Latinas/os in the world with 32 million Latinas/os in the United States. Many Latinas/os or Hispanics speak the same language, share similar values, heritage from Spain. Yet there is a "world of difference" among national groups.

Documentation

There is a misconception that all Spanish speakers are undocumented or are in the U.S. illegally. Many Latinas/os are U.S. citizens whose families have been here for generations. It is not uncommon for domestic Latinas/os to continue to speak Spanish especially during times of crisis. Many international Latinas/os have immigrated here legally. Regardless of their legal status, survivors of sexual violence deserve support. Assumptions about a survivor's legal status may lead to inappropriate service or referrals. It is important to provide all survivors with all possible options and let them determine what they want to do.

Language

It is not appropriate to assume that all Latinas/os speak Spanish, or the same kind of Spanish. In fact, many rural and indigenous people from Mexico and Central/South America speak indigenous languages. Many Latinas/os speak English to varying degrees and some do not speak Spanish at all. Advocates should ask survivors if they are more comfortable speaking in their own language and access the appropriate interpretation services if necessary. If you have a staff member who speaks Spanish, it is important to remember that because she or he may speak Spanish does not mean that they understand the culture of the survivor/victim. Cultural competency is a journey that requires one to first understand their own cultural viewpoint and then it is easier to move to develop an understanding of a other cultures in addition to the language.

The Family

Usually the term “family” is interpreted to mean the immediate, nuclear family, although the person will be aware of his/her grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins.

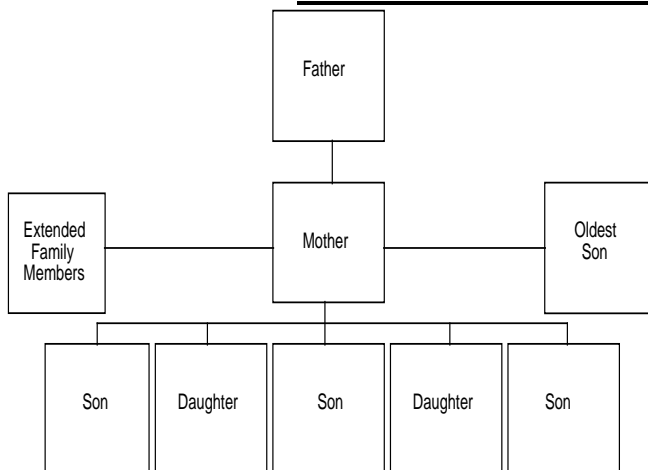
Family relationships are often dictated by a definite authority structure of age, gender and role:

Elder over younger

Men over women

Father over family

Traditional Family Structure



Attitudes Regarding the Family

Dominant Society

The family tends to be very adult-oriented, encouraging their children to “Grow up and act like an adult” even while they are young, although the responsibilities of an adult are only given relatively late.

The passage to adulthood is extended over a very long period of time (15 to 25 years of age) and the rights of adults only gradually given to the adolescent and young adult.

The family and/or family activities tend to take second place to work, individualism and other activities.

Sons and daughters of Anglo-American families tend to see themselves more as a separate entity, and tend to be more individualistic in their behavior.

Individualism is strongly encouraged in children from birth. To be responsible to oneself for one’s behavior is important. Children are given greater freedom in expressing themselves.

Children are encouraged to experiment and work out problems for themselves (both boys and girls). Teaching children to be responsible adults and take care of themselves is important.

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Latin@ Community

The family tends to be very child-oriented and provides children with much warmth, nurturing and support. The Latino child is allowed a great deal of permissiveness when he is very young.

The time for passage to adulthood is visibly marked (puberty for boys; 15 years for girls). The rights and responsibilities of adults are given all at one time.

The family unit is the single most important unit in the Latino culture. It influences the perception and behavior of its members as to how they see the outside world.

Latinas/os see themselves as representing their family in outside contacts. (Implicit control by the family.) Therefore children are very careful not to discredit or dishonor their family.

The family reinforces its importance by providing emotional, physical and material security to its immediate and extended members.

The family consists of both immediate and extended family.

Abuelos(grandparents)

Padres (parents)

Hermanos (brothers and sisters)

Tios (aunts and uncles)

Compadres
Primos (cousins)
Parientes (relatives)
Perientes Politicos (relatives by marriage)

Family relationships are dictated by a definite authority structure of age, sex and role:

Elder over younger
Men over women
Father over family

Description of Traditional Gender Roles within the Latin@ Family

Father

The father is the recognized head of the household. He may be aloof and independent from the rest of the family. He is the final authority on all decisions made by any of the family members.

He is to discipline older children. When the children are younger, the mother may also discipline them for minor misbehaviors.

His power and authority is to be respected by all the family. However, he must use his “machismo” in a just, fair manner or lose community respect for him.

Mother

The mother is sympathetic, nurturing, warm and submissive. She often sacrifices herself to satisfy her husband’s needs and those of her children and extended family. She supports the decisions and actions taken by the father, without question.

The mother’s role is one of sympathizing and empathizing with her children. She makes decisions regarding the behavior of her sons until they reach puberty. She tends to have a close relationship with her daughters.

She is not encouraged to adventure or make many contacts outside the home and extended family. The father may decide who his wife’s friends will or will not be.

Today’s Latina woman is struggling with this traditional gender role and the effects of the increasing liberalization of women in general. The modern Latina is moving toward greater social awareness and increased educational achievement. This liberalization of the Latina woman, of course, often threatens the husband’s concept of male dominance and his feelings as a “macho”. Many Latina women are successfully bridging these contradictory roles.

Children

Children quickly learn the roles of their parents and extended family. The father is respected and loved while his authority and power are accepted as a fact of how life is meant to be. Grandparents are

respected and loved because they are elders and for the time and counsel they give the children. The mother is respected because she loves them, is very sympathetic and takes care of them.

Latino children tend to grow up in a permissive and loving environment. However, they are also given real, necessary tasks and responsibilities for which they are held accountable, such as taking care of brothers and sisters, doing errands, or helping to add to the family income. They are not allowed to be disrespectful or frivolous.

There tends to be very little sibling rivalry between Latino children as they have learned the Latino cultural values of cooperation, sharing and working together for the good of the entire family.

After puberty, the children are taught their respective gender roles through explicit and implicit teaching by the entire family. Boys are taught that the woman's domain is the kitchen and the man's domain is the outside world. Boys are taught to look after and protect their sisters. They are taught to behave like men, to have adventures, to experiment and to experience life directly.

Girls are taught to keep house, help mother and watch over brothers and sisters. They are taught to be feminine and encouraged to be like their mother. They are discouraged from experimenting like their brothers.

Introduction to Machismo

In order to understand *Machismo*, you must first understand it is not about blaming - it is about understanding and reorganizing the influences of other people's oppression during the colonization by European Male Spaniards toward native populations called "Indians".

The understanding of *Machismo* requires a full consideration of sexism, hetero-sexism, racism, ethnocentrism and classicism. All forms of oppression are central in their attempt to domesticate the other.

Within the Latino Community there exists intra-structures of oppression along gender, race and class lines. This creates the need for an ethical initiative to move beyond these constraints.

Stereotypical Concepts of "Machismo"

Denotes negative images of Latino/Latinas/os and American Latino Males in general. They are thought of as being:

tough authoritarian giving discipline
strong irresponsible making major decisions giving orders extremely jealous
extramarital infidelity

They are depicted as prone to infidelity, violence and alcohol abuse. They are portrayed as being proud to ask for help, to do so is to admit weakness.

Sometimes this is manifested by a desire on the part of the individual to have his own way. In the community often avoid frank discussion of issues for fear that they will feel compelled to literally fight to preserve their honor if a disagreement develops.

Basically, it is the identification of potency and fertility with manliness. Worried that other may not believe his claims, the male often seeks proof of his virility in extramarital conquests.

Machismo of this sort is not confined to any particular class, though it may be more overt among the poor.

To be a man - "a macho" implies both domination and protection for those under his specifically women. Men prevail over women in the;

Marketplace

Church - Community

Within our Latinas/os community

because I am a male.

Machismo is as much about race and class as it is about gender. The ultimate "sin" in most rural Spanish speaking communities is to be called homosexual, the antithesis of machismo.

Latino teen males experience both peer and parental pressures to "prove their manhood". Machismo means to be sexually ready for anybody, anywhere, anytime. Conquering a female becomes an adolescent's ritual of initiation into the "machismo world".

For some Latino countries, homophobia differs from homophobia in the United States. We do not fear the homosexual, rather we hold him in contempt for being a man who chooses not to prove his manhood. Unlike North American, where two men engaged in a sexual act are both called homosexuals, for most of the Latino countries, one that places himself in the "position" of a women is the only homosexual. In fact, the man who is in the dominate position is able to retain, if not increase, his machismo.

Machismo is more than anything else a state of mind. It appears that machismo is widely accepted as characteristic of Latinas/os/Latino culture.

When we speak of the negative connotations of machismo, one is referring to male chauvinism which is cross-cultural and found in certain portions of the male population and in dysfunctional families.

New "Machismo" Definition

Refers to the way a man thinks of positive aspects including strengths, tolerance of pain and suffering; ability to cope with adversity and to do so in silence, pride and dignity; responsibilities and obligations to the family; protection and providing a good role model for his children.

Actually, machismo refers to the way a man thinks. It reflects how he views himself in the environment and his family. In turn, the male is entitled to respect, obedience and the independence to do what he wants within the parameters of respect and dignity.

Translated into such positive cultural characteristics as:

Respect
Honesty
Loyalty
Fairness
Responsibility
Trust
Worthiness

A man (“macho”) is affectionate, hard working, amiable, and family oriented. He can admit his mistakes and knows where and when to ask for help.

Concept of “Marianisma” for Latina Females

Meaning: Mary like, as in Virgin Mary, as being kind, nurturing, dependent, predictable, quiet, docile, vulnerable, yet enduring of pain, virginal and without aspiration; self-sacrificing mother and wife. The description also includes the acceptance of a double standard concerning sexual promiscuity and mutual acknowledgment of male superiority. Female roles include, being gentle, delicate and protected. The female role also implies “comfort” and boundless supply of love from the “outside” world. Often Latinas/os women turn to another family member or her “comadre” or an elder female of the Latinas/os social and family network.

Cultural Considerations Working with Latinas/os

A. When working with a family, remember that the man of the house is contacted and invited to participate. Request his involvement for two reasons:

1. It shows that the “servidor” or person delivering services is culturally sensitive and respects the man’s position as head of the household. Making him the ultimate decision maker for the family.
2. This approach begins to eliminate the effects of negative experiences that the husband or father may have with other service providers who may have placed him in a subordinate position in the past. This affects the male self-image or machismo. Additionally, this will improve the service providers’ access to the family in traditional families.

B. Begin the process of “Hooking the Macho Concept” by stressing that without his participation, important family decisions can not be reached. The service provider’s function is to “servile” or to preserve him and his family. The staff member should be flexible to schedule appointments at the client’s convenience. The staff member must acknowledge the client’s positive cultural attributes. Emphasis can be placed on his responsibility in keeping his appointments. The staff member can show appreciation of the fact that he is a hard worker and keeps the family unit intact, in times of economic and emotional hardship.

Machismo then acts as a bridge, rather than a barrier, because the Latino male is made to feel that he is worthy of respect and dignity, regardless of his perceived faults.

The verbal or non-verbal expression of interpersonal respect is vital in maintaining rapport.

C. Personalismo Approach

Briefly describe these functions covering activities designed to establish and maintain his relationship with his family effectively communicating with it's members. It means relating to people as whole people and expressing warmth, rather than impersonally. Commitments to friends and family, in particular the extended family concept, have been the focal point of many discussions. This includes not only the nuclear family but often aunts, uncles, cousins and a cultural-specific concept known as "compadrazco".

D. Language

Latinas/os maintaining the Spanish language is to maintain the Latina/o culture. Many Hispanas/os are bilingual. The client or participant may still prefer to discuss sensitive information en espanol. According to the literature, there are problems associated with the use of a translator. This may do more harm than good in the long run. A translator goes against the traditional value of "dignidad" or dignity. For the traditional Hispanas/os, a great deal of embarrassment may exist when a third party learns of personal matters. For the immigrant, the native language is crucial. Not simply because it is a way of communicating but because it effects his cultural values. For many, Spanish language is one of the main components of the Latina/o identity.

Language is the foundation of establishing safety and trust. It is always helpful to have an interpreter available to assist with victims when there is a language barrier. Ask the survivor/victim if they prefer to speak in English or Spanish. It is imperative to avoid using children or family members as translators for a survivor. Use of family members or children may inhibit the survivor's willingness to speak openly and can put children in the inappropriate and potentially dangerous position of explaining the sexual violation of a parent.

E. Concept of respect - "respecto"

"Respecto" refers to the important value of respect for others and for social customs. It terms of treatment, satisfaction for Latinas/os may not express dissatisfaction out of respect to the therapist. Often the client does not return for services without discussion or even mentioning discontentment. The staff member should do as much as possible to foster the Latina/o client's contentment and to allow/encourage the client to express dissatisfaction. If confrontation is to be utilized it should be done in a non-threatening manner, within the confines of respect and dignity.

Client's expression of respect:

Bows his head during conversation

Avoiding eye contact during the session

Other non-verbal considerations:

Shaking client's hands in the beginning of the sessions. More traditional males also shake hands at the end of the session.

Placing the hand on the shoulder when it is appropriate, is often viewed as communicating openness and positive regard.

F. Touching

Touching should also be viewed in terms of the traditional family and gender roles.

Men touching men

Females touching females

Females touching males

Males touching females

Care should be given so an incorrect interpretation does not occur.

G. Natural Support System

1. The family is the most important and powerful support system. Understanding how the family mobilizes its support in time of stress.

2. The Catholic Church

Roman Catholicism continues to play an influencing role in the life of the traditional Latinas/os.

3. Explore the folk healer

As most of a spiritual explanation for illness and human suffering, some Latinas/os adhere to a lesser understood beliefs of curanderismo, espiritismo and Santeria.

Latino Cultural Awareness Glossary

BARRIO

A geographical locality populated by Latin@s in the United States, which is viewed as part of the social structure under which Mexican Americans live. It has a lifestyle which sets it off from other groups and performs certain functions in the lives of the group. It is a social-cultural environment in which the social, cultural and psychological needs of Latin@s are met, and in which the culture is kept alive to pass on to new generations.

BICULTURALISM

The combination of two cultures or the internalization of two totally different sets of norms of behavior and value systems. These distinct norms presumably allow individuals to organize their real and phenomenal world with its beliefs and value systems in order to make life more predictable and rewarding. The combination or coexistence of two distinct cultures in a single person, region, or society in relatively equal proportions has perhaps existed only in limited cases. A truly bicultural person has to be able to switch codes of behavior and values as he or she switches linguistic codes. However, the internalization of some values and norms (in some domains) of two cultures makes a person bicultural, just as a person with proficiency in some facets of language (phonetics, syntax, semantic) is considered bilingual.

BRACERO

A migrant worker who entered the U.S. to perform seasonal farm labor. Until 1964, the U.S. Government encouraged the bracero movement due to the great need for low cost farm labor.

CARNALISMO

Brotherhood. This value is based on the Christian philosophy, “Ama a tu projimo como a ti mismo” (Love thy neighbor as yourself). It is characterized by the deep feelings one might experience toward the closest relative. This feeling is also experienced with friends and compares. It means loyalty and allegiance.

CHICAN@

A sociopolitical term pertaining to Mexican American, though not all Mexican Americans identify with the term. When used, it usually indicates pride of cultural and ethnic heritage.

COMPADRAZGO

Co-parenthood, a religious ritual-kinship system in which there is established a three-way relationship between godparents, godchild, and the godchild’s parents. Among Mexican-Americans godparents are used on three important religious occasions: baptism, confirmation and marriage. While the religious bond established between godparents (padrinos) and godchild (ahijado) is basic, there is also a social relationship, often more important, between the godparents and the parents of their godchild, who refer to each other as compadre or comadre. The system is known by this relationship. The compadrazgo system serves to reaffirm old ties and friendships and to create new ones.

CONFIANZA

Refers to rapport and trust. It is a condition in which two people break down barriers and see themselves in a more familiar and trusting relationship.

DIGNIDAD

Means dignity, but in Spanish, conceptually, it has a broader meaning than “worth”. It also means self-respect. It is the most important element of personalismo.

DIVERSITY

The condition of being different or having differences. Despite similar cultural traits, language and historical background, Latinas/os groups differ from one another, creating sub-groups within the group.

FATALISMO

This value projects an established social order, a promise of life after death and supposedly places a high value on stoicism and teaches that one must accept God's will whether it brings good fortune or poor.

FAMILIARISMO

Familiarism refers to the interdependence of and attachment to family members. This encouragement of closeness, interdependency and respect of the parental authority contrasts not only with Anglo egalitarianism between parents and offspring that is often prevalent in the dominant society but to the sense of autonomy that most members of the dominant society seek to achieve.

HEMBRISMO

The traditional gender role function of the Latinas/os female. At its extremes, it is characterized by dependence, passivity and submission to male superiority.

HISPANO

Latinas/os is an umbrella term. This can apply literally to any Spanish-speaking group with their cultural origins and history derived from the Spanish. This would include such diversified groups as the Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Bolivians and perhaps even the Spanish-speaking Phillipinos.

JIBARO

Puerto Rico's idealized folk hero. In the 18th century, the rural people of Puerto Rico were called jibaros and today, the word expresses a nostalgia for and idealization of the old rural ways. To the Puerto Rican, "El jibaro" is "the honest man with both feet firmly planted on the soil. The man whose lack of schooling does not deprive him of a shrewdness and wisdom that has something to do with the timelessness of nature."

JONES ACT

Signed in March 2, 1917, this law granted American citizenship to Puerto Ricans, more local political power, the right to migrate freely between Puerto Rico and the United States and the U.S. military drafting of Puerto Ricans.

LA FAMILIA

The family concept for Latinas/os not merely including the nuclear family members, as father, mother and children but some other relatives like grandparents, aunts, cousins and even some close friends of any family member.

LATIN@

Usually synonymous with Latin. The term is used frequently in the Southwest interchangeable with Mexicans. However, in the wider sense, it can be used to describe any Central or South American nationality.

MACHISMO

Literally, maleness from the Spanish Macho. Machismo is the term for the cult of masculinity in Latin America, especially Mexico, identified with a masculine aggressiveness, self-confidence and courageousness.

A cultural misunderstanding exists with the popular usage of the term in the United States by both Anglo American and Mexican Americans. Machismo is misinterpreted as being associated only with arrogance, selfish sexual satisfaction, extramarital sexuality and as overcompensation for personal insecurity. It is true that some men exhibit and use machismo for these purposes, which have much in common with lower-class attitudes

toward masculinity. On the other hand, in the Latin American social and cultural ambience machismo also expresses honor, responsibility, dependability, dedication and generosity.

MAL DE OJO

Illness caused by the eye. This condition is usually brought about inadvertently by a person who by nature has “strong eye sight”. This condition can transmit “currents” when that person admires another person or thing. It does not necessarily involve envy, it “just happens” unintentionally. The currents are believed to be broken when the person having the “strong eye” touches the person or thing admired.

MESTIZO

Literally “mixed”. Term applied to those of Latinas/os descent with Spanish and Indian blood.

MEXICAN - AMERICAN

An American born citizen of Mexican ancestry. The individual may be first generation or his ancestry may be dating back several hundred years. This individual is indigenous to this country.

MULATO

Term applied to those of Latinas/os descent with Spanish and African blood.

NEWYORICAN

This term refers to the second and subsequent U.S. born generations of migrated Puerto Ricans established in New York.

PERSONALISMO

The traditional Latinas/os characteristics of relating to others on a warm and personal basis. It is focused on the inner importance of the person and centers attention on the inner qualities of the individual, which constitutes his uniqueness, his goodness, his worth. This form of individualism contrasts with Anglo individualism which values the person in terms of his ability to compete alone for higher social and economic status.

PLATICA

Conversation or chit-chat.

RESPETO

Respect. The esteemed acknowledgement of an individual’s personal attributes, uninfluenced by wealth or social position. It connotes hierarchal relationships such as elders and superiors. Traditions are also highly respected.

SPANGLISH

The combination of English and Spanish words in an effort to communicate effectively in an English-speaking dominant society, I.e. furniture (furniture), rufo (roof), yarda (backyard), marketa (market), sureo (legal sue).

STEREOTYPING

The use of a set of fixed assumptions, often exaggerated, which allow an individual or a society to classify individuals in groups. These assumptions or beliefs may determine the attitudes of culture groups toward each other.

Even before Anglo-Americans came into contact with Mexicans (and later Mexican-Americans), a variety of stereotypes began to develop. To most English settlers of the eastern seaboard, Mexicans were an ignorant, pope- and priest-ridden people who lived in the tropics where they miscegenated with local natives, producing an

inferior, hybridized progeny and who needed to have “real” Christianity brought to them. By the early 1880’s, after more widespread contact between Anglos and Mexicans along their common border, modern stereotypes began to develop. Some people saw Mexicans as dirty, lazy, illiterate, deceitful, volatile, unpredictable, romantic, fond of fiesta and dancing, given to gambling, delinquent, addicted to drinking and criminality, fast with the knife, and fond of bright colors and flowers.

These stereotypes were developed and perpetuated by writers in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially by novelists who discovered “romance” in the alienness of southwestern society. In this century stereotypes have been spread much more widely by motion pictures and television: one has only to recall the simple-minded, bumbling, if charming, Mexican sidekick of that Hollywood hero as portrayed in *The Cisco Kid* and the villainous Mexican bandit as portrayed in *Treasure of Sierra Madre*. On television the even more familiar figure of the Frito Bandito, or the Mexican, sombrero pulled down over this face, sleeping against sun-drenched adobe wall has served to reinforce a negative impression.

In general, these stereotypes support the assumption that the Mexican is simple, child-like, irresponsible, and untrustworthy, and therefore they have served to justify Anglo discrimination against him. Clearly, these views serve to rationalize and justify exclusion and discrimination: Mexican - Americans may be denied their civil liberties, their right to equality in society and before the law.

TREATY OF GUADALUPE HIDALGO, 1848

Negotiated by President Polk’s emissary Nicholas Trist and signed in the small town of the same name outside of Mexico City. The treaty brought the Mexican - U.S. War to an end in February 1848. By its terms, the United States acquired an area of about one million square miles including the present states of California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Texas and half of Colorado. The new boundary between the U.S. and Mexico was the Rio Grande to the southern boundary of New Mexico, then westward to the Gila River, down the Gila to its juncture with the Colorado River, and thence west to the Pacific Ocean, one league south of San Diego.

Mexico received \$16 million in partial compensation for the loss of about half of her national territory (plus \$3 million in claims); she lost less than one percent of her citizens in the transfer. By the terms of the treaty the approximately eighty thousand Mexicans living in the ceded area were to have the choice of remaining Mexican citizens (by declaring their intent within one year) or of becoming citizens of the United States at a time deemed proper by the U.S. Congress. Both groups were to enjoy protection of their liberty and property and the “free exercise of their religion without restriction”. By the second protocol to the treaty, legal titles to land grants and other property were those recognized as legitimate under Spanish and Mexican law.

All except two thousand Mexicans became U.S. citizens. While the treaty gave all some legal protection, it provided no protection for their culture and language.

ZAMBO

Term applied to those of Latinas/os descent with African and Indian blood.

For more information about Victims/Survivors who are Spanish speaking or to learn more about Latinas/os, check out these websites/resources

1. Pew Latinas/os

www.pewLatinas/os.org

2. National Sexual Violence Resource Center

www.nsvrc.org

3. Arte Sana

www.arte-sana.com

4. DV Alianza

<http://www.dvalianza.org/>

5. MESA

www.ydae.purdue.edu/mesa

6. National Council of La Raza

<http://www.nclr.org/>