THE EVOLUTION OF THE LATINO COMMUNITY IN CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

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FACES OF THE LATINO AND CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY

Elizabeth Ahsanullah: Following the lead of two of her brothers, Ms. Ahsanullah left Puerto Rico for Cambridge in 1977. Initially she took courses at the Community Learning Center in Central Square before enrolling at Bunker Hill Community College. Over the years, Ms. Ahsanulla's work has included mobilizing Latinos to vote, translating legal documents, and providing translating services for Latinos. Now, an employee of the Cambridge Election Commission, Ms. Ahsanullah is still committed to getting Latino residents involved in the political system and making sure they are represented in the city's decisions.

Dennis Benzan: Dennis was born in 1972 and grew up in Columbia Terrace. His father is originally from Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic and his mother is from Coamo, Puerto Rico. After high school, Dennis attended Howard University where he graduated in 1995. In 1996, he ran for one of two State Representative positions in Cambridge, but was defeated by a narrow margin. In 1998, Dennis ran again for the 28th Middlesex District seat in the State Legislature, this time losing out to fellow Latino Jarrett Barrios. Dennis currently attends Roger Williams Law School.

Rafael Benzan: Originally from Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, Rafael Benzan proclaims to be the first Dominican immigrant to settle in Cambridge in 1962. He was also the first Latino resident to move into Colombia Terrace. Rafael Benzan, along with other Latinos in Cambridge formed Confraternidad Hispana de Cambridge, an organization similar to today's Concilio Hispano in the early 1960s. While he and his family have since moved out of Cambridge, they are still very connected to its Latino community. Rafael Benzan is the uncle of Dennis Benzan.

Maria Bermudez: Ms. Bermudez has lived in Cambridge for 31 years. She is the youngest of eleven children. Her father was the first family member to come to the States from Puerto Rico. He worked as a migrant farm worker in Connecticut and Springfield in the 1940s and 1950s. Currently, she has two jobs, one as an Instructional Assistant in a classroom for first and second graders at the Cambridgeport School. She has also been Coordinator of the Religious Education Program at St. Mary's Church for the past two years.

Sister Rose Marie Cummins: Originally from Louisville, Kentucky, Sister Rose worked in Massachusetts from 1972 to 1999. Sister Rose went to Kentucky Dominicans after graduation. Sister Rose visited Puerto Rico from 1966 to 1971 and fell in love with the island. In the mid 1970s, she worked in Framingham as a bilingual counselor in the public school system. She was very active in the Sanctuary movement in the 1980s and was one of the co-founders of Centro Presente. She worked for six years as co-director of Centro Presente and for three years at Saint Francis House doing immigration work with homeless and low-income people from around the world. Recently, Sister Rose moved back to her home state of Kentucky.

Elena Letona: The current Executive Director of Centro Presente, Ms. Letona immigrated to the U.S. from El Salvador's capital city of San Salvador in 1974. She studied piano at the Oberlin College Conservatory in Ohio. After graduating Oberlin in 1984, she moved to Boston in hopes of making a living as a musician. She eventually ended up moving into the field of social justice. Ms. Letona eventually went back to school and finished a PH.D in Public Policy in 1997. She applied for the Executive Director position at Centro Presente and was offered the position in July of 1999.

Israel Maldonado: Mr. Maldonado moved to Cambridge in 1964 from Hatillo, Puerto Rico. He spent time working at a Laundromat, a bakery and a closed circuit television firm. He was eventually able to save enough money to start his first restaurant. After a few years of slow business, Mr. Maldonado moved to Florida. Eventually, he decided to give Cambridge another chance. He is currently the owner of Izzy's Restaurant located in Cambridge on the corner of Winthrop and Harvard streets. Izzy's has become a fixture in the greater Boston area for people of all ethnicities.

Felix Perez: Felix Antonio Perez served in the army in El Salvador before migrating to the United States at the age of 19. He has resided in Cambridge for over 20 years. Following the path of family members that had already established a home in Cambridge, Mr. Perez was able to find a job and a place to settle. At times, Mr. Perez worked 80 hours a week to support his wife and three daughters. He and his family have found a permanent home for themselves in Cambridge. He sites St. Mary's Church as an integral part of his life. Two of his daughters, Maira and Marisela Perez are members of the AHORA Program at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. They have contributed significantly in the compilation of this project.

Magdalena Rivas: Originally from San Salvador, Magdalena played an influential role in the push for Cambridge's "Sanctuary city" status in 1985. Ms. Rivas was forced to leave her three children in the fall of 1984 after being arrested and tortured by the Salvadoran government several times. She made her way up to Mexico where she was put in contact with church members helping Central American refugees. She took on the name "Estela Ramirez" and was sent to Old Cambridge Baptist Church by the Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America in December of 1984. Here she was the symbol of Sanctuary for many Cambridge residents who took turns sleeping beside "Estela" in the church. She bravely told her story to gatherings at churches, schools, and eventually Cambridge City Council. After taking courses at Bunker Hill Community College, Ms. Rivas has worked at a day care center for over 15 years.

Sylvia Saavdedra: Current Director of Concilio Hispano, Ms Saavedra has been involved with the organization since 1973. Sylvia is originally from Chile, where she was a political activist. She has been an integral part in a transformation of Concilio

Hispano. Building off the hard work of Latinos who helped form and develop the organization, many current programs are on social issues like housing, discrimination and violence. She has continued and expanded on Concilio Hispano's services providing translation, education and immigrant assistance.

Nelson Salazar: Currently the Director of the Welcome Project in Somerville, Mr. Salazar immigrated to the United States from San Salvador in 1980. In 1984, Mr. Salazar graduated with an Associate Degree in Culinary Arts from Bunker Hill Community College. After working as a chef in restaurants, hospitals, and hotels, Mr. Salazar realized his chance at moving up as a Latino chef was slim-to-none. He applied, and was accepted, to UMass Boston in 1990. In 1992, Mr. Salazar began work at Centro Presente. In 1996, he earned a Bachelor's Degree in Human Services and Community Planning. He proceeded to work for the City of Cambridge on the Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force. Mr. Salazar then helped revamp the AHORA Program at Concilio Hispano before founding the Welcome Project in 2000.

Roberto Santiago: Originally from Coamo, Puerto Rico, Mr. Santiago is a prominent member of Cambridge's Latino community. Although he no longer resides in Cambridge, he was influential in the development of many programs and institutions that cater to the Latino Community. Mr. Santiago was one of the first Puerto Ricans to settle in Cambridge. He came from the town of Coamo at the age of 22. Some of his many contributions to the community include: the establishment of Concilio Hispano, the Roberto Santiago Softball League, obtaining equal voting rights for Puerto Ricans, and fighting the discrimination many Latinos faced in the 1960s and 1970s.

James and Julia Wallace: The Wallaces came to Cambridge in 1968 and joined the Old Cambridge Baptist Church (OCBC) congregation in 1969. The Wallaces and OCBC have been strong advocates around many social justice issues. When their two children studied abroad in Latin America, James and Julia were turned onto many issues facing Latinos, particularly Central Americans. The Wallaces made a push for OCBC to become a Sanctuary church for undocumented Central American refugees in the 1980s. They generously housed Salvadoran immigrants in their Cambridge co-op. The Wallaces were also strong voices advocating the City Council Resolution to legally recognize Cambridge as a "Sanctuary city."

AN OVERVIEW OF CAMBRIDGE

City of Cambridge Community Development

Before delving into the experience of Latinos in Cambridge, it is important to understand the character and context of the city. Many experiences of the community are affected by patterns that have shaped the city as a whole.

Cambridge is located near the eastern coast of Massachusetts. Bordered by Somerville and Arlington on the north, Watertown and Belmont on the west, and Boston on the east and south, Cambridge has an area of 6.43 square miles (City of Cambridge). There are approximately 95,000 residents in Cambridge. The city is divided into twelve separate neighborhoods as shown on the map above. Each of Cambridge's neighborhoods has its own unique and diverse character, containing working, middle, and upper class residents of various ethnicities.

Cambridge is a unique city in that over one-fourth of its residents are college students (City of Cambridge Development Department). Students attend Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Lesley College, or one of many other surrounding colleges and universities in the greater Boston area. Education is an important part of the city's economy, as one-sixth of all jobs are in higher education (Ibid., see Appendix). The universities attract scholars from around the world. The presence of such educational institutions also contributes to Cambridge's transient nature. Students, scholars, professors, and other university affiliates are continuously entering and leaving the city. While this change affects certain demographics of Cambridge's population, the intellectual presence contributes towards Cambridge's progressive nature.

In addition to numerous students and educators, Cambridge is also home to a substantial immigrant population, as well as Puerto Ricans, a linguistic and cultural minority who are U.S. citizens. More than one in five residents is foreign born and students from sixty-four different countries attend the public schools (Ibid.). Currently the largest immigrant groups come from Haiti, Brazil, and countries in Central America.

Previously, Cambridge was one of the busiest industrial areas in Massachusetts. The earliest industries were soap making, woodworking, and food processing. Later in the nineteenth century, these early industries expanded to include the manufacturing of musical instruments, candy, and metals (Neighborhood 4 Profile).

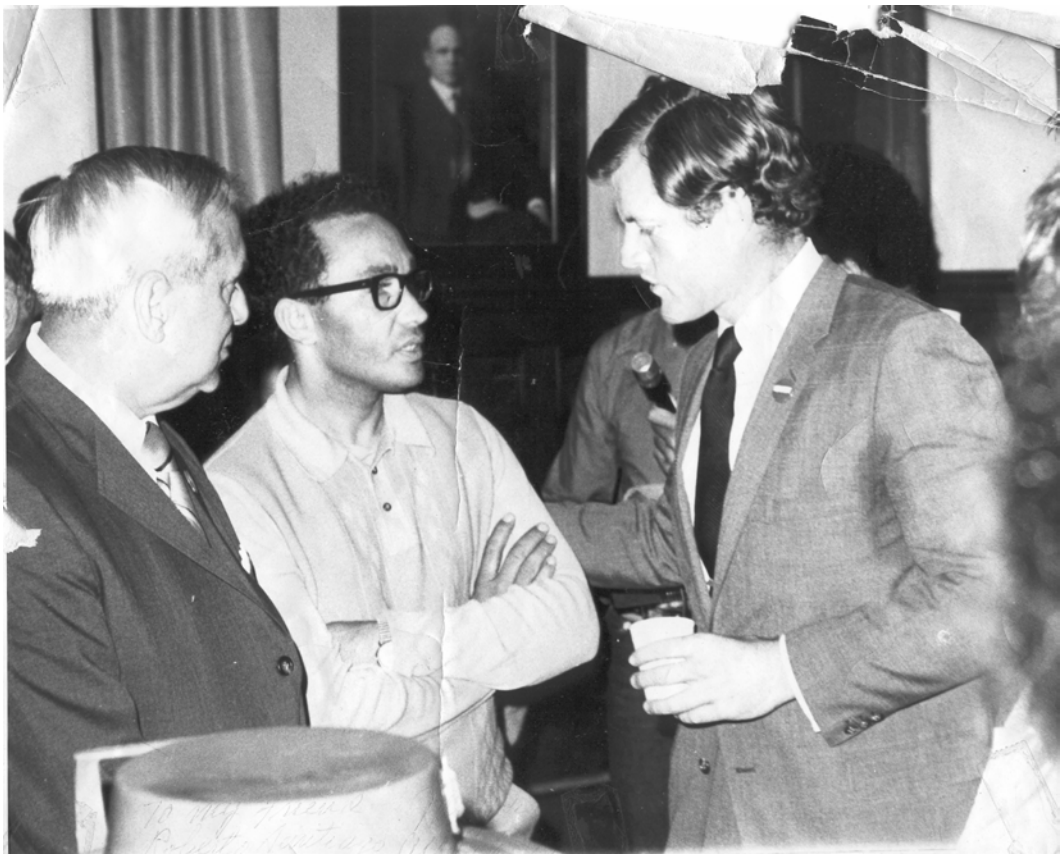
The 1980s saw a shift towards more technology-based industries. Today the factories have been converted into firms on the cutting edge of computer, biotechnology, electronics, self-developing film, and other new technologies. Harvard and MIT are the top employers in Cambridge and have contributed to this shift from the industrial to the

technological sector (see Appendix)**.** The government and medical sectors are also important elements of the Cambridge economy.

Because of vigorous urban development and open-space programs, Cambridge has been able to survive the loss of industry that started in the 1950s and begin to return to some of its pre-industrial beauty. During the 1960s, Cambridge underwent various urban development projects. These "renewal programs (were) capable of eliminating whole neighborhoods if they were deemed blighted (Emmet 65)."

The composition and layout of Cambridge play significant roles in where people of various ethnicities and socioeconomic classes often settle. The focus of this project, the history of the Latino community in Cambridge, follows this trend. This history begins with migration from Puerto Rico.

I
THE EARLY YEARS



Mayor Alfred Vellucci, activist Roberto Santiago, and Senator Edward Kennedy in a 1969 photograph.

A BRIEF PUERTO RICAN HISTORY

The earliest evidence of Latinos residing in Cambridge dates to the beginning of the twentieth century when a few wealthy Puerto Ricans came to study at Harvard and MIT. Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos, for example, attended Harvard University in 1913 and again in 1919. He returned to Puerto Rico after completing his degree despite many prestigious job offers in the Unites States. Albizu Campos was later to become a prominent leader of the Nationalist party heading the campaign for Puerto Rican independence (Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos). Other elite families also sent their children to Cambridge to obtain a good education, and most of these scholars returned upon completing their schooling.

Puerto Ricans have unique rights regarding immigration. Unlike other Latin Americans, Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens. This right comes from the island's colonial status. On March 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones Act giving Puerto Ricans on the island the right to choose whether they wanted to be U.S. citizens or not. Anyone who did not initially decline the right was granted citizenship (Péres y González 29).

As the economy suffered significantly, Puerto Ricans of all classes grew increasingly frustrated with U.S. corporations and American involvement in the island's economy. Albizu Campos and other leaders led workers in numerous forms of protest expressing their discontent with the U.S. government. During the 1940s, civil unrest heightened in response to tensions between the U.S. government and the Commonwealth's Nationalist movement.

Thousands of Puerto Ricans chose to leave the island in hopes of living a more

economically stable life in the continental United States. New York City became the center of this Puerto Rican migration. In response to both this increase of Puerto Ricans in New York and the need for better opportunities for citizens on the island, large manufacturing firms in the eastern United States began to recruit Puerto Rican labor.

TRANSITORY CITIZENS: Migrant Farmers Plant the Seeds of Puerto Rican Settlement in New England

The ability to come to the United Stated freely, and the substantial recruitment efforts on behalf of industry and agriculture explain why the Puerto Rican community grew rapidly in the eastern United States. Between 1946 and 1964, Puerto Ricans entered the United States at an average rate of 34,000 (im)migrants per year. In 1953 alone, 74,603 Puerto Ricans came to the States in search of economic relief (Pérez y González 35). In the 1940s, some Puerto Ricans took advantage of the labor recruitment on New England farms, and adopted a seasonal migration pattern. Workers were needed as a source of cheap labor for large farms during prime seasons. Puerto Ricans were not the only Latino workers on New England farms, but in contrast to the others, they had the ability to return home in the off-seasons. Other Latinos, constricted by immigration laws, had to relocate within the United States as work was no longer needed by their employers.

Puerto Rican migrant farmers working in Massachusetts established some of the initial Latino roots in Cambridge. Farms in Springfield, Lexington, Arlington, Holyoke, and Bedford, Massachusetts, are known to have employed some of these early workers (Bermudez, Salazar Transcription 16, Santiago Transcription 1). Some of these Puerto

Rican farmers incidentally became aware of the town of Cambridge during their experiences in New England. These early migrant workers gave the next wave of Puerto Ricans ideas on where to settle.

THE PIONEERS ARRIVE

Puerto Ricans were drawn to Cambridge through channels established by those migrant farmers of the earlier decades. The first major attempts of Puerto Ricans to settle in Cambridge occurred in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Maria Bermudez came to Cambridge from the town of Orocóvis, Puerto Rico because two of her elder siblings had already settled here. They were drawn to the town by a contact their father had made during his years as a migrant farmer in various towns in Massachusetts and Connecticut (Bermudez Interview).

Similarly, Israel Maldonado came to Cambridge in 1964. He was aware of the location, as his sister had been requested to serve as a domestic servant for a family in Cambridge in 1953 (Maldonado Transcription). The very small Latino community that had settled in Cambridge at the beginning of the 1960s expanded rapidly as family members were encouraged to leave home and follow in the footsteps of their relatives.

The majority of the Puerto Ricans migrating to Cambridge during the 1960s came from the town of Coamo in Puerto Rico. Following the advice of established family members, the newcomers had less difficulty finding homes and work than the pioneers. These Puerto Ricans, and other Latinos that soon followed, settled mostly in Area 4, around Columbia Street in low-income housing. The first few families to make a home in this area have been identified as the Pagans, the Maldonados, and the Santiagos.

Roberto Santiago, a long-standing resident and community activist recalls that the Latino community consisted of approximately seventeen people by the middle of the 1960s (Santiago Transcription 1).

PAYING THE BILLS

Often, the first objective on an immigrant's mind is to find a way to support him or herself. It is difficult to find work without knowing where to go, what to do, or how to speak the language. As one can imagine, immigrating to a new country is a difficult transition. Though many had a contact in the area, establishing themselves did not come automatically. The earlier arrivals found work easily, while later arrivals had a very hard time finding work.

For the most part, those who arrived in the 1960s and 1970s found that jobs were abundant and not hard to come across. As there were no formal job placement programs to help the immigrants, relatives and friends served as the connections, finding open positions at their workplaces or through their other contacts in Cambridge.

New England Confectionary Company, NECCO, employed many Latino factory workers.

In addition to working on farms in neighboring towns, Latinos could find work in one of many factories or businesses in Cambridge. Latinos found work at places such as the New England Confectionary Company (NECCO) on Massachusetts Avenue or the

Tootsie Roll Company on Main Street. Some of the earliest Puerto Ricans to settle in Cambridge commuted to work at the Griffith Ladder Factory in Waltham. Other types of jobs included working at the Nabisco factory, various clothing or toy factories, auto shops, butcheries, and carwashes. Generally, these jobs paid low wages in exchange for long hours of hard labor.

One early Latino employer was the Consolidated Foil Company located in Somerville near the Cambridge border. Positions at this factory paid slightly more than others of its kind. The typical wage was $2.00 or $2.50 per hour at a time when similar jobs in Cambridge paid only $1.00 per hour**.** The vice-president of this company was Puerto Rican and utilized the growing Puerto Rican network in Cambridge to fill factory positions. As soon as a few members of the Puerto Rican community began working for them, the foil company recruited the friends and relatives of employees who also needed jobs. Latinos were not the only minority group sought after to fill these types of positions. They also worked alongside members of the sizeable Portuguese community in surrounding areas (Santiago Transcription 4).

By the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, pioneers from the Puerto Rican town of Jayuya and the Dominican city of Santo Domingo were beginning to establish themselves in Cambridge. Representation from these two communities grew in a similar pattern of social networking as the earlier group from Coamo had. Roberto Santiago, describes the nature of the connectedness of the early Latino community:

> We, in the community, got a committee together. And they elected me president. And then my cousin [was elected] vice president, and then my other cousin… You know family. All these people start to come from Jayuya, and… then people got married. And then you have a community! (Santiago Transcription 4)

Puerto Ricans were not the only group able to establish networks. It was around this time that political changes in the Dominican Republic ignited a wave of immigration into the United States. Some of these immigrants found their way to Cambridge and established themselves alongside the Puerto Rican pioneers.

A BRIEF DOMINICAN HISTORY

In the 1920s, a young officer named Raphael Trujillo ascended the ranks of power, and by 1930, he had enough military backing to seize control of the new democratic government established by the U.S.

Trujillo ran a repressive dictatorship. In 1937, he ordered his military to kill all Haitians in the Dominican Republic, resulting in the slaughter of 20,000 people. His regime was also characterized by embezzlement and corruption. Despite his authoritarian techniques, the United States government continued to support Trujillo (Gonzalez).

For most Dominicans, Trujillo's reign was marked by repression, fear and economic instability. During this time, many Dominicans left home in search of greater security in the United States. Subsequently, many of the first Dominicans in Cambridge began to arrive during the mid 1950s (Gonzalez).

The initial Dominican immigrants in Cambridge were able to collaborate with the growing network of the small Puerto Rican community. Rafael Benzan, originally from Santo Domingo, came to Cambridge in June of 1962. He was drawn here by some friends of his wife who were attending MIT. Upon arriving, a Puerto Rican acquaintance helped him find a job at the Griffith Ladder Factory in Waltham. Benzan recalls the assistance he received from the Puerto Rican community in helping his family settle.

While the Dominican community in Cambridge cannot be traced to only one town from the island, a significant portion of the early settlers came from Santo Domingo. As the first Dominican to reside in Cambridge, Mr. Benzan was often a resource for other Dominicans entering the community. He recalls, "Oh yeah, the first Dominican(s) all would come and see me, I would help them find an apartment and a room, all [the] Dominicans in Cambridge (Benzan, Rafael Transcription 3)."

RESIDENTAL PATTERNS

Many Latinos settled in Area 4, specifically around Columbia Street. Columbia Terrace is a publicly subsidized apartment complex located near Central Square.

Columbia Terrace, a low-income housing unit, was one of the places many Latinos settled during the 1960s-early 1990s.

Columbia Terrace stands out as an area of prime historical importance to the Latino community. It was here that many of the community's early leaders settled. Many of the important community centers for Latinos have come out of the Terrace and are located

nearby. Area 4 contained many of the first Latino stores and business ventures in Cambridge. Residents of Area 4 founded Concilio Hispano, a Latino service organization, and the annual Latino festival. Also in the area is St. Mary's Church, one of the primary community churches. Dennis Benzan, nephew of Rafael Benzan, grew up in Columbia Terrace and described it as "the heartbeat of the Latino community."

The first Latino residents were mostly Puerto Rican and Dominican. By the mid 1970s, Columbia Terrace was home to approximately fifty-four families, about 80 percent of which were Latino. Dennis Benzan, explained why Latinos moved into Columbia Terrace:

> [Latinos] ended up living there probably because the rent was so cheap and they could afford it… Once a family member came, they began+ calling back [to relatives and friends] in Puerto Rico or the Dominican Republic in this case, and telling them that this place has great opportunities where you can come and that's how I think the community grew. (Benzan, Dennis Transcription 1)

In Columbia Terrace, social networks were also an influential factor in determining where Latinos chose to settle.

As early as the 1970s, Columbia Terrace provided low-income housing and was in close proximity to the factory jobs that employed many Latinos at that time. The Terrace became a close-knit community with a deep sense of pride because of its concentration of Latino families that collectively faced hardships in a foreign locale.

The community faced a number of issues together from childcare and the language barrier to the need to find jobs. Dennis Benzan, nephew of Rafael Benzan who grew up in Columbia Terrace, describes the Terrace as "the heartbeat of the Latino community." Since many of the community's early leaders lived in Columbia Terrace, it

is not surprising that many of the important community centers and community events for Latinos have come out of the Terrace as well.

Dennis Benzan believes that these commonalties fostered a sense of solidarity and mutual respect among the parents. He used the cliché, "it takes a village to raise a child" to describe the interactions between fellow resident families. The following anecdote demonstrates his childhood experiences in the Terrace:

> I'll never forget the day that about twenty of us would travel, ride our bikes around the city for whatever reason. I remember one day we were gone all day and we had totally forgot that we weren't supposed to be gone all day. You know the tunnel by the high school? Well one of our buddies went on the other side of the tunnel against the traffic, and he never came out. He ended up getting hit by a car or something and the ambulance came. Meanwhile, while that's going on, a whole crew of other kids were coming, because they had formed a search party looking for us because our parents were wondering where we were. We were so scared about what was going to happen, that instead of thinking that riding our bikes would get us home faster, we dropped our bikes and just started running home. (Benzan, Dennis Transcription 11-12)

The communities close ties also extended to their homelands. For example, families in Columbia Terrace hosted Puerto Rican runners from Coamo each year during the Boston Marathon. A large group of Latinos from Cambridge would greet them at Logan Airport, and the runners would stay with families in Columbia Terrace. During the event, much of the Latino community would show support and cheer the runners on.

Though the residents of Columbia Terrace came from many different nations and cultures, they were able to come together as a community. As Dennis Benzan recalls of his Puerto Ricans and Dominicans friends, "The communities definitely weren't separate. It's funny because we've talked about these distinctions that they would often make

about each other, but in the end, they would party together (Benzan, Dennis Transcription 7)." In this spirit, in 1985, Concilio Hispano organized the aforementioned Latino Festival in Columbia Park. This event attracted Latinos from the greater Boston area and beyond. The festival took place annually in Columbia Park for six or seven years through the early 1990s. The celebration lasted for three days and included food, music, a short marathon, boxing, and dancing, as well as a traditional grease pole competition (depicted in the mural on this report's cover page).

Today, Columbia Terrace is home to fewer Latino families. This can be attributed to a number of factors. In 1983, a fire raged through Columbia Terrace forcing one fourth of the families to seek shelter elsewhere. These families were moved to government housing in other parts of the city and for one reason or another never returned. Other residents opted to buy homes outside of Cambridge. Another reason that people left was to move to safer neighborhoods; as in many low-income areas crime has been a significant problem.

The reduced numbers of Latino residents in Columbia Terrace should not be confused with a decline in the Cambridge Latino community in general. The Latino community by this time had expanded well beyond its beginnings in Area 4 to many of Cambridge's other neighborhoods.

II

OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME

St. Mary of the Annunciation conducts a Spanish mass every Sunday that Latinos from all over the greater Boston area attend. The Church has been a “safe haven” for the Latino community in the face of both overt and institutional discrimination.

OBSTACLES OF THE 1970s

Though Cambridge has been characterized as a progressive city with a mostly transient community, the city was not always very welcoming to its Latino immigrants. Living in Cambridge did not necessarily bestow these Latinos equality or even respect.

Maria Bermudez, who currently works in the religious education sector of St. Mary's Church, described instances of discrimination she experienced in the Cambridge public school system. She was one of the first students in Cambridge's bilingual education program that began in the 1970s. The first bilingual classes were housed in the basement of a local church. With time, bilingual students were bussed to the Longfellow School where they were segregated from the Anglo students. Bermudez recounts her experience at Longfellow:

> We weren't accepted there by the other students, by the white kids, you might say. They didn't want us there. [The bus was] met with kids with rocks and bottles. A lot of times the bus driver had to drive away. It took a while just to get us into the building safely. (Bermudez Interview)

In order to ensure their safety, students in the bilingual education program alternated between the gym and outside playground, week to week, separated from recess with the Anglo students.

It soon became apparent that there were limitations as to where Latinos could go and what they could do. The Latino presence in East Cambridge, North Cambridge, and Central Square was unwanted during the early 1970s. Roberto Santiago told of a time when someone threw a rock at him while walking in Central Square. Describing the danger Puerto Ricans faced he said, "People would try to jump you." (Santiago Transcription 2)

The discrimination against Latinos in Cambridge extended far beyond people's attitudes. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, tension escalated between Latinos and the Anglo community. Gangs of Anglo youth tried to keep Latinos out of public parks. The police were brought in to remedy the situation, but the police department sided with the white residents, and forced the Puerto Ricans to leave.

Maria Bermudez described her family's experience in moving to a new neighborhood: "When we moved, my mother found an apartment, it was very close to the school. The white kids in the neighborhood threw stuff at our windows, and said, 'You spics' and 'go back home.'" (Bermudez Interview)

The church discriminated against Latinos as well. When they went to a nearby church, some parishioners "looked at [them] like [they were] from space" (Santiago Transcription 3-4). Santiago recalled that the Puerto Ricans were told to go to Boston, where the Latino community was more established and where masses were held in Spanish. They searched for a Spanish-speaking priest that would perform services in Cambridge, but even after finding a willing priest, the Latinos struggled to find a church that would agree to host such services. Eventually, Latinos were allowed to attend Spanish mass at St. Mary's. Still, the discrimination did not cease as Latinos were forced to stay in the basement as opposed to the main floor of the church.

A PLACE TO PRAY: St. Mary of the Annunciation

Although Latinos struggled to gain acceptance into the church, the Latino community's increase in size and influence made a profound significance in the parish population. St. Mary's, in turn, became a vital resource for Latinos.

People left their countries of origin in search of a better life in the States, but did not want to abandon the lifestyle to which they were accustomed. For many of the Latino (im)migrants, the Catholic Church was a major part of their lives. These new Cambridge residents hoped to maintain the culture they enjoyed before (im)migrating.

In describing the role of St. Mary's Church during the 1970s, Maria Bermudez called it a "safe haven" where she and other parish children were able to interact with each other in their faith. St. Mary's provided a free summer school program as well as Catechism classes. There, children learned about various tenets of Catholicism and received their First Communion and Confirmation sacraments. Such programs were attended primarily by Latino youth and provided a good opportunity for them to make friends, something that was very difficult in the public schools and around town due to the racism against Latinos in the area (Bermudez Interview).

Some children also attended parochial school at the church. St. Mary's has conducted bilingual religious education classes starting in the 1970s and helped (im)migrants find employment. In addition, Rafael Benzan mentioned social activities, which were also sponsored by St. Mary's, such as bingo and dances with various types of Latin music.

LATINOS ENTER THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

The Vellucis were a powerful Italian family who made significant political gains for the Italian community in Cambridge. They were intimately involved with Cambridge politics, serving on school committees and the Cambridge City Council. Roberto Santiago befriended Mayor Anthony Velluci in the late 1960s. Mayor Velluci encouraged Santiago to become more active, register to vote, and get others registered as well.

When they went to the Election Commission hoping to register to vote, members of the Puerto Rican community were often turned away. In remembering his experience with voter registration, Roberto Santiago recalls:

> So then I start collecting the people to register to vote, because we have the right to register. We… go to the election commission, [and] they say, 'No! You are from Puerto Rico.' We say we are Americans and they say, 'No, no you are not.' So we had a dilemma, and we had to get a lawyer for the city. The professional people there [looked] into the constitution and…at the map and say, 'Well, you are American citizens.' So then we cleared up the issue. (Santiago Transcription 4)

The lawyer proved the Puerto Ricans' citizenship status, but when they lined up to register, the police forced them to leave. Santiago realized that some outside assistance was necessary to assert their rights. He solicited help from Spanish-speaking students at neighboring universities, such as Harvard, MIT, Tufts, Brandeis and Boston University. The students began meeting with members of the community and agreed to help them with their struggle (Santiago Transcription 5).

Santiago contends that the students provided the Puerto Ricans with a clearer voice. The language barrier was a major obstacle, as was the lack of knowledge about local resources and services. Since the City of Cambridge was not willing to reach out to

the Latino community, the community was forced to make do for itself. College students were pivotal in obtaining various rights and privileges for Cambridge's Latino community, providing Latinos with the tools of language and know how, which the immigrants needed to triumph in their battle for equality (Santiago Transcription 6).

With issues such as conflicts with the police, the students translated information into English and presented the police department with complaints and potential solutions on behalf of the Latino community (see Appendix "Memo from Office of Chief of Police"). The community's needs were addressed once city officials realized that they were no longer dealing with poor, uneducated, non-English speaking residents. One example includes how the students helped the community members fight to make the public parks open to everyone. Latinos would no longer have to travel to the surrounding towns just to play a game of softball.

Support from the students provided the necessary resources for Puerto Ricans to create a committee to focus on the needs of Cambridge's Latino community. Roberto Santiago was elected president. The committee recognized the underemployment of Latinos in the area, who could only get very low paying jobs. To try to rectify the employment situation, the committee drafted letters to surrounding universities asking them to include more Latinos in their workforce (see Appendix).

CONCILIO HISPANO

Another obstacle to tackle involved the Cambridge Economic Opportunity Committee (CEOC), the anti-poverty agency that distributed money to the less fortunate in the city. Even though they were eligible for a portion of this money, Latinos never

received any. When members of the community presented a case to the CEOC stating why they deserved funding for an office, they were denied.

In response, the Latinos in the area united to protest the decision. Santiago had a connection to the traffic director through the Vellucis, and got permission to set up shop in a U-Haul truck parked in front of the CEOC's office. There, he and others met with Latinos who needed help with various resources. People from the Latino community showed up everyday to picket City Hall (Santiago Transcription 11).

Their goal was not reached until the group traveled to New York, where the branch that distributed federal money to the New England region was located. Three committee members, two students and a lawyer were able to argue the need for funding, describing the services which they hoped to provide, such as assisting residents with housing, translation and job placement services. The Office of Equal Economic Opportunity granted $18,000 to fund the committee, and thus began the Spanish Council, or Concilio Hispano as it now referred to.

The existence of Concilio Hispano gave legitimacy to the Cambridge Latino community. The organization helped immigrants find a place to live and showed them ways to deal with housing authorities. Concilio Hispano helped Latinos obtain basic services such telephone and electricity. The organization also provided childcare and helped Latinos receive medical attention. In collaboration with the Department of Social Services, Concilio Hispano was able to send Latino social workers into the homes of suspected child abuse cases. In cases in which abuse was present the children were made sure to be relocated to Latino foster families to ensure the preservation of their cultural

identities. The organization also intervened in conflicts between residents and various community institutions such as the police, the courts, and other city organizations.

Santiago told a story about one of his friends who was cited for a minor traffic violation of driving without a license. Normally, only a ticket would be issued for the offense. However, this Puerto Rican man was arrested and taken before a judge. The judge threatened to send the man to jail if he did not return to Puerto Rico, an obvious example of discrimination and misconduct. Concilio Hispano fought to require that court proceedings from then on be recorded in order to lessen the likelihood of discrimination in the courtroom. The discrimination around the community was widespread, but not always overt. Furthermore, Latinos in the area were characterized as Puerto Rican, regardless of their actual ethnicity.

III
NOT JUST PUERTO RICAN
AN INFLUX OF CENTRAL AMERICAN IMMIGRATION INTO CAMBRIDGE

Guatemalan refugees, Felipe and Elena Excot, and their family of five children at a worship service at Old Cambridge Baptist Church on March 24, 1984. They were brought to the church through a connection of Sanctuary establishments from the Mexican border to their desired destination of Weston Priory, Vermont.

NOT JUST PUERTO RICAN: An Influx of Central American Immigration Into Cambridge

Elizabeth Ahsanullah said that the Latino community was not recognized as having come from different parts of the hemisphere. To many non-Latinos, "anybody who [spoke] Spanish was Puerto Rican." She remembers being very surprised to hear a police officer refer to a Columbian man as an "f—ing Puerto Rican." (Ahsanullah Interview)

Similar anecdotes were commonplace to Latinos throughout the United States. If you spoke Spanish in the Southwest you were thought to be Mexican. In Miami, you might be mistaken for Cuban. In Cambridge and much of the northeast, you were labeled as Puerto Rican. However, the 1980s would drastically alter the composition of the Latino population across the United States and, in so doing, pose a myriad of new and complex issues for the nation to address. It was during this time that frightening civil wars were escalating throughout Central America. Immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua flooded through U.S. borders, more often than not, as a last resort to escape violence and economic troubles.

A large number of undocumented Central American immigrants began to settle in pockets of various metropolitan areas. As word from settled immigrants traveled back to cities, towns, and villages in Central America, family and friends of those immigrants followed suit. The formation of these immigrant settlements was contingent upon help and support from the respective communities in which they settled. While some U. S. citizens viewed Central American immigrants as illegal aliens stealing local jobs and occupying American resources and tax dollars; others recognized their position as

refugees with no choice but to flee dangerously bleak and life-threatening situations in their homelands. With many Central Americans making their way into the Boston area, Cambridge became one of a select group of communities across the United States to legally provide refuge for these newer Latino immigrants. Always known for their progressive politics, members of the Cambridge community began to make others aware of the social and political factors that brought these Latinos to New England. Eventually, these residents teamed up with immigrants to influence Cambridge City Council into passing a resolution to have the city legally recognized as a "Sanctuary city."

THE CIVIL WARS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

The brutal civil wars that were waged in Central America in the 1970s and 1980s were inextricably linked to the United States government. The Reagan and Bush administrations of the 1980s pumped billions of U.S. dollars into the Central American Wars, either in fear of government takeovers by communist groups, as was the case in El Salvador and Guatemala, or in the case of Nicaragua, to support anti-communist coups looking to overthrow the Sandanistas because they were perceived as communists.

These wars were the major reason why many Central Americans fled their countries and made the precarious journey to the United States. Although several separate histories are necessary to tell the story of Central Americans in the U.S., Central Americans in Cambridge are overwhelmingly Salvadoran. Thus for the purposes of their story, a brief overview of El Salvador's recent history is necessary.

For decades, El Salvador had been run by an increasingly corrupt oligarchy known as "the fourteen families". After a social call from the Second Vatican Council,

Catholic clergy members began to organize civic groups, transforming their "churches and missions into centers for democratic dissent." (Gonzalez 134) In 1972 and 1977, opposition candidates were on the verge of winning national elections until the National Guard organized military coups to prevent the victories. When another military coup ignored the results of a democratic election in 1979, a civil war broke out in El Salvador. Right-wing death squads began murdering and abducting trade union leaders, communist supporters, and even members of the Catholic clergy. After these death squads assassinated San Salvador's archbishop Oscar Romero in 1980, and four American Catholic nuns were killed several months later, the violence in El Salvador caught the attention of the outside world.

THE PLIGHT OF CENTRAL AMERICAN REFUGEES

It was at this time that Salvadorans began to come to the United States in great numbers. The U.S. government responded with strict immigration policies and the refusal to recognize most Salvadorans as refugees. Thousands of Salvadoran immigrants applied for political asylum, but only a select few were granted refugee status. Moreover, the disparity in the number of immigrants granted political asylum by country became the topic of much controversy. In the words of Elena Letona, currently the executive director of Centro Presente, a Cambridge-based organization advocating immigrants rights:

> (We) tried to get them some kind of protection, by filing for political asylum for these people, but by in large these petitions were not successful and people estimate that around 98 percent of the political asylum cases were denied. Now this was very different from when we [looked] at patterns of other nationalities of people, like from the Soviet Union or Nicaragua. (Letona Transcription 4)

In the eyes of many, the reason for this difference is quite simple; granting Salvadorans and Guatemalans political asylum would be hypocritical on the part of the United States government. The Reagan and Bush administrations were funding the very governments Salvadorans and Guatemalans were fleeing. Nicaraguans, on the other hand, were granted political asylum in much larger numbers, representative of the U. S. government's backing of anti-communists efforts to overthrow the Sandanista regime, the leadership these Nicaraguans would claim to be seeking asylum from.

In the meantime, as undocumented immigrants poured over U.S. borders, some social activists began to recognize the pressing need to assist the Central American immigrants that were beginning to make their way into Cambridge. Sister Rose Marie Cummins, a nun who helped found Centro Presente and played an instrumental role in providing immigrants with many social services, describes the situation of Cambridge's Salvadoran community as it manifested in the 1980s:

> It was pretty overwhelming. There was no center that was dealing with their issues. Most were undocumented and had come on a very tiresome and perilous journey with *coyotes* (smugglers). They told stories of things that had happened to them in their countries—stories that were unimaginable to me. They had lost children, brothers and sisters, spouses, and parents in the war…. They had fled forced conscription, disappearances, and death. Quite a few teachers came as well as some who had been in seminaries in La Union, Yucuaiquin, and San Vicente. None of them spoke English. They were living several people in an apartment, often times sleeping on the floor or on mattresses on the floor. A few were guerillas, some cheese makers, many other catechists... It soon became evident that there was a need for legal services because many of them had been arrested by Immigration. There was also a big need for social services and ESL classes. (Cummins Personal Communication)

THE SANCTUARY MOVEMENT AND THE STORY OF "ESTELA"

Other members of the community began to recognize these needs as well. On January 8, 1984, a congregation of fifty members at Old Cambridge Baptist Church (OCBC) voted unanimously to declare OCBC a Sanctuary church for undocumented Central American immigrants. In doing so, they joined almost 200 churches and synagogues nationwide taking part in the Sanctuary movement (Wallace 1). James and Julia Wallace were two of the people present at the OCBC gathering in 1984. Mr. Wallace described the uneasiness in coming to the consensus vote:

> At the time it felt like there was a very credible risk the church was taking. We knew that there were pretty severe laws. We knew that the government was not dealing kindly with people who were objecting to U.S. policy in El Salvador. It still felt like it was a real risk, not just a hypothetical risk. (Wallace, James Personal Communication)

These risks came in various forms ranging from severe government fines to incarceration. Certain governmental agencies, including the Department of Justice and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), vehemently opposed any acts in providing refuge for illegal immigrants. After the first arrest of a Sanctuary worker in Texas in February of 1984, OCBC members made a commitment to financially support any staff member if he or she were unable to work because of grand jury hearings, trials, or jail (Wallace Memo 1).

In the fall of 1984, OCBC sought out help from the Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America. Members of the Church wanted to provide sanctuary for a refugee, preferably a Salvadoran woman (Wallace Memo 2). Around this same time, Magdalena

Rivas, a textile worker and mother of three was arrested and tortured by the Salvadoran government for the third time. She was arrested for participating in a union that was trying to get better wages than the $2.50 a day they were getting for 12 hours of factory work (Wallace Testimony). She described the experience of being arrested for the second time in October:

> They killed (my husband) April 7, (1984) and they arrested me on April 9... the first time. And the second time I went to the union workers in Kimberly Clark. It's a factory plant in San Juan Opico... When we waited for the bus, the tank came and they arrested us… They have a room where they tortured the people and where they killed them. They leave the bodies there. You could see skeletons and the heads and everything. They almost killed me over there because a man said, "I am looking for somebody who killed my brother." And they thought I was the woman who killed his brother. All the time what they do is they keep you covered with a bandana. They tie you up. No handcuffs like what they do here with robbers. I stayed there for three days. (Rivas Interviews)

Her third arrest, coupled with the death of her husband, convinced Magdalena to leave her three young children with her sister and flee from El Salvador. Magdalena's journey took her to Mexico where she came in contact with local church members assisting Central American refugees. It was here that she decided to take on the pseudonym of "Estela Ramirez" for the protection of her family still living in El Salvador.

From the time that OCBC announced that "Estela" was coming in the fall of 1984, until August 21, 1988, OCBC had eleven break-ins of a suspicious nature. Files were rummaged through and doors broken, but no valuables were stolen. The break-ins fit the pattern of more than fifty incidents nationwide in churches and other groups working on Central American issues. Some believe the intruders were conducting black

bag jobs for the government to intimidate those participating in the Sanctuary movement (Wallace Memo 2).

When Magdalena arrived in Cambridge after stops in Texas and Ohio, she stayed at OCBC for two weeks before living in the basement of the Wallaces co-op for several months. Magdalena's fortnight stay at OCBC was a symbolic demonstration of Sanctuary by the church. From the time she arrived, Magdalena told her story to large gatherings at churches, schools, universities, and eventually Cambridge City Council (see Appendix for article). She spoke in Spanish with a translator conveying her story to those who did not understand her language. As the Sanctuary movement picked up steam nationally, the media increasingly gained interest. After sixteen Sanctuary workers were arrested in Tucson, Arizona, "Estela" was available a day later at OCBC for interviews by major television stations and newspapers. At events such as these, in which the international media was involved, "Estela" covered her face to mask her identity. Had word of her political activity in the U.S. reached El Salvador, there was a serious threat that the Salvadoran government would punish her family.

A RESOLUTION TO BECOME A "SANCTUARY CITY"

While "Estela's" story was making the atrocities in El Salvador known to those willing to listen, the Cambridge Peace Commission was spearheading a city resolution to have Cambridge be declared a "Sanctuary city" and serve as a safe haven for the nearly 5,000 Central American and Haitian refugees living "underground lives" (Cambridge Commission 8, see Appendix).

On April 8, 1985, after several months of speaking to the public, "Estela" gave perhaps her most important speech at the Cambridge city Council hearing "On the Status of Central American and Haitian Refugees (Cambridge Commission 7)." Fliers for the hearing were printed and distributed in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole (Ibid. 8). Major U.S. television, radio, and newspapers covered the hearing. The Council was deadlocked, four votes to four, until City Councillor Alfred Velluci joined his support in the measure. "Passage of the resolution brought unanimous applause from 500 citizens attending that night's hearing and calls from all over the country offering support (Ibid.)." (See Appendix)

THE IMPLICATIONS OF LEGAL SANCTUARY STATUS

Passing the resolution meant Cambridge officials would not have to "do the federal government's dirty work." (Wallace, James Interview) The Resolution ordered:

> That no city employee or department, to the extent legally possible, will request information about or otherwise assist in the investigation of the citizenship status of any City resident, will disseminate information regarding the citizenship of a City resident, or condition the provision of the City of Cambridge services or benefits on matters related to citizenship. (City of Cambridge Resolution)

This proclamation had several important implications. Sanctuary status led to the development of a free healthcare policy for low-income people at Cambridge Hospital (Cambridge Commission 8). It also made other communities throughout New England conscious of the situation of the various immigrant refugees. Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis established a refugee policy for the Commonwealth, based on the Resolution. Undocumented Latinos were now able to seek services from the city without fear. Julia Wallace explained the pervasiveness of the City Order with a personal anecdote:

> A Salvadoran woman, who was living with us, wanted to break up with her boyfriend. And he accosted her one morning as she was walking to the bus to go to work. He punched her in the face. She wanted to go to the police and get a restraining order and I said I would go with her. So we went to the police station in Central Square. I thought I kind of wanted to see if they could handle the Spanish language so I didn't volunteer to help translate. I'm not that good. And so we asked for somebody who could speak Spanish and they got on the radio and called in a guy on the beat in Central Square to come in and talk with her. And he was very kind and helpful to her. But the first thing he said was, "Don't ever be afraid to come here if you're not documented because this is a "Sanctuary city". (Wallace Interview)

THE FORMATION OF CENTRO PRESENTE TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF IMMIGRANTS

As the Central American population grew in size and it became apparent that it had many needs that were not being met by the community, Sister Rose Marie Cummins helped found the immigrant-advocacy organization Centro Presente. She spoke of its inception:

> A group of Salvadorans and another friend and I decided we would try to create a place where Salvadorans and Guatemalans would feel safe and able to get the support and assistance they needed. For two or three years, we had a small place at the Maryknollers in Cambridge, a small office in the Old Cambridge Catholic Church, and on Massachusetts Avenue. Then, the school closed at St. Mary's, my old place of ministry. I asked if we could rent space there and they were glad to have us. Many people helped us create offices out of the space we rented. (Cummins Personal Communication)

Eventually, Centro Presente received grants and was able to hire a lawyer, a social worker, an ESL teacher, and afford administrative costs. For over fifteen years, Centro Presente has been steadfast in providing services for immigrants in the greater Boston area. It currently serves over five thousand immigrants each year.

WHERE DID SALVADORANS SETTLE?

While Salvadorans represent a substantial portion of Cambridge's Latino population, there does not appear to be a tight-knit Salvadoran community. Unlike earlier generations of Latinos in Cambridge that settled in many of the same geographic areas and routinely held large community events, Salvadorans are scattered throughout Cambridge and do not regularly associate with a larger Salvadoran community.

Felix Perez explained that between working eighty-hour weeks, attending Church, and taking care of his family, he did not have time to socialize with other Salvadorans. This pattern seems representative of many Salvadorans and Central Americans in Cambridge, especially recent arrivals. Magdalena Rivas explains that there is almost no effort for Central Americans in Cambridge to come together as one group. Nelson Salazar immigrated directly to Boston from San Salvador in 1980. After living and working around Cambridge for the past 22 years, he addressed the notion of a Salvadoran settlement or community in Cambridge:

> What a lot of people ask about is like a settlement... like (the) North End... Because we're new in the area, and (Salvadorans are) trying to settle in, and because of the economics in the United States, it doesn't really allow (Salvadorans) to settle in. So you have to work eighty hours to make a living, never mind to say, "Okay, we're gonna settle in." It's not that easy... People ask, "Where do Salvadorans live?" Well, we're everywhere. Wherever you find a place to live, you move in. You don't say, "Oh let's go over there because there's Salvadorans over there. Let's go over there because there's a place to live." (Salazar Transcription 20-21)

Even though Salvadorans have settled in many different neighborhoods throughout Cambridge, Spanish services at St. Mary's Church bring together an array of Latinos from different communities, including a large number of Salvadorans. In this sense, the Church embodies the closest form of a unified Salvadoran community one might find, albeit one of common religious practice rather than social gathering. Ms. Rivas states that this lack of social organization is most likely a consequence of the long hours Salvadorans work, as it is common for people to work two or three jobs simultaneously.

A SISTER CITY: San Jose Las Flores

Rather than being a distinct community isolated from the greater Cambridge population, aspects of the Latino experience have in many ways infiltrated the community at large. Because of Cambridge's progressive nature, many organizations and institutions have developed in the past fifteen years to connect Latinos with non-Latinos in Cambridge.

A Sister City Program began in 1987 is an example of how many non-Latino residents of Cambridge have taken an interest in the backgrounds and experiences of their Latino neighbors.

In 1986, residents of the town of San Jose Las Flores in El Salvador defied the military and returned home after having been forced to leave during the war. The United States was spending $1.8 million per day to fund the war in El Salvador. These residents wanted Americans to know the tragedy that had taken over their homes and everyday lives. In order to reach out to North Americans, the residents of San Jose Las Flores sought for a city in the United States that would support their actions and help educate Americans about the circumstances of daily life in El Salvador. They specifically contacted cities with a substantial Latino population. The Cambridge Peace Commission agreed to be a sister city, and it has been sending a group of residents to San Jose Las Flores annually to provide moral and material support for their Salvadoran "relatives." (Hoffman Personal Communication)

The group sent representatives on the first anniversary of the San Jose Las Flores's repopulation in 1987 (see Appendix for pictures and articles). At the time, the

members of the Sister City Program were the first outsiders to enter the Salvadoran province. Previously, no one had been allowed in the town including media, journalists, tourists, or family. The community of San Jose Las Flores had been isolated from outside influence as the military had total control. On its first visit, the U.S. group went to provide support. They offered materials and supplies, but for the most part their presence showed moral support and shed light on what U.S. government funding was doing to El Salvador.

Over the years, the character of the group that visits the small agricultural town has changed. In the past five years, more high school aged residents have participated in the outreach program. The group has consistently been composed of mostly North Americans; rarely have Central Americans participated in the Sister City Program in Cambridge. Cathy Hoffman, the current director of the Sister City Program explains that many Salvadorans might be hesitant to participate in the program because the tragedies of the war are still very hard to cope with. In the same way, Magdalena Rivas is reluctant to tell her children about all her experiences with the war and her journey to the United States. She does not want them to know about the torment she experienced.

Nevertheless, the relationship between San Jose Las Flores and Cambridge demonstrates one of the ways that non-Latinos in Cambridge have gotten involved with the Latin American and Latino communities. The struggles that some of their Central American neighbors experienced gave residents of Cambridge an awareness of the United State's actions in Central America.

IV
LATINOS TODAY

Maira Perez, right, and her older sister Marisela Perez, left, participate in an interview of a fellow member of the Latino community in Cambridge. As members of the AHORA program at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, the Perez sisters have collaborated with students at Tufts University in putting this project together.

While the previous forty years of Cambridge's Latino presence can be characterized by definitive trends in (im)migration and community interests, the last decade has seen a drastic growth in its Latino population. The Latino community in Cambridge is currently more ethnically diverse than it has been in previous decades, and accordingly, it has seen variations in its activity. Today's Latinos are also assuming a leading role as part of the general Cambridge community. Many programs and institutions primarily focused on Latino issues no longer cater exclusively to Latino residents. Furthermore, institutions that remain focused on Latino issues have shifted their agenda to fit the needs of changing times. This final section will examine some of the changes and developments involving members of the Latino community in Cambridge.

WHAT TO MAKE OF CURRENT CENSUS DATA AND THE TERMINATION OF RENT CONTROL

Facing pressure from the state of Massachusetts, Cambridge was forced to end its policy on rent control. The long-standing practice guaranteed a specific ceiling on rental rates for certain housing units to make living in the city more affordable. This was a deliberate effort to diversify the ethnic and class makeup of Cambridge's population. Rent controlled housing units were available to anyone regardless of income level.

The loss of rent control had a foreseeable impact on not only the diversity of the City of Cambridge, but the size and composition of the Latino community as well. A 1998 article in the *Cambridge Chronicle* stated that rent across the entire rental market had increased by thirty-six percent since the end of rent control in 1994. Furthermore, the average rental rate of decontrolled housing units increased an astounding fifty-four

percent between 1994 and 1997 (City Changing). Despite intense efforts to preserve the system, those in favor of more modest rents and increasing socioeconomic diversity could not sway public opinion enough to prevent the eventual vote.

Today in the post rent control era, housing may be less accessible for many lower-income families in Cambridge. Seemingly after the loss of rent control, most families could not compensate for increasing costs of living. Some residents were forced to sacrifice other essential areas of their budget, move into smaller quarters, or move out of Cambridge altogether (Cambridge Rental Housing Study 1998).

In the years after rent control, there have been reports of dramatic resettlements and evictions of families not able to afford the climbing rents (Batista 2). Informants have mentioned that they have heard about or known families that have left for these reasons. However, the U.S. Census reports do not seem to indicate a precipitous drop in population. Rather, these reports show that the Latino population has continued to grow in spite of these difficulties. (see Appendix for chart)

In 1994 there were substantial public protests in response to the termination of rent control, including the picketing of City Hall. In 1995, Cambridge City Council approved the CITYHOME program, as a result of this political activism. In its first two years the program received $4.25 million dollars from the city. The funds are allocated to various programs that cater to the housing needs of low-income residents (Community Development). These programs have been somewhat successful in softening some of the effects in losing rent control. Much of the Latino population is concentrated in Area 4 and, as such, it is worth looking at the affordable housing market in this area in further detail.

Area 4 has several housing units devoted to affordable and subsidized housing. In 1995 the Cambridge Housing Authority subsidized over four hundred housing units in Washington Elms and Newtowne Court. There are also several other units located in the JFK housing complex owned by the Housing Authority. Additional affordable units have been provided by private nonprofits such as, Homeowner's Rehab and Just a Start. The presence of substantial low-income housing continues to benefit the community, especially those new to Cambridge (Area Four Neighborhood Study).

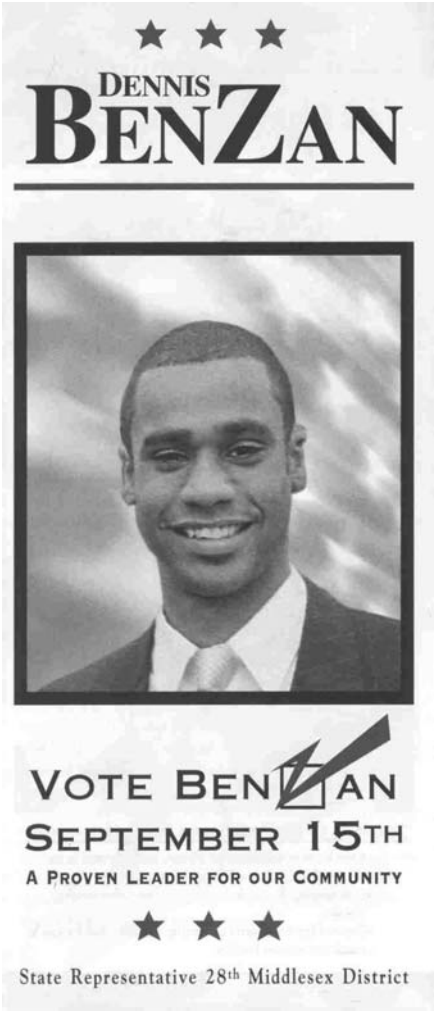
THE POPULATION QUESTION

Many Latinos come to Cambridge with hopes of making money and improving their lives, and as such they are not a wealthy population. Despite their economic position, there has been a substantial increase in the number of Latinos over the last thirty years. This has proved to be somewhat of a mystery in this project. While several sources have noted that many families relocated following the end of rent control, Census data shows that Latinos, specifically Central Americans, continue to settle in Cambridge. Another reason for this increase in the Latino population is the growing professional Latino community in recent years. While this particular group did not make up a large portion of the Latino community in earlier decades, the number of Spanish-speaking professionals is currently on the rise in Cambridge.

THE LATINO VOICE

Since the termination of rent control in Cambridge, many lower-income households have been able to remain in the city as a result of grassroots political

organizing. Insofar as the city continues to be pressured to support these programs, the Latino population should remain a vibrant part of the Cambridge community. These continued efforts to subsidize housing costs highlight the importance political mobilizing. In the early days of the community Latinos, such as Roberto Santiago used community activism and informal political organization to etch a space for Latinos in Cambridge. Fortunately, as the Latino community matured, it continued to build upon these political foundations set by early pioneers.



Pamphlets distributed by Dennis Benzan during his campaign

In 1996, Dennis Benzan ran for State Legislature in Cambridge, but was defeated by a narrow margin. In 1998, he ran for the same position but was defeated by another Latino candidate, Jarrett Barrios. Benzan's campaigns were based largely around grassroots organizing of Latinos in Area 4. He considers his campaigns a success because they helped raise community awareness about politics and the importance of the Latino vote (Benzan, Dennis Transcription). Similarly, many members of the community continue to champion issues that reflect the evolving needs of the Latino population in Cambridge.

TRANSFORMATION OF CONCILIO HISPANO

Both the loss of rent control and the sudden influx of the Central American populations in the late 1980s and 1990s drastically changed the nature of the Latino community. A comfortably established group of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans was met by a new wave of immigrants. Clearly, those that have (im)migrated most recently have different needs and experiences than those that made up the earlier community.

Accordingly, Concilio Hispano has changed the nature of the services it provides to adapt to these changing circumstances. Founded by Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in response to the concerns and challenges presented to them, Concilio Hispano began with a particular agenda. They provided referral services, translation assistance, and planned cultural events. While these are all important to immigrant communities, they do not resolve the immediate concerns of Cambridge's newer immigrants.

Newer immigrants are often concerned with citizenship rights and fundamental survival in an unfamiliar city. Traditionally, Concilio Hispano was not used to dealing with such issues. Although the needs of the Latino community changed in the early 1990s, the focus of Concilio Hispano did not. The organization continued to cater to the needs of its original constituency.

This constituency, because of their immigration status as U.S. citizens or permanent residents, already had easier access to resources and programs than other groups. As a result, Concilio Hispano always had a close relationship with federal and state services such as Department of Social Services and the Welfare Department. Refugees from Central America were not able to get these services because of their undocumented immigration status.

Over the last decade, the staff of Concilio Hispano has changed considerably, from primarily Puerto Ricans and Dominicans to what Nelson Salazar calls the "United Nations". Salazar recalls working with employees from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Costa Rico, Chile, and the United States (Salazar Transcription 14).

An annual Latino Festival took place in Columbia Park from the mid 1980s through the early 1990s. This celebration has since been removed from Concilio Hispano's agenda.

The functions of Concilio Hispano's services for the Latino community have seen similar changes. The organization continues to provide referral services, and an expanded ESL program. Additionally, the organization is putting more efforts into educational programs to strengthen the community internally. Ms. Saavedra thinks that ultimately, the need for a formal institution such as Concilio Hispano will not be necessary. She states, "Rather than doing intervention kind of programs, we're doing prevention kind of programs." (Saavedra Transcription 4)

Concilio Hispano has served as an outlet for underrepresented voices to receive assistance. Originally, its constituents struggled to get basic rights to vote, receive adequate healthcare, legal representation, and proper treatment from city officials. They also used the organization to preserve traditions that the majority of the members shared from their native lands. Latinos that move into Cambridge now can take advantage of the

paths that were cleared for them by their predecessors. Yet, the new generation of immigrants has to deal with additional issues that the Puerto Ricans and Dominicans of earlier generations did not.

Many people miss the cultural activities that Concilio Hispano endorsed. The annual Latino Festival has been replaced by an all-encompassing, city-sponsored, International Festival in Central Square. Sylvia Saavedra explains the reason such cultural activities have declined:

> Change in priorities, that's all… The community that has come…has had to battle wars, [they are] mainly people from Central America, who have very, very little education. So, the adjustment and all of that had been much harder for them. So, we have had to assist the community in a very different [way]… You know the issues of immigration that the community has here, that's not the issue that the Puerto Rican community had. So of course they could dedicate time to celebrate culture. We're here, what are we going to celebrate? The fact that they changed the immigration bill and now if you even *look* dark, you are asked in the street to give your green card. Especially after September 11th. So we're dealing with other kinds of stuff—very, very different than it was before. So, switching of priorities, and what is it that the community needs. That doesn't mean that the community doesn't say to you, "I need that cultural stuff too." (Saavedra Transcription 7)

Concilio Hispano now deals with a vastly different community and, as a result, the organization has altered its services in an attempt to address this community's needs.

THE YOUNGER GENERATION

The rising population of Latinos in Cambridge is also paralleled by the growth of Latinos in the public school system. Education is one of the channels through which (im)migrants are able to upgrade their socioeconomic status and standard of living. The public school system is therefore a critical element for the future of the younger generations and the Latino community in general.

Cambridge's Bilingual Education Program has been under scrutiny in the past few years, as some residents do not support the necessity or effectiveness of such a curriculum. This program was an important part of the education of many Spanish-speaking students attending Cambridge public schools during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Students in the bilingual program were not only Latino. Spanish-speaking students found themselves surrounded by other languages, ranging from Chinese to Haitian Creole. While this system addresses the language needs of these non-native students, it does not allow students to take classes with native English speakers.

1986 brought the inception of the AMIGOS program. An alternative to bilingual education, AMIGOS is a two-way program in which both native English and Spanish speakers participate. Students from kindergarten through eighth grade are taught the same subjects as those that follow the typical curriculum. However, the class is conducted completely in Spanish or English on alternate weeks. The goal of the program is to help native Spanish-speakers articulate English with ease, and for the English-speaking students to obtain the same comfort level with Spanish. The program has remained relatively small, but has grown slightly over the years. The average class consists of roughly equal portions of Latino students and non-Spanish speakers. This

program demonstrates a deliberate effort on behalf of Cambridge to benefit from the presence of a substantial Spanish-speaking population.

THE CHURCH TODAY

Today, people travel from all over Boston to attend Spanish services at St. Mary's Church. Its Sunday mass has been known to house as many as seven hundred parishioners. People of various backgrounds and ethnicities unite to participate in the sacraments of Communion and Reconciliation. Sunday services are videotaped and broadcast on Cambridge's community television station. The Church accommodates people of all ages, through religious education classes, as well as youth and young adult programs.

The Church continues to reach out to younger members of the parish. There is a youth group consisting of teenagers seeking a better understanding of their faith, as well as a group of young adults who come together to share both their religious beliefs as well as their thoughts about issues in the church as a whole. There are also bible classes and prayer meetings conducted in Spanish.

Many of Cambridge's former Latino residents return to attend services at St. Mary's Church. As an active member of St. Mary's Church, Maria Bermudez has noticed that people now living in towns such as Waltham, Chelsea, Revere, and other parts of Boston still attend Church ceremonies in Cambridge. "Many of these people travel the extra distance to attend St. Mary's Church because it represents their first sense of community in the United States (Bermudez Interview)." While not everyone can

return to St. Mary's on a weekly basis, many make the effort to attend occasionally or for special services.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In trying to gain an understanding of the Latino community in Cambridge, the members of our group attend several services at St. Mary of the Annunciation. In spite of this, the Church remains an area of study we would have liked to pursue further.

In conducting our research, we were essentially starting at ground zero. Little had been documented about the history of the Latino community in Cambridge, and it was our hope that we could find informants to assist us in piecing together a report that would do the community justice. In sixteen weeks, we have experienced first hand the city's rich diversity within the Latino community. Informants from a wide range of backgrounds were generous with their time and energy in providing us with incredible stories, information, and insights. Nevertheless, sixteen weeks is a relatively short time to cover a group of people with many years of history. Many stones have been left unturned.

The "Early Years" of Latinos in Cambridge still contain many gaps. In the early 1960s, President John F. Kennedy had plans for a NASA research center to be built in East Cambridge. These plans forced many Puerto Ricans living in the area to relocate as East Cambridge was prepared for the massive construction project. After Kennedy was assassinated, President Lyndon B. Johnson moved the site of the NASA center to his

home state of Texas. We were unable to gather information on the Puerto Ricans living in East Cambridge prior to their relocation.

The fire in Columbia Terrace was also a piece of information we would have liked to investigate further. Who were the families affected and where did they relocate? Why did they never return? Were they able to recover from any significant losses in the fire?

There was not enough time to gather much information in regards to education. There is much more to be learned about Cambridge's Bilingual Education Program, and useful informants are accessible. Corrine Varon is one such informant. We would also liked to have learned more about Latino students outside of the bilingual programs. We were in contact with Larry Aaronson, a history teacher at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School who has taught there for many years. We would have been interested in learning of his experience seeing many Latino students pass through the high school.

United States Census numbers show that Mexicans make up the second largest group of Latinos in Cambridge. The 2000 U.S. Census reports 1,175 Mexicans living in the city. In asking many informants, none were able to point us in the direction of a Mexican resident residing in Cambridge. If there is a Mexican community in Cambridge, we would like to identify it and figure out where they live, work, and come together. If other Latino groups are choosing to identify themselves as Mexican for political or social reasons, we would like to determine exactly what those reasons are.

Our information on the Sanctuary movement came to us near the end of this project. We have only recently been in contact with Cambridge residents who were personally involved in the movement. They were able to give us names and contact

information of people who have since left Cambridge but should be able to assist us in our research. For example, we are in contact with Dr. Juan Emilio Carrillo, who Sister Rose Marie Cummins described as very helpful in providing services for undocumented Central American immigrants in the 1980s at Cambridge Hospital.

There is no study that has pinpointed the specific effects of the end of rent control for the Latino populations. Further research along these lines will help to illuminate the Latino experience from a historical perspective. However, one issue that may be relevant for the future of the community is the new focus in Cambridge on mixed-income housing projects. The idea behind these programs is to allow lower incomes residents access to the same benefits that residents of higher incomes enjoy, such as higher-quality buildings and facilities, access to better public schools, and safer neighborhoods. While these programs promise to have a positive effect on lower-income families, what will be the effects on Cambridge's Latino residents? Will greater dispersion of Latinos in housing projects make community building efforts more challenging?

We were not expecting the entire history of Latinos in Cambridge to be pieced together in sixteen weeks. Hopefully this report will serve as a benchmark for future research. The collaboration with Latina students in the AHORA program at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School was incredibly helpful. Moreover, their presence on this project shows great promise that fellow members of our younger generation are interested in community research.

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LIST OF INDIVIDUALS INTERVIEWED

Elizabeth Ahsanullah: Cambridge resident for over twenty years; employee at Cambridge Election Commission.

Elba Bedros: Choir member at St. Mary's Church.

Dennis Benzan: Grew up in Columbia Terrace; ran for Massachusetts State Representative.

Maria Bermudez: Instructional Assistant at Cambridgeport School; Director of Religious Education Program at St. Mary of the Annunciation.

Ramón Cruz: Originally from Havana, Cuba; former owner of El Coloso, which is now the Brea Market.

Sister Rose Marie Cummins: Founder of Centro Presente, former Sister at Saint Mary's Catholic Church in Cambridge.

Epigemnio Guzman: Owner of 'Tu y Yo'' originally from Mexico.

Cathy Hoffman: Director of Cambridge's Sister City Program with San Jose Las Flores in El Salvador.

Elena Letona: Current Executive Director of Centro Presente.

Jaime Mercabo: Student and waiter at Casa Mexico, originally from Columbia.

Manfredo Perez: Originally from El Salvador, grew up in Cambridge.

Felix Perez: Originally from La Union, El Salvador; chef at a Boston area restaurant; resident of Cambridge.

Magdalena Rivas: Salvadoran refugee settled in Cambridge; helped bring Cambridge its Sanctuary status.

Hilda Rosario: Originally from the Dominican Republic; currently a teacher at the Maynard School.

Nelson Salazar: Former employee of Concilio Hispano and Centro Presente; founded the Welcome Project in Somerville.

Roberto Santiago: Community activist and leader.

James and Julia Wallace: Leaders in Cambridge Sanctuary movement.

I: THE EARLY YEARS

APPENDIX ITEMS

- City of Cambridge Memo: 4 December 1989
- Spanish Language Population Map
- Reunion de los “Coamenos Autenticos”
- Photographs

II: OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME

APPENDIX ITEMS

- Letter to Tufts University
- Letter from Office of Chief of Police
- Memorandum from Judge Feloney

III: NOT JUST PUERTO RICAN

APPENDIX ITEMS

- Testimony of James E. Wallace
- City of Cambridge Resolution: 8 April 1985
- Letter from the Cambridge Hospital
- The Cambridge Idea: Fifth Anniversay Report of the Cambridge Commission on Nuclear Disarmament and Peace Education
- Cambridge: A Sanctuary City
- “Refugees Won’t Jam City, Cambridge Observers Say”
- “Cambridge Votes to Be a Sanctuary”
- “Nuevo Salvador?”
- “Sanctuary in Cambridge”
- “Cambridge Offers Sanctuary for Illegal Aliens”
- Memo by Julia Wallace: History of OCBC Sanctuary Experience
- Photographs from Sister City

IV: LATINOS TODAY

APPENDIX ITEMS

- Cambridge Languges Spoken at Home: 1990
- Cambridge Detailed Racial & Hispanic Population: 1980-2000
- 2000 Hispanic Origin – Cambridge Census 2000 Trends and Differences Presentation to City Council
- Income Distribution in RC Units
- Cartoon from Cambridge Chronicle on Effects of End of Rent Control
- "City Changing Since End of Rent Control, Report Says"
- Rent Control Petition Fact Sheet
- "Affordable Housing Proposals Pass Council"
- "City Council Approves Housing Proposals
- Photographs from the Community