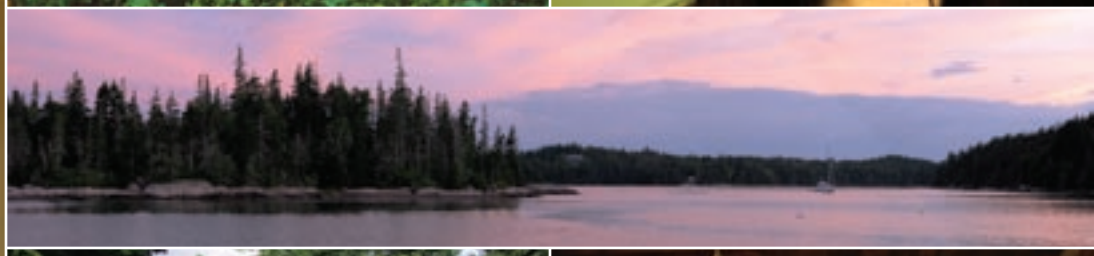
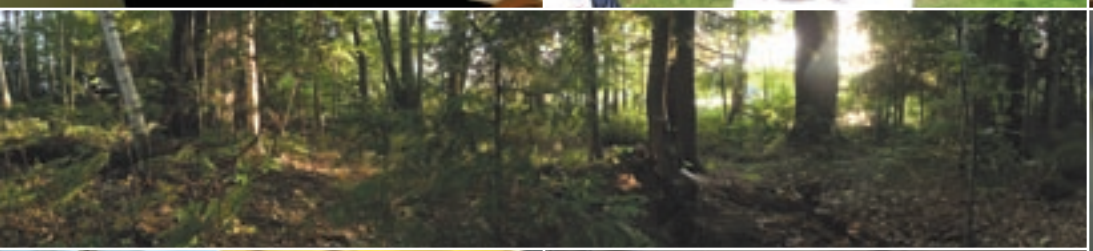
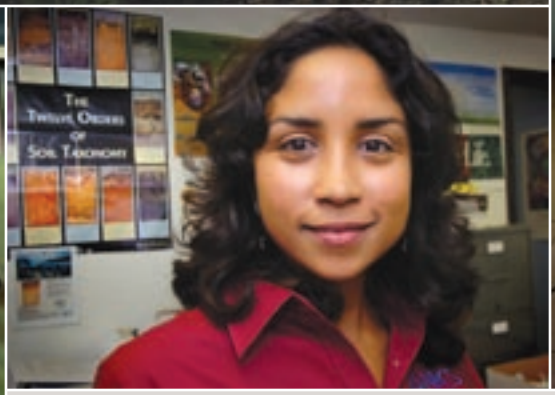
The Growing Latin American Influence

Opportunities for Maine's Economy







Maine Center for Economic Policy

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Preface and Acknowledgments

The Growing Latin American Influence: *Opportunities for Maine's Economy* is the first in a series of reports by the Maine Center for Economic Policy (MECEP) on immigration and its importance to our state's future growth and development. Hispanics currently represent the largest immigrant population in Maine and are thus a logical choice for this first report.

MECEP has purposely diverged from our usual numbers-based research in order to present both a qualitative and quantitative look at the Latino population in Maine. Statistics can tell us about trends, but only people can tell us their stories. The story of Maine is a story of in-migration and out-migration, settlement and re-settlement. The face of Maine is changing. Maine and Vermont still remain the whitest states in the nation. However, the number of foreign-born people living in Maine rose 6% between 2006 to 2007, while the immigrant population nationwide grew by just 1.4%.

Many policymakers, economists and business leaders are rightfully concerned about the adequacy of Maine's future labor force, our falling birth rate, the 'brain drain' of educated young people leaving Maine, and our aging population. Others are concerned about Maine's future relevance in a global marketplace where our lack of diversity and cultural competency may be a key disadvantage. And unfortunately immigrants – particularly those of non-European descent – are still viewed in some quarters with suspicion and distrust. In this report, we hope to break the stereotypes and misconceptions about Hispanics in Maine: who they are, where they come from, how they get here, and why they stay.

Immigrants contribute to the Maine economy in multiple ways; by paying taxes, filling job vacancies, starting new businesses, harvesting crops, participating in civic activities, consuming goods and services, and revitalizing communities. The net financial gain from immigration in America is widely documented. But economic contributions are not the only reason why Maine needs new immigrants. The life experiences, traditions, ideas, customs, cuisine, art and music all serve to enrich our communities and our state.

In 2007, Blanca Santiago, at the time a MECEP board member, approached Executive Director Christopher St. John with the idea of documenting the economic impact of Maine's immigrant population on our economy. This report – two years in the making – is a testament to her persistence and dedication.

The Growing Latin American Influence: *Opportunities for Maine's Economy* study was carried out during the summer of 2008. In addition to data collection and analysis, one-on-one interviews were conducted with Hispanics from across the state and in various professions to gather their stories and gain insight into their experiences in Maine. The research for this report was conducted by Blanca Santiago, President of Centro Latino and Diane Belanger, PhD candidate at the University of Maine Orono, Maine under the direction of Nicole Witherbee, PhD, Federal Budget Analyst at MECEP. Their work included both the quantitative research and qualitative interviews.

This report builds on prior research conducted during the summer of 2007 by Nicole Witherbee and MECEP interns; Carol Hughes-Hallett, Maeve Kieffer, and Matt Crommett. Funding for this research was provided in part by the Maine Community Foundation, the Maine State Planning Office and the Maine DHHS Office of Multicultural Affairs.

In the fall of 2008, we contracted with Victor Damian, an independent photojournalist, to photograph the individuals profiled in this report. MECEP extends a very special thanks to all the people who shared their stories with us.

In addition, we gratefully acknowledge the contributions of MECEP board member, Juan Perez-Febles, Director of the Maine Department of Labor Migrant and Immigrant Services, for his expertise on migrant worker issues and data. The report also benefited from his review.

The final report was compiled and edited by MECEP staff members Deborah Felder, Communications Director and Garrett Martin, Economic Policy Analyst. The report was designed by Neil Amalfitano at R.N. Haskins Printing Company in Oakland.

Photos of migrant workers are by Earl Dotter from the Farmworkers Feed Us All Exhibit and from the Maine Department of Labor.

We also wish to acknowledge Kathy Breckenridge for her assistance putting MECEP in touch with potential interview participants and to Mark Felder for the panoramic photos on the cover.

Funding for this study was made possible by a grant from The Catawamteak Fund at the Maine Community Foundation and by The Hudson Foundation. We sincerely thank them for making this work possible. ■

Executive Summary

Maine has recorded a Hispanic population since 1860, when the U.S. Census reported that 25 Hispanics from Mexico, Cuba, and South America had made Maine their home. Since that time, the number of Hispanics living in the state has grown to 15,656 in 2007, representing approximately 1.2% of the population.

As one of the whitest states in the U.S., Maine will likely see continued significant increases in the number of foreign-born residents. To remain globally competitive, the state must identify ways to maximize the potential contributions of people, native and non-native alike, who locate here, and to appreciate the competitive gains that can be achieved through increased diversity and cultural competency.

This report is a starting point. By depicting the experiences and contributions of the state's largest minority population, the Maine Center for Economic Policy hopes to foster understanding and establish a baseline for future policy action. Following is a summary of key findings and recommendations.

Key Findings:

- ***Hispanics represent the largest minority group in Maine.*** 15,656 Hispanics lived in Maine in 2007 and accounted for approximately 1.2% of the state's population.

- ***Latinos in Maine are a heterogeneous group that came to the state for a variety of reasons.*** While Hispanics of Puerto Rican and Mexican ancestry account for almost half of the Hispanics in Maine, there is broad representation of other Latin American countries in the state. Similarly, the stories of how and why individuals of the Hispanic community came to live in Maine reveal diverse experiences and backgrounds.

- ***Hispanic settlement in Maine reflects a growing regional pattern of geographic dispersion by secondary migrants.*** Historically, Hispanics settled in more urban areas and added to their numbers as a result of new international migration, family reunification, and births. Secondary migrants to more suburban and rural areas are becoming the norm in northern New England and are driving Hispanic population growth in Maine. Hispanics reside in every county in the state and are more geographically dispersed than other minority groups.

- ***Latinos, along with other immigrant groups, are playing an increasingly important role in Maine's labor force.*** Faced with slow population growth, an increasingly aged population and continued 'brain drain' of educated young people leaving the state, the adequacy of Maine's future labor force is at risk. Immigrants are helping to offset some of these trends. From 2000 to 2007, the state's Hispanic population grew by 67% compared to 3.3% growth for the total population. The median age of the state's Hispanic population is 26.9 years, compared to 42.1 years for whites.

- ***Hispanic contributions to Maine's economy and community-life are many and varied.*** In 2002 there were 731 Hispanic-owned businesses in the state generating $113 million in revenue. This represents a 117% increase in revenue from 1997. Approximately 10,000 to 12,000 migrant and seasonal farm workers work in the state each year. Some choose to stay and make Maine their home. In the town of Milbridge, for example, Mexican agricultural workers and their families (approximately 200 people) have settled in and are bringing new life to a rural community.

Recommendations:

- ***Expand English language programs for immigrants.*** The discrepancy in educational attainment and income between foreign born immigrants and second generation immigrants is most often associated with language acquisition. It is in the state's interest to insure that students and adults with limited proficiency in English have access to appropriate language courses and, where appropriate, that these courses are offered in conjunction with particular employment opportunities.

- ***Guarantee a certain number of temporary or seasonal visas for Maine employers.*** 66,000 H2B visas are issued in the U.S. each year. These visas cannot be applied for until an employer is within 120 days of the issue date (i.e. the point at which the employee will commence work). This puts seasonal employers in states like Maine at a disadvantage since employers in states with longer production cycles, earlier growing seasons, or longer tourist seasons are better positioned to obtain such visas. Such a policy has an adverse impact on employers in Maine and may limit the potential for economic growth in certain areas of the state's economy.

- ***Develop better ways to recognize and capitalize on the skills that immigrants may already possess.*** Many Hispanic immigrants who come to Maine were skilled professionals including nurses, doctors, teachers and engineers, in their home countries. Unfortunately, many lack the certification needed to practice in the U.S. The state should work with universities and businesses to identify these experienced professionals and fast track them through programs that match existing skills with Maine specific demand.

- ***Invest in programs that promote and support entrepreneurship within the Hispanic community.*** Business ownership may be one of the best ways for skilled immigrants to pursue a livelihood. While many programs are in place, more can be done to support outreach and make resources available to Latino and immigrant business owners in Maine.

- ***Strengthen and improve state-level efforts to promote awareness and shared prosperity within minority and immigrant communities.*** The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) within the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) holds great promise but lacks adequate funding and staffing to take a leadership position in addressing issues effecting immigrants in Maine and in building awareness of their contributions. The Governor, DHHS, OMA and its advisory council should play a stronger role in identifying and providing feedback on policies related to integrating Maine's immigrant communities. ■

Introduction

The United States is largely a nation of immigrants. Immigration and the melding of cultures keeps our labor supply strong and innovation flowing. Nevertheless, immigration remains a subject that elicits strong emotion and difficult conversations. Immigration forces Americans to balance fears about maintaining the status quo with the need to grow our economy, bring new life to our communities and diversify our cultural experiences.

Since 2000, Hispanics accounted for more than half (50.5%) of the overall population growth in the United States. Hispanics comprise 15% of the U.S. population, making them the nation's largest minority group.[1] In contrast with past trends, Hispanic growth in this century has been more a product of natural increase (births minus deaths) of the existing population than it has been of new international migration.

As in the U.S., Hispanics comprise the largest minority group in Maine, approximately 1.2% of the state's population.[2] From 2000 to 2007 Maine's Hispanic population increased 67%.[3] Similarly, from 1997 to 2002 business ownership by Hispanics increased by 34% and revenues increased by 117%.[4,5]

Despite these trends, Hispanic residents of Maine are often less visible than other ethnic communities. In contrast to their national counterparts, Latinos in the state do not typically live in dense ethnically-defined communities. They are spread across the state and work in a variety of settings. While some Hispanics began life in Maine as migrant workers, many did not. Their reasons for coming to the state are often as diverse as the lives they create once they arrive here. Indeed, Maine has recorded a Hispanic population since 1860, when the U.S. Census reported that 25 Hispanics from Mexico, Cuba, and South America had made Maine their home.[6]

In this report, we look at Maine's growing Hispanic population focusing in particular on first and second generation Latinos, migrants and immigrants. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative research we paint a picture of the demographic trends, economic contributions (both current and future) and varied experiences associated with the state's Hispanic population. In so doing, we hope to provide a window into the opportunities that 21st century migrations present for Maine. ■

A Word about Terminology

Anyone who is an immigrant to this country or a minority in their own country knows that labels matter. This is also true for people from Latin America who may disagree about whether Hispanic or Latino is the preferred term. Within the research community both Hispanic and Latino are widely used. The Pew Hispanic Center, for example uses both Latino and Hispanic, while the U.S. Census used to use only the term Hispanic, but now uses both. Other organizations use only the term Latino. In this report we use Hispanic and Latino interchangeably. In the story section, people self describe themselves as Hispanic, Latino/a or both. The countries of Central America, South America and the Caribbean have rich and diverse cultures that are very distinct from one another. They have unique traditions, cuisines, climates, and in some cases languages. If given a choice, most people who hail from countries in the Latin American region would self-identify by their country of origin, such as Puerto Rican, Mexican, Colombian, etc.

Webster's dictionary defines Latin America, Latino and Hispanic in this way:

Latin America: 1. Spanish America & Brazil. 2. All of the Americas South of the United States.

Latino: a native or inhabitant of Latin America or a person of Latin-American origin living in the United States.

Hispanic: of, relating to, or being a person of Latin American descent living in the United States; especially: one of Cuban, Mexican, or Puerto Rican origin.

FIGURE 1 Map of Latin America

Definitions

Immigrant: A person who moves to a country where he or she intends to settle permanently.

Second generation immigrant: The children of immigrant parents, first in a family line to be born in the United States.

Foreign-born person: A U.S. resident who was not a citizen at birth.

Native-born: For the purposes of this study a native-born person is someone who was born in the U.S. and whose parents were also born in the U.S. They will have a wide range of heritage including that of Latin American.

Refugee: A person who is unable or unwilling to live in his or her native country because of persecution or fear of persecution.

Naturalization: The process by which an immigrant becomes a U.S. citizen.

Family reunification: The process by which citizens and immigrants, including refugees, are allowed to sponsor close relatives enabling them to come live in the U.S.

Visa: A legal permit to enter the United States granted according to purpose, such as travel, work, or study.

Immigration and Resettlement in Maine

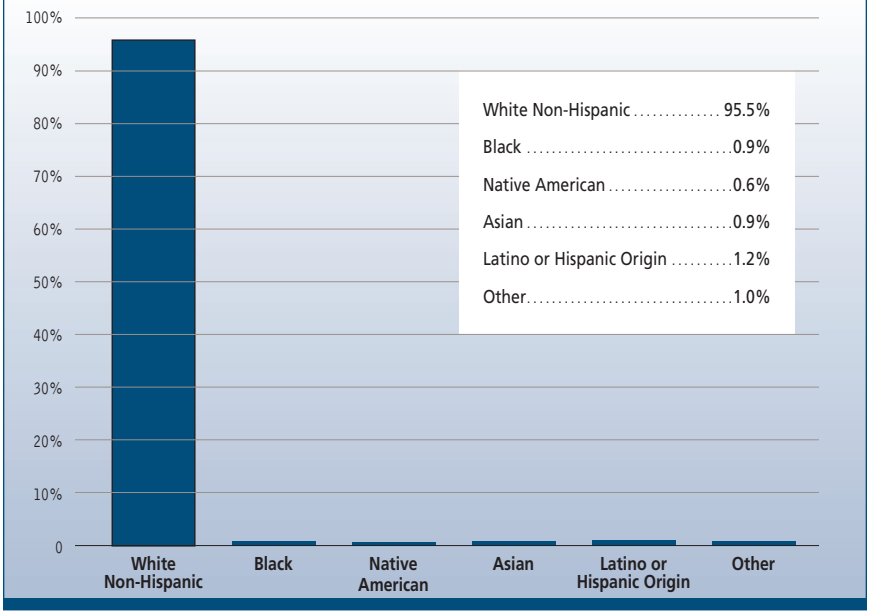
Maine's economic and cultural history is marked by significant in-migration of foreign born people. Most notable is the influx of Irish and French Canadians in the mid to late 1800s.

At the beginning of the 21st century, 3% of Maine's population (36,691 individuals) were identified as foreign-born. In recent years the growth of Maine's foreign-born population has outstripped national levels. From 2006 to 2007 the number of foreign-born people living in Maine rose from 36,976 to 45,720, representing a 24% increase. Nationally, this increase was 1.4% (37.5 million to 38.1 million) for the same time period.[7]

Over the past thirty years, many of Maine's immigrants arrived as refugees from civil wars and political persecution. During the 1970's and 1980's, refugees from Afghanistan, Cuba, Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam) and Eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia, Poland and Russia) resettled in Maine. In the 1990's, the population shifted with the arrival of refugees from Africa (Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia, and Sudan) and from the former Yugoslavia. The newest refugees are being resettled from Iran and Iraq. As evidence of these diverse origins, Maine's Department of Education reports that 86 languages other than English are spoken in the homes of Maine students.

While some refugees begin their life in the U.S. in Maine, others (referred to as secondary migrants) choose to move here after having lived elsewhere in the country. Catholic Charities of Maine is the primary resettlement agency in the state and assists approximately 200 to 250 new arrivals and 1,200 secondary migrants each year. The organization estimates that 40 to 60% of new Mainers are secondary migrants and that the majority – up to 90% - of Maine's most recent immigrants have resettled in greater Portland and Lewiston/Auburn. Still, many municipalities across the state are becoming home to more and more new Mainers. ■

FIGURE 2 Race and Ethnicity of Maine's Population: 2007



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division.

Destination Maine

Learning how and why Maine's refugees and immigrants come to the state can be fascinating and informative. The stories of the Latinos profiled for this report offer many examples of the factors that can both push and pull individuals to settle here.

Quality of place is important. Angel Ortiz, came to Portland while serving in the U.S. Navy during Desert Storm. He fell in love with the city and filed Maine away as a good place to raise a family.

Some come for health reasons. When Monica Elliot's husband left for Maine to help a friend in Calais, she did not imagine that a health emergency would find her at his bedside at Eastern Maine Medical Center in Bangor. She has not seen her native Peru since. For Maria Rave, it was her young son who needed the care of a specialist that brought the family from their native Colombia to the U.S. and eventually to make a home in Ellsworth and then in Bangor.

Political events have the power to change lives forever. The presence of the Shining Path in Peru caused Elna Osso's family to relinquish some of the traditional control over their young daughter to allow her to come to the U.S. to live, work and study. Dr. Felix Hernandez's family left their home in Havana, Cuba on Christmas day of 1960 almost a year after Fidel Castro took power.

The pursuit of educational and economic opportunities also plays a role. Like Elna Osso, Gustavo Burkett came to the U.S. for educational opportunities. Bianca Soto Gomez arrived in Maine after receiving a job as a soil conservationist for the state.

Finally, family and family re-unification, a central theme in the larger Latino migration and immigration story, plays a role. In spite of the long and complicated process of getting a visa or being petitioned by a family member, such a twist of fate is often viewed as a winning lottery ticket that one can not just discard. Rafael Clariot came when an aunt went to visit him, his mother and older brother in the Dominican Republic and later petitioned them to join her in New York.

> ***"Coming from San Antonio, Dallas and Houston, there's a lot of you around - a lot of Mexicans and Mexican culture. Here, when I hook up with other Latinos, they're from Argentina, Honduras, Chile, Guatemala, other places. Each one has their own culture, their own idea. So we have to readapt."***
>
> — Angel Loredo

Maine's Latin American Population

The Hispanic community is a heterogeneous group. Individuals hail from a variety of places and come to the state for a variety of reasons. Some come as migrant and seasonal farmworkers seeking employment. Others come as second-generation migrants with a job in hand and a desire to create a better life for their family. Then there are those that come to be with family or to reconnect with a place and a way of life that reminds them of their native place. Still others come as members of the U.S. Armed Forces. Regardless the reason for coming, virtually all the individuals interviewed for this report cited the sense of community and quality of life in the state as reason to stay.

Historic (and Future) Growth

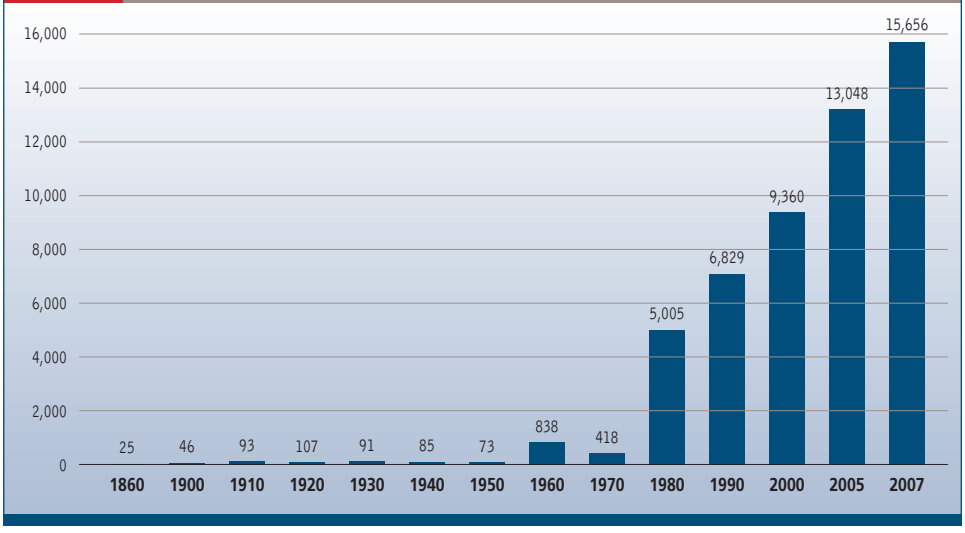
Maine has recorded an Hispanic population since 1860, when the U.S. Census reported that 25 Hispanics from Mexico, Cuba and South America made Maine their home. 15,656 Hispanics made their home in the state in 2007. This represents a 67% increase from 2000 to 2007 and firmly establishes the Hispanic community as the largest minority group in the state. If current trends hold, Latinos could make up as much as 10% of the state's population and 20% of the U.S. population by 2050.[8]

FIGURE 3 Ancestry of Maine's Hispanic Population: 2007

Colombian	114
Costa Rican	735
Cuban	391
Dominican	103
Ecuadorian	334
Guatemalan	294
Honduran	779
Mexican	4,672
Panamanian	336
Puerto Rican	3,712
Salvadorian	438
Venezuelan	162
Other	2,252

Source: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPMUS).

FIGURE 4 Hispanic Population in Maine: 1860-2007



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

The most notable period of growth in the Hispanic population in the U.S. and Maine came after the 1970s. Five historic events influenced this surge.

- Enactment of the Bracero program between 1942 and 1964 offered amnesty and citizenship to illegal migrant workers already living in the U.S. This program created jobs for an estimated 5 million Mexican laborers nationwide during the early 1970s.[9]

- The Immigration Act of 1965 abolished national quotas and substituted hemispheric caps. Signed by President Lyndon Johnson, this act contributed to the immigration surge during the latter part of the 20th century and the growing number of Hispanics in the mix of arrivals to the United States in later decades.[10] The act also expanded the categories of family members who could enter the U.S. without numerical limit.

- The federal district court issued an INS injunction in 1976 to cease deportation of immigrant workers.[11] A result of *Silva vs. Levi*, known as the "Silva Letters," this case was an outgrowth of the civil rights movement and the momentum of Chicano struggles during the 1960s. The injunction remained in effect until the 1982 class action *Silva vs. INS*, which resolved the dispute and eliminated the protection for more than 100,000 Mexican immigrants.

- Civil unrest in Cuba and Central America during the 1980s resulted in a new wave of immigrants. Jimmy Carter had criticized Fidel Castro for preventing asylum seekers to leave Cuba, and Castro's response was the Mariel Boatlift crisis, which authorized a mass exodus of more than 125,000 Cubans in 1980 to the U.S. Approximately 100 Cubans came to Maine as a result. Also during the 1980s, a number of Guatemalans and El Salvadorans immigrated to Maine in search of political asylum from civil wars in their home countries.[12]

- The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) allowed for legalization of undocumented aliens living in the United States since 1982 and legalization of certain agricultural workers.[13] Some newly legalized Hispanics have gone on to raise their families in Maine.

Historically, increases in Maine's Hispanic population were a result of international migration, family reunification, and higher birth rates. However, the current wave of growth reflects an emerging pattern in northern New England – secondary migration away from urban centers to more suburban areas and small towns.[14, 15] Indeed, Maine's *quality of place* may be a key to future population growth and diversification as Hispanics seek out less congested and more affordable places to live in northern New England.

"If I am speaking to a diverse community, I always talk about being bicultural and how that is really a privilege. The more you become bicultural, the richer your life experiences are, and the greater your opportunities. Being bilingual is a good thing, but it's not everything. You cannot be culturally competent just because you know the language. There are still plenty of barriers. We need to empower the community and the youth to finally break the cycle of being a minority economically."

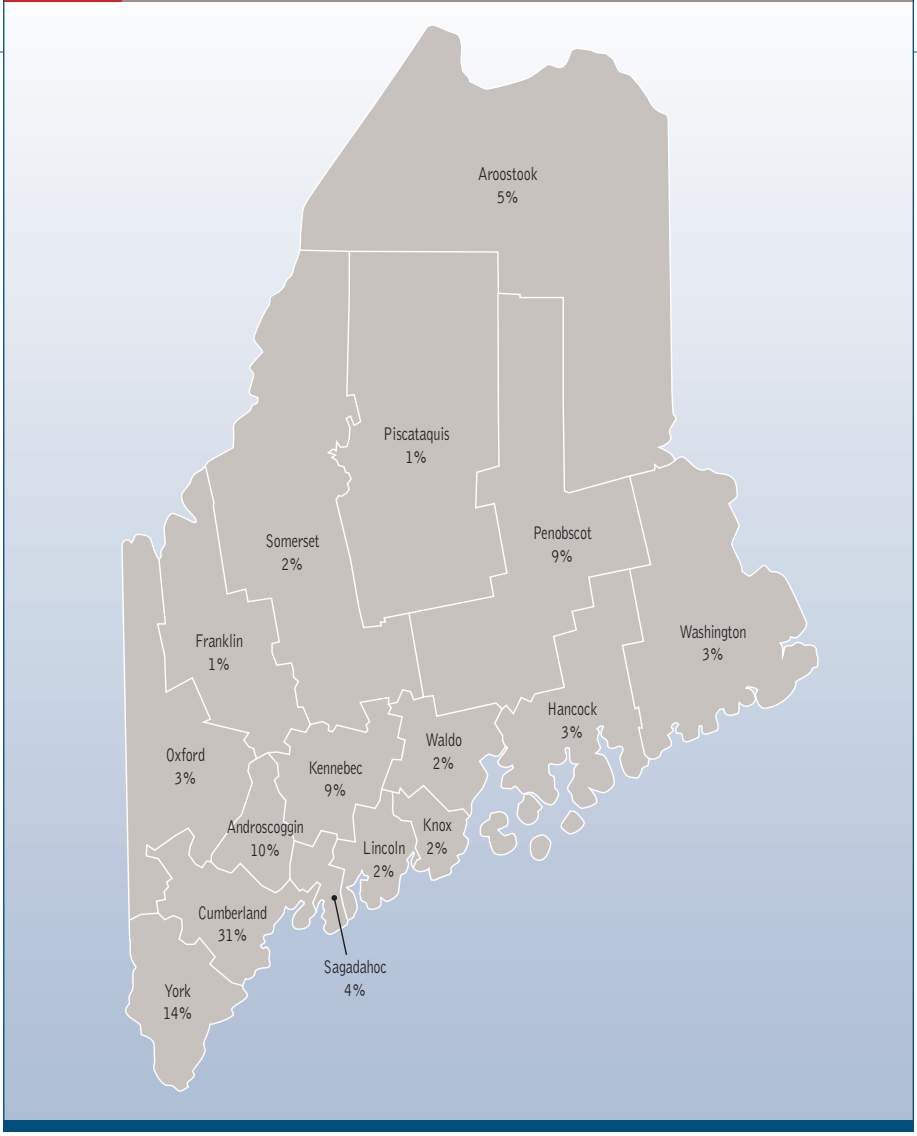
— Blanca Gurrola

Geographic Location

Since the 1950s, most Americans have lived in metropolitan areas[16] and Hispanics are no exception, having historically concentrated in the major urban centers of seven states: California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Texas.[17] The turn of the millennium marked Hispanics as the largest minority group in the United States and saw a shift in Latino communities which now span the nation: no longer restricted to the seven traditional states.

Hispanics in Maine can be found throughout the state. According to 2007 census data more than half of all Latinos living in the state resided in the southern counties of Cumberland, York, and Androscoggin. The percentage of the state's Hispanic population in Cumberland County (31%) exceeded the county's share of the overall state population (21%).[18]

FIGURE 5: Percentage of Hispanic Population in Maine Counties: 2007



Source: U.S. Census, Population Estimate Program

Despite the heterogeneous nature of Maine's Hispanic population and their distribution throughout the state, Latinos still tend to cluster in certain areas. Typically, early arrivals provide a base that facilitates the later arrival of others who in turn add to the links in the migration chain. For example, the town of Topsham with a population of about 9,100 in 2000 was home to 113 of the 391 (29%) Hispanics living in Sagadahoc County, and the small town of Milbridge with a population of slightly more than 1,200 was home to 84 of the 274 (31%) Hispanics in Washington County. Today, estimates place the number of Latinos in Milbridge closer to 200.

Topsham and Milbridge are small in size but are well-rooted communities that reflect the emerging Latino settlement pattern in northern New England. Employment opportunities also play a role in these settlement decisions. Job availability at the Naval Air Station in Topsham's neighboring town of Brunswick and the prominence of blueberry harvests, fish processing plants, and wreath making in the greater Milbridge area played a clear role in the growth of the Hispanic population in each community.

Military Bases and Migration

Aroostook County is tucked into the northeast corner of Maine and borders the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick and Quebec. It is the state's largest county in terms of land area and was once home to Loring Air Force Base. Loring was a strategic air command base constructed in 1953 to accommodate B-36 bombers and take advantage of Maine's proximity to Europe and the Soviet Union during the Cold War era. The base closed in September of 1994 and lost many of the military personnel including many Hispanics who served at Loring Air Force Base.

In 1990, the U.S. Census reported that 554 Hispanics lived in Aroostook County. By 2000, the county had lost 20% of its Hispanic population dropping to 441. Likewise, the county's overall population dropped nearly 15%. Aroostook was the only county in Maine to report a decline in its Latino community during the 1990s. The closure of Loring Air Force Base in 1994 contributed to the drop in both the county's Hispanic and total population. The census for the town of Limestone—in which Loring Air Force Base was located—dropped from 9,922 in 1990 to 2,361 in 2000. Furthermore, only 225 people lived on the base in 2000.[19]

A similar scenario has played out in Topsham, home to an annex which provided housing and services to those people employed by the Brunswick Naval Air Station. The Brunswick Naval Air Station was Maine's second largest employer, employing 5,227 military and civilian personnel. As the base continues to transform and military jobs are shifted out of the mid coast region many of Topsham's Hispanic residents are leaving with them.

> ***"In my family people are sacrificed for the next generation. It's like that for most immigrant groups. My mom cleaned houses her entire life, worked two or three jobs, to make sure I had options and I thank her. When I applied to Smith College, I was told by other people 'Why'd you do that?' 'You're not getting into Trinity, you're not getting into Smith.' But I did! And then I was told, you need a master's. What's a master's, what's a PhD? It's given me pride. It's why I want to give back to the Latino community – to tell Latinas and Latinos that you have options."***
>
> — Teresa Sarmiento-Brooks

Education and Economy

Hispanics in Maine may share important educational and economic attributes. Trends suggest that the move to towns and regions with developing economic communities may be more attractive to migrants who are fluent in English, more assimilated, and occupationally or economically diverse.[20] A recent report by the New England Public Policy Center concludes New England's immigrants have more diverse national origins and are better educated than immigrants nationwide. They have higher median household incomes and lower poverty rates than immigrants as a whole. Nearly half are naturalized U.S. citizens – one of the highest naturalization rates in the country.[21]

From a national perspective, Hispanics are playing an increasingly prominent role in the economy. Latinos accounted for as much as 30% of the increase in the nation's civilian labor force between 1990 and 2000.[22] Hispanic business ownership grew 31% from 1997 to 2002 accounting for 1.6 million firms and $222 billion in revenue.[23] U.S. Hispanic purchasing power surged to nearly $870 billion in 2008 and is projected to reach as much as $1.3 trillion by 2015. During the past decade, the rate of growth was more than two times the overall national rate. Hispantelligence estimates current Hispanic purchasing power to be 9.3% of the total current U.S. purchasing power and projects it to be 12% by 2015.[24]

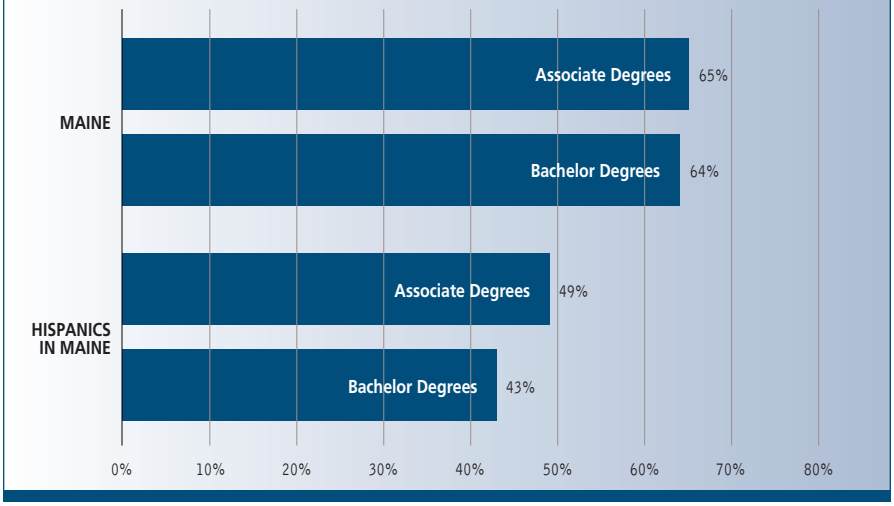
Reflecting the emergence of Hispanics in Maine, small-business ownership is growing faster among Latinos than among whites or African-Americans.[25] As Maine's workforce ages, immigrant workers are being identified as important contributors to the state's labor force. As a sign of this, many Maine businesses and government agencies now target Spanish speakers in their employment recruitment campaigns.

Educational Attainment

Hispanics consistently cite education as a priority in policymaking. Although they continue to lag behind other subsets of the population, the number of Hispanics attaining higher degrees is slowly growing. The proportion of U.S. Hispanics aged 25 years and over with a high school diploma increased from 53% in 1993 to 57% in 2003. Those who had some college increased from 26% to 30%; and the percentage with a bachelor's degree increased from 9% to 11%.[26]

Second and subsequent generations of Hispanics tend to outpace earlier generations in educational attainment. For example, at a national level, 74% of U.S. born Hispanics age 25 and over graduated from high school compared to 45% for foreign born Hispanics living in the U.S. Similarly, 40% of U.S. born Hispanics completed some college or had an associate's degree compared to 22% of their foreign born counterparts.[27] While comparable figures are not available for Maine, research based on data from the 2000 census indicates that among Hispanics aged 25 to 34 in the state, 49% had attained an associate degree and 43% held a bachelor's degree. This compares to the state's overall population of 65% having earned an associate degree and 64% a bachelor's degree.

FIGURE 6 Attainment of College Degrees in Maine (Ages 25 to 34): 2000



Source: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. (2004). *Measuring up 2004: The state report card on higher education: Maine*. National Center Report #04-4. San Jose, CA.

While increased educational attainment is a key determinant of increased earnings among the general population, it may be even more critical to the success of Latinos and other minorities.[28] A study by Reynolds et al. (2004) found that educational attainment had a greater effect for minority groups when identifying emerging entrepreneurs.[29] Higher education increases the probability of self-employment, and business owners are more likely to be successful when their education or past experiences match the skill sets required for their business startups.[30]

Business Ownership

Small business growth and self-employment are key drivers of Latino economic development. The Small Business Act defines a small business concern as "one that is independently owned and operated and which is not dominant in its field of operation."[31] In 2002, minorities owned 4.1 million businesses that generated $694 billion in revenues and employed 4.8 million people. Hispanics constituted the largest minority business community and owned 6.6% of all U.S. businesses.[32] In 2012, the number of Hispanic-owned businesses in the United States is expected to grow to 4.3 million and revenues to climb to more than $539 billion.[33]

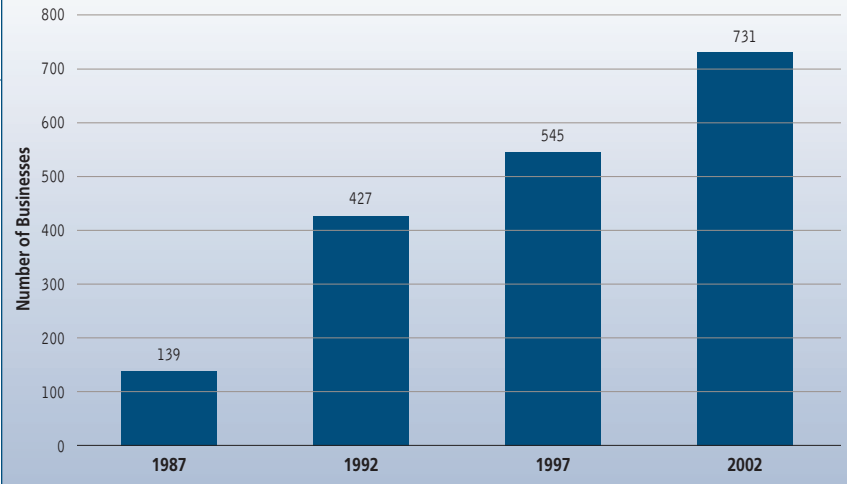
Further proof of the entrepreneurial ethic within the Hispanic community can be found in a 2000 poll of middle and high school students in the U.S. 87% of Hispanic students said they wanted to start a business compared to 71% of white students.[34]

In Maine, Hispanics are making significant progress toward business ownership. In 1987, 139 businesses were Hispanic-owned in Maine; the number grew to 427 by 1992. In 1997, Maine was host to 545 Hispanic-owned businesses and generated $52 million in revenue. This number grew to 731 in 2002—an increase of 34%—and generated $113 million in revenue. Members of Maine's Latino community are increasing contributions to the state's economy, and small businesses are at the core of these contributions.

An examination of types of businesses owned by Hispanics in Maine for 2002 illustrates that half were either in health and personal care services (23%) or other non-government services (27%). Construction at 14% was the third major industry, while wholesale trade and finance and insurance had the smallest percentage representing only 1% of Hispanic-owned businesses.

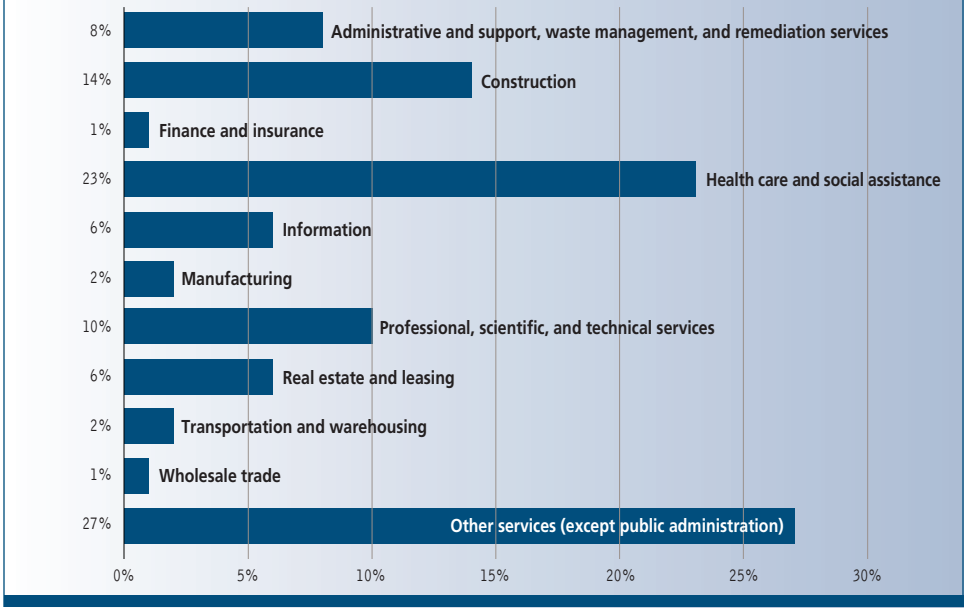
Perhaps as striking as the interest and growth in business ownership among Hispanics is the gender breakdown of ownership. In 2002, males owned 55% of Hispanic-owned businesses in Maine compared to 45% female ownership. For all Maine businesses, 75% were male owned and 25% were female owned.

FIGURE 7 Number of Hispanic-Owned Businesses in Maine: 1987 to 2002



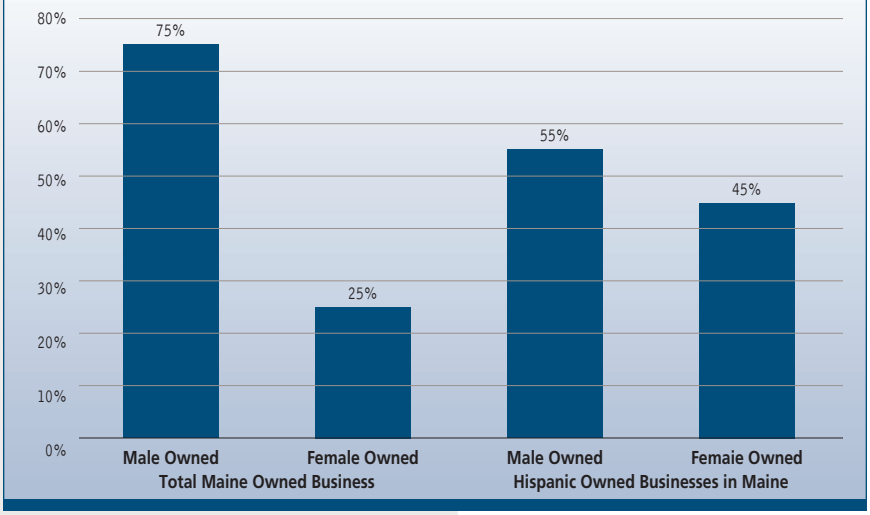
Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census. (1987, 1992, 1997, 2002). *Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises: Hispanic.*

FIGURE 8 Percentage of Hispanic-Owned Businesses by Industry in Maine: 2002



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, (2006, August). 2002 Economic Census. *Survey of Business Owners. Hispanic-owned Firms: 2002.*

FIGURE 9 Gender of Business Owners in Maine: 2002



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2002 Survey of Business Owners.

" It's important for all of us to realize the service that migrant workers provide for us, and that without their labor and the sweat off their backs, we would not have food on our tables. A lot of people forget that."

— Juan Perez-Febles

Definitions

Seasonal workers: All people who are employed temporarily through a particular season. This can be local residents, migrant workers or guest workers and includes all seasonal work including but not limited to agricultural work or the tourism sector.

Migrant worker: Someone who travels for extended periods of time to accommodate labor opportunities and earned at least 50% of their earnings in the prior year in agricultural activity.

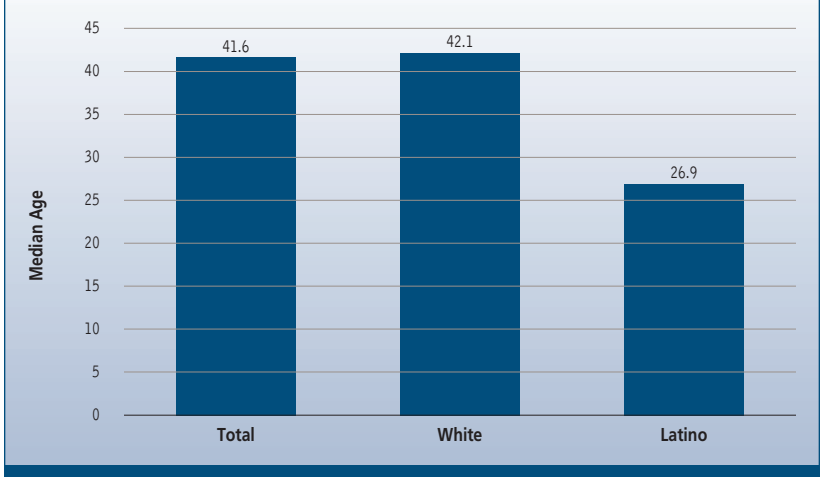
Guest worker: A person who comes into the United States with an H2A or H2B visa. They are able to be present in the U.S. while working within a specified time and for a particular employer who has demonstrated need.

Source: Code of Federal Regulations – section 20 (National Archives and Records Administration)

Workforce Participation

During the 1990s, immigration played an important role in generating growth in the nation's population and labor force.[35] Comparing the 1990 and 2000 Censuses reveals that 47% of the increase in the nation's civilian labor force and nearly two thirds of the growth in the male labor force can be attributed to immigration.[36] Hispanic population growth accounts for the bulk of this increase.

FIGURE 10 Median Age of Select Population for Maine: 2007



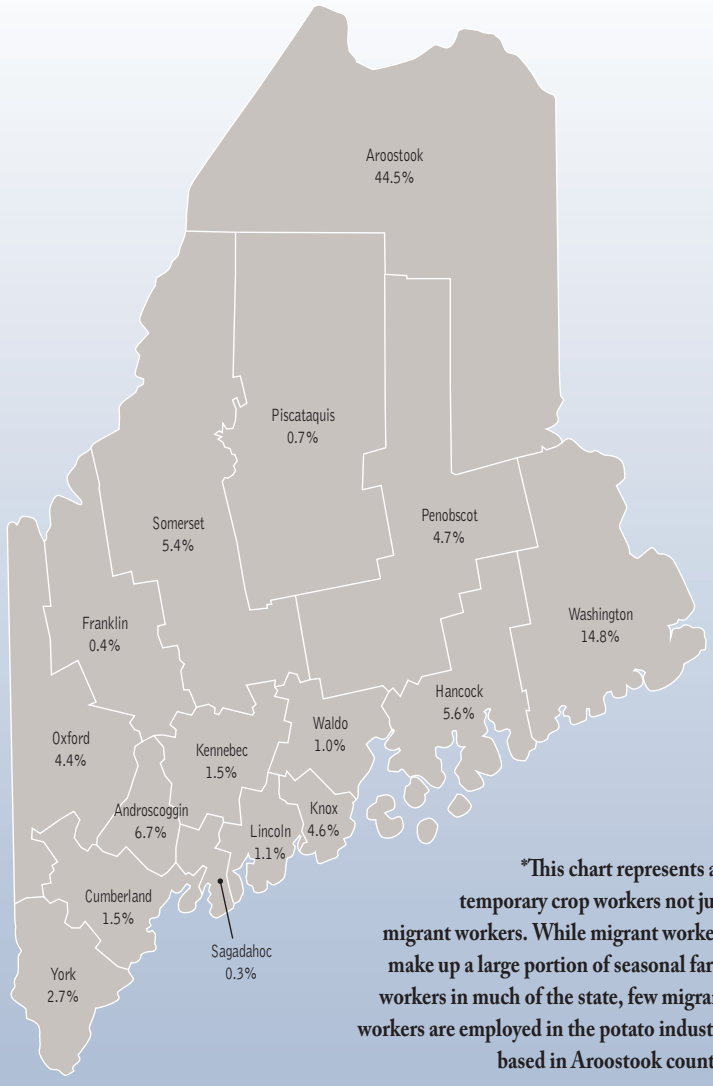
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division.

Maine's population is among the oldest in the U.S. with a median age of 41.6 years. The combination of increased life spans, low birth rates, and further brain drain means that Maine could face significant labor supply issues in the future. As in the U.S., immigration, particularly Latino immigration, will play a role in offsetting these trends. In 2007, the median age of Maine's Hispanic population was 26.9 years compared to 42.1 years.

Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers

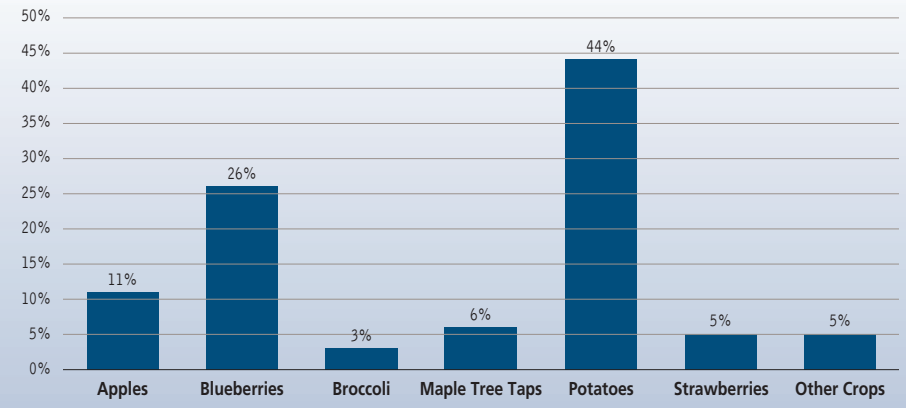
Beyond the role that Hispanics play in Maine's year round workforce, migrant and seasonal farmworkers have been vital to the state's economy. Approximately 10,000 to 12,000 migrant and seasonal workers are employed throughout Maine each year. Most come from Mexico and Central American countries.

FIGURE 11 Estimate of All Temporary Crop Harvest Workers in Maine Counties: 2005



Source: Alice Larson. (2005, November). *Enumeration of Vegetable and Orchard Temporary Workers and Work Hours in Maine*. Cooperstown, NY: New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health.

FIGURE 12 Estimates of All Seasonal Crop Harvesters in Maine: 2005



*This chart represents all temporary crop workers not just migrant workers. While migrant workers make up a large portion of seasonal farm workers in the blueberry, apple, strawberry and other crop industries, there are very few migrant workers in the potato industry.

Source: Alice Larson. (2005, November). *Enumeration of Vegetable and Orchard Temporary Workers and Work Hours in Maine*. Cooperstown, NY: New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health.

Many migrant workers are employed in the planting and harvesting of blueberries, apples, and broccoli. Apples are harvested in late summer through mid-fall in Androscoggin, Cumberland, Kennebec, and Oxford counties. While some migrant workers are also employed in the egg and seafood industries, others tend chickens, work in the forests, and help grow Christmas trees. Hispanic workers from Central America are employed during the summer and fall seasons in the forestry industry to plant and thin trees, particularly in Somerset, Franklin, Aroostook, and Piscataquis Counties.[37]

Blueberries and Migrant Workers

Maine is the largest producer of wild blueberries in the United States. Located primarily in Washington, Hancock, and Waldo counties, the industry hires thousands of workers for the harvest season each year. In the late 1980s, the blueberry harvest was predominantly a Native American enterprise—Micmacs, Penobscots, and Passamaquoddies from Maine and Canada. Subsequently, Hispanics, mostly Mexicans, began to expand participation in the blueberry harvests in Washington County. The workers came to make money, send remittances home, and moved on to the next harvest. Today, the number of Hispanic blueberry workers is a greater proportion than Native American workers.[38]

Hispanic blueberry workers travel from Texas, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Central America.[39] Yarborough (2003) states, "Concerns for the future health of the wild blueberry business in Maine include regulations required to hire a suitable labor force to harvest and process the crop, which involves about 10,000 people of which 60% are migrant professional harvesters, mostly Hispanic workers."[40] Initially attracted by the availability of migrant work in crop harvest industries, many workers brought their families along. Subsequently, some have settled in Maine, contributing to the continued growth of the Latino community in the state.

Undocumented Immigrants in the Workforce

Nearly 12 million unauthorized immigrants live in the U.S. and about 7 million are employed.[41] The legal status of immigrants and, in particular, Hispanics has become a subject of much controversy. Immigrant groups, policy makers, employers, and anti-immigrant groups have all called for some form of immigration reform. Current work visa caps do not meet the need for an expanded workforce. As a result, many immigrant groups and many employers continue to advocate for broadening legal paths to citizenship.

Another critical issue cited by immigrant groups is the fate of U.S. based family members of undocumented immigrants facing deportation. This is particularly critical for children of undocumented immigrants who were born in the U.S. and therefore have citizenship. Current policy allows undocumented immigrants to be deported without being able to contact family members and make decisions about where children will reside. While this issue is beyond the scope of this report, it is one that was called to MECEP's attention during its research.

Estimates of unauthorized immigrants in Maine's labor force vary. In 2007, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) calculated Maine's unauthorized immigrant population at about 5,000 persons. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services under the Department of Human Services in 2000 projected the number to be 3,000, and in 2005, the Pew Hispanic Center estimate was 10,000.[42] Using the U.S. Department of Labor's estimate that 65% of agricultural workers in Maine are undocumented suggests that there are approximately 3,500 to 4,000 undocumented workers in the agricultural sector.

Researchers have struggled to come to consensus over the net fiscal impact of legal and undocumented immigrants. That said, there is widespread agreement that the future solvency of the social security system is dependent on immigrant contributions.[43] Each year, the U.S. Social Security Administration maintains roughly $6 billion to $7 billion of Social Security contributions in an "earnings suspense file" – an account for W-2 tax forms that cannot be matched to the correct Social Security number. The vast majority of these numbers are attributable to undocumented workers. ■

Personal Connections

Statistics tell only part of the story of Hispanics in Maine. With that in mind, MECEP interviewed 21 Mainers with ties to South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. All the people interviewed were first or second generation Latin Americans actively participating and contributing to the Maine economy. They were entrepreneurs and business owners, health care providers, and public servants. Some were fluent English speakers, others were bilingual in both English and Spanish, and some were solely Spanish speakers. All were interviewed in their preferred language using a common interview guide. Twelve stories are featured in this report reflecting a breadth of Hispanic experiences in Maine.

Those interviewed include:

Jorge Acero
Kathy Breckenridge
Gustavo Burkett
Rafael Clariot
Miriam Curtis
Monire Child
Monica Elliott
Bianca Soto Gomez
Juan Gonzalez
Blanca Gurrola
Felix Hernandez
Angel Loredo
Miriam Oliver
Elna Osso
Angel Ortiz
Francisco Andreu
Juan Perez-Febles
Maria Rave
Santiago Rave
Roberto Rios
Teresa Sarmiento-Brooks

The profiles reinforce many of the findings presented thus far. The diverse ancestral roots and their significance in cultural identify became immediately apparent. Interviewees came from 10 countries including Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia, Argentina, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. Several counted more than one country in their parentage. Monire Child has a Colombian parent that married an American citizen but names Venezuela as not just her place of birth but her home country. Angel Ortiz has a Chilean mother and a Puerto Rican father, but grew up in Spanish Harlem in New York.

In addition to the diversity of careers and career paths, the individuals profiled came from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. Some lived in poverty during their young lives. Others were from struggling middle class families. Some came from comfortable middle class backgrounds or from families where wealth and resources were in abundant supply. Regardless of their background, all interviewees stressed the importance of education and educational opportunities.

Despite the natural sadness that can come from being separated from families far away and the initial difficulties that accompany being a 'stranger in a strange land,' those interviewed shared in the belief that Maine has been good to them and that they are good for Maine.

MECEP would like to thank all the interviewees for opening their hearts and homes. Kathy Breckenridge was a tremendous contributor to this endeavor as well. Kathy came to Maine when her husband was offered a job as the pharmacist at a Native American reservation in Washington County. She continues to live in Calais and, aside from allowing herself to be interviewed, was instrumental in connecting MECEP to the individuals living in downeast Maine. Finally many thanks to Victor Damian for his wonderful photos. They capture, far more than words could ever say, the dignity and joy our participants feel about their lives and work in Maine. ■

"People need to stop the stereotypes. Not every immigrant comes to take away something from you. There is enough for everybody here. Maine has definitely become home, it has been very good to me."

Elna Osso

Elna Osso is a nurse and public health professional employed by the city of Portland. She was born in 1962 to an upper middle class family in Talara, Peru, a coastal city with rich oil reserves.

"We grew up by the ocean. They found oil in the ocean and the town was built because of that. The funding for all of this was an American company. My father worked for the company, so I had always very positive thoughts about America and Americans. My father was given employment since he was a young man of fourteen and there were eight kids in his house and they needed to make a living. The Americans gave him a job and he stayed with them forever. I think I had my love for America put in my head since I was little without even knowing."

Born: **Talara, Peru**
Lives: **Cumberland, Maine**
Occupation: **Public Health Nurse, City of Portland**

As a young girl, Elna's grandmother had a friend who was a nurse. She visited regularly and often gave Elna bus money to come visit.

"She was the first woman that I saw who lived alone and was happy and independent. My early experiences taught me a lot. One, that the world was bigger and second, that you could be independent and go places and do things."

After going to school in her little town, Elna had to compete for a place in the university system which is centralized in Lima, Peru. Often there would be 5,000 applicants for 300 openings. It was the late 1970's and The Shining Path guerilla group was gaining ground in Peru. There was a lot of political unrest and terrorist attacks.

"I had a boyfriend then that was coming to study in Boston, and I said, 'Well, I'll tag along.' It wasn't such a big deal to leave because the violence in Peru was such by then we'd have coups at ten or twelve at night, tanks going by, personal rights were gone, police could stop you anytime and do whatever they wanted. There was a huge risk. My parents didn't want me to leave but they couldn't have an argument for me not to. They figured, if I learn English, I could come back and help in tourism. This was an important industry in Peru, but when the terrorism took over it died. Terrorism killed tourism."

Elna came to Boston and hated it. She wanted to go back to Peru but she didn't have the resources and she was too proud to ask.

"I tried to weather it, tough it out. When I came here, all I could think of was, you had the opportunity of coming, you can't let that opportunity go. I needed money and saw a little sign that said, 'Handicapped woman needs help at home. No experience required.' So I called and it was a young woman in a wheelchair that needed someone to come a couple of hours a day to help her. So I started doing that and then very quickly in the handicapped community they figured, there is this woman who will help you out. Immigration laws were different then."

In time, her reputation as a care-giver spread. She enjoyed the work and was inspired by the courage of the people she took care of. She was encouraged to go to nursing school and after being turned down at a number of community colleges was accepted into Deaconess Hospital in Boston.

"I didn't know Deaconess Hospital was one of the top schools in Boston. And now that I look back at it, they needed to meet their international quota. I think I was the only international student ever. I was their quota. I was working twenty million jobs and going to school. But it was my late twenties and I was so happy I had the chance I was beyond myself. While I was there I learned more English and then that's when I started dating somebody that lived in Maine."

"I loved Maine because it was more like my small town. I was never a big town person."

Because of the nursing shortage, Elna was able to get a work visa. While working as a registered nurse at Maine Medical Center, she went on to obtain a bachelor's degree.

"So after twenty-something years later I'm still here. I always go back to Peru and visit. I never forget what life was like there. Even though we were in a privileged position, I wasn't removed from poverty. It was so small, it's not like you can live in a penthouse and not see what's happens in the shantytowns. It was so small that it was right in my face. That was always in my head."

Elna's desire to do something about health care disparities led her to pursue a master's degree in international health. As soon as she could, she started doing work overseas.

"The nursing program at USM has a group that goes to the Dominican Republic. I've been to the DR maybe six times. In this country, mortality is about chronic diseases. In poverty-ridden countries, it's infectious disease-based. I was in Chiapas, with the Zapatistas. I got to go to Africa. I'm on the board of Kambi Sante, the group that goes to Haiti. I was part of that group when it first got organized. "

Elna now works with the city of Portland as public a health nurse which brings her in direct daily contact with the Latino community. She rotates between the Portland Free Clinic, Health Care for the Homeless and the STD clinic.

"I can't believe that I have a job at the city where I can be a nurse and I get to speak Spanish. When I first came to Maine, there were months and months that unless I picked up the phone to call my family, I didn't speak Spanish. The fact that now I speak Spanish on a daily basis says a lot about how the face of Maine has changed. I think it's good for Maine. I also think it makes a lot of people nervous."

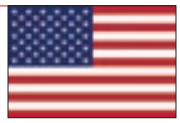
Elna's goal is to continue to stay in Maine and continue working abroad in international health as much as possible. Her parents are aging and in poor health so being so far away is very difficult.

"Right now, that's the toughest thing for me, not to be able to be there as much. When Dad is sick now and I see how people attend to him and tell me about my father. That's been a big sense of pride, for me, how he has treated people. here's never been a question... if you have something, you need to share it."

"So I think the struggle is, now when I'm here, I don't feel like I belong here, and when I'm there I don't feel like I belong there. And then I start thinking I belong to both places and I'm like a bridge. I'd like to keep a foot in Maine and be able to travel more. I want to find that place - to be that bridge, between work there and here."

"I'm not this big moral dude, but I live a very clean life because it's more than just me out there, it's the company. Life is about choices. It's not about the mistakes you've made, it's what you do after that makes all the difference in the world."

Angel Ortiz



Angel Ortiz is the owner and sole proprietor of Guardian Angel, Plumbing and Heating. Angel was born in what is referred to as "Spanish Harlem" in New York City. His father, a barbershop owner, was Puerto Rican and his mother was from Santiago, Chile.

"I grew up in a very heavy Latino environment, although NYC is a melting pot of just about every nationality. In Spanish Harlem, it was Latino everything. It was great. We could open up the fire pumps in the summertime. Growing up in barber shops you know the latest, the greatest, what's going on in the neighborhood. It's better than CNN. Faster. You grew up listening to stories, a lot of old timers go to hang out in barber shops. That whole vibe that was New York at the time, especially in Spanish Harlem is gone now. That era is done."

Born: **New York City - Parents from Chile and Puerto Rico**

Lives: **Topsham, Maine**

Occupation: **Owner, Guardian Angel, Plumbing and Heating**

Angel discovered he had musical talent at an early age and became interested in Latin jazz. In junior high he tried out for the Harvard School of the Arts in Manhattan and was accepted. By the time Angel reached high school age, his parents decided that New York was not a good place to raise children and decided to move to California.

"The West Coast is a totally different vibe than NYC. I was so into the whole New York thing that I didn't even know what a taco was. New York and Spanish Harlem was all Puerto Rican and Dominican. In California, it was different nationalities. It wasn't my core. I was like 'I'm not going to embrace that, because that's not me.' Within the Hispanic community, there are a lot of differences and a lot of groups are quick to point that out."

Like a lot of teenagers, Angel faced a lot of social pressures.

"So I signed up with the Marine Corps. I graduated high school and before I left for the Marine Corps, I got in trouble. So I talked to the Marine Corps recruiter and he said, 'Angel, I don't know what to tell you, it's going to be a couple of weeks.' And I said, 'No, you don't understand, I have to leave like tomorrow.' So I went to the Navy recruiting office and they said, 'OK you can leave tomorrow morning.' So the next day I was in boot camp, it happened that fast."

After boot camp, Angel was out at sea for the next four years, working as a gas turbine technician on the jet engines that propel ships. He traveled all over South and Central America. Occasionally, they would work alongside the Coast Guard, intersecting fishing boats suspected of smuggling drugs. On these missions, he often served as an interpreter. Ultimately Angel ended up in Desert Storm and Desert Shield.

"Our ship caught a mine, so that's how I ended up in Maine. We blew a hole in the side of the ship. We ended up at Bath Iron Works, when they were still open in Portland. And I'm like, 'Here I am in Maine, this place is kinda different. I like it.' I remember calling my mom and telling her, 'You know, Mom, this is like Disneyland. You could go to sleep on the street with one hundred dollar bills on your chest, and if one blows off, somebody will stop and say, "Excuse me sir, did you lose this?"' So, in comparison to other areas, this is great. I was thinking that I could have a future here, with kids."

It was in Portland that Angel met his first wife. They were stationed in Norfolk, VA and the stress of being in the military and away from home for long periods of time was very difficult. When Angel got out of the military, the family returned to Maine, but Angel couldn't find a good job.

"I ended up working in a factory, for $4.25 an hour. I had a family to support. I was experienced with what I did in the Navy, but I didn't have a degree. I had an engineering brain, but that's not good enough. You need to have the paperwork to back you up. Hands-on doesn't exist out here. The military is great because it teaches you a lot of skills, but at the same time I think it's kind of deceiving because they train you their way, but when you get out to the civilian world, none of that really counts."

A friend's father was a plumber looking for someone to work in the shop. Angel took the job which consisted at first of sweeping and putting away fittings. He studied the parts and the pieces and kept learning more each day. Eventually, he was accepted into an apprenticeship program.

Over the next eight years, he worked for Richard P. Waltz plumbing where he learned about managing a service-driven business. Ultimately, he received his journeyman's license and in 1996, he passed the master plumber exam becoming the first Latino in Maine to attain that status.

"That put me in a whole different bracket. At gatherings or seminars, it was weird because first of all, my name is Angel, so that's very different here in Maine. People would say to me, 'Who do you work for? Are you like the helper?' I got that. And they would find out, he's a master plumber. 'What are they giving those things away now?' But I've never let stuff like that bother me. If anything that fuels me, to do more. I want to make it big in a field that Latinos are not represented. Latinos are either the helpers or the guys that carry the stuff or the tools, the laborers. I want to be the guy that says, the stereotypes that you see in the movies or TV are not true, Latinos are very smart."

Angel now owns his family-operated business; Guardian Angel Plumbing and Heating. It's hard work and he is constantly learning more about business ownership.

"To be a plumber, you have to have all this insurance, my license fees and everything costs so much now. To have a plumber come to your house is not cheap. Basically, the customer's your boss. You know, if I'm in your home, I'm working for you. I want you to be very happy and if there's any problem, please tell me how I can help you and make you happy. Because at the end of the day, that's my job. My job is not plumbing. My job is to make you happy and solve your problems."

Today Angel lives with his second wife, his mother and three children in a six bedroom house on four acres of land. Angel plans to stay in Maine and continue 'becoming the ever present, ever positive dad' cheering his kids on to higher education. Angel admits that he is still 'hungry' with ambition, but well on his way to success - all in the interest of providing opportunity for his children.

"Overall I love my life, I love my kids. Hopefully, I can be an example to them. That's a real big thing - to be a positive influence to my children. For them to say - the stereotypes of Latino men are not always true. Latino men have lasting relationships, meaningful relationships with their children."

"I don't feel short changed in any way by being from a different country, or by being Hispanic or Latino. Actually, to me, it's been a benefit a lot of the time."

Gustavo Burkett

Gustavo Burkett is the Director of Campus Activities and Events at the University of Maine. He was born in 1979 in the city of Santé Fe, Argentina, about four hours northwest of the capital, Buenos Aires. His family is well-educated, Catholic, and middle class. Gustavo is the oldest of four children. His paternal heritage traces back to Germany, and his maternal lineage links to Spain and Italy.

"In South America, families are the center of everything. Every Sunday, for us, and for most families in my city, it's a sacred family day. On Sunday afternoons we had lunch with the entire side of my dad's family - cousins, uncles, aunts, everybody. We all get together at grandma's house. She makes pasta for everybody, and we had a great time. We don't leave until 3:00 in the afternoon. We go home; take a nap; go to church all together in the afternoon, and then at night, we go to my other grandmother's house, and my mom's side of the family gets all together. And this happens every single weekend."

Born: **Sante Fe, Argentina**
Lives: **Old Town, Maine**
Occupation: **Director of Campus Activities and Events, University of Maine**

All of Gustavo's siblings participated in student exchange programs during their senior year of high school. His brothers went to North Dakota and Kansas; his sister went to Colorado. Gustavo came to Maine.

"I got here with a group called AFS (American Field Service). I had an exchange for a year with John Bapst High School in Bangor. I didn't know any English at all at that point. After the year was over, I went back home and started college in Argentina and never really liked it."

During a subsequent visit with his Maine host family, he was introduced to the Business School at the University of Maine. He applied and was accepted with a full scholarship. He received an undergraduate degree in Business Administration and later a master's degree in Higher Education and Administration.

Before entering graduate school, he spent a year in the mid-West working for Sigma Phi Epsilon—a collegial fraternity that emphasizes academic development and diversity.

"In the mid-West, it seemed like you were not part of the clique if you weren't from there. I think the Northeast is a little more inviting to people from other places. It may seem closed when you come here, but once you break in, you're part of the culture."

There are other reasons why Gustavo prefers the Northeast. As an openly gay man, Gustavo finds Maine more accepting to gays and lesbians.

"In the Northeast, it's a lot more free than in other parts of the country. That means a lot to me. I can be who I am. I have a child with a lesbian, so it's a nontraditional family. Culturally, in Argentina, it's not something that would be accepted. My lifestyle, I can live it the way I live it and that's something I would not be able to do back at home."

Gustavo thinks being gay is a problem for young people from Hispanic countries.

"In some cases, and I don't want to say all of them, but in some cases the younger population is looking to get out of the country. Not only because of economical reasons and a better career, which is definitely valid, but also because of the lifestyles - the type of lifestyles that are allowed and not allowed in other countries. For example, divorce is not common in Argentina. If it happens, it's the talk of the town."

As the Director of Campus Activities and Events at the University of Maine, Gustavo really enjoys working with students. Anything that has to do with extracurricular activities outside of the classroom goes through Gustavo's office in one way or another. This includes all the fraternities and sororities, all clubs and organizations, honor societies, intramural teams, large-scale events, student leadership development and managing the Memorial Student Union. The Memorial Union is also the designated safe haven for the campus community in case of emergencies. Gustavo and his staff need to know everything that is going on, which he finds both interesting and challenging.

"The opportunities that I've had have been phenomenal and I have advanced, professionally, pretty quickly. I'm a director at age 28 and that's usually something that doesn't come until your mid-thirties."

Looking toward the future, Gustavo plans to continue working in a college setting and in student affairs. He is the proud father of a 19-month-old son and is self-portrayed as assimilated and Americanized. And while he has few opportunities to speak Spanish anymore, he is in constant contact with his family back in Argentina.

"I know that if I had not done that exchange program with AFS, I would not have been exposed to this country. If I wasn't exposed, then I wouldn't have known, and I wouldn't have come to America to start with. And while I'm far away from my blood family, I have a lot of family here."

"The land brings me memories of my childhood…of the happy times when we were there on the big chicken farm with my dad, warm days and citrus fruits – just fresh, like it was yesterday."

Miriam Curtis

Miriam Curtis and her husband own a small organic chicken and egg farm that sees a steady flow of townspeople in Pembroke, Maine. A nurse and health educator by training, she was born in Pichincha province in Ecuador in 1965. Her father was an overseer of a large poultry farm and the family lived there until Miriam was twelve.

"On the farm, you had no voice, you could not ask for a raise, you could not determine your hours. The administrators did that. My father lost his job when the workers tried to form a union. Not just him but all the overseers on many farms. My father was not prepared for a different future, so we ended going to live with my grandmother."

Born: **Pifo, Ecuador**
Lives **Pembroke, Maine**
Occupation: **Organic chicken and egg farmer. Trained nurse and health educator**

They moved to Pifo, an arid and cold area, where the family struggled financially to support six children. Miriam, as the middle child, had a lot of responsibility for her two younger siblings. She determined that education and a good profession was the key to a better life. She received a scholarship to go to high school which helped pay for her books and uniform.

"It was really hard times, but being in a Christian home you work together and each one takes care of each other. If you are the oldest child in the family and you have work or the means to help your younger siblings you will do that. That's what my brother did, my sister did, and that's what we have all been doing, helping the other ones to finish their education and their studies. My mother and father took pride that despite all the difficulties we all became professionals."

After graduation, Miriam went to nursing school. Part of that education included a mandatory year of community service tending to the indigenous people in far flung, rural parts of her county.

"We had to walk from town to town in the jungle. I thought I would never see civilization again. I remember once we had to cross this marsh and the water came almost to my waist. And I was thinking, 'Please, don't let a boa constrictor come.' The doctor was a few yards ahead since men have a larger stride and I'm calling, 'Wait, don't leave me behind!'"

Shortly thereafter she volunteered with Compassion International, a faith- based group, and was hired as a full time employee promoting health education to poor and indigenous people. Even though she made less money than working in a hospital, she liked public health and the opportunity to travel. In 1995 she attended a seminar on health education in Florida and her sister, living in Maine and married to a Passamaquoddy man, helped pay for Miriam to come visit. Her brother-in-law introduced her to her future husband at dinner and a long distance courtship began.

"I made this rice with clams. We do that in Ecuador. It's called ceviche de concha. Esta deliciosa. The clams are different here. And it was my first time learning to cook apple pie. My sister taught me. I supposed he liked it. So there you have it!"

In 1996, Miriam married and moved to Pembroke. After she obtained her nursing credentials in the U.S., she worked seasonally for the Maine Migrant Health Program.

"At the beginning, I really had a hard time trying to accommodate from my single, independent life to this really quiet place. It is really quiet."

Once she had children, Miriam chose to stay home and began raising chickens. Today, they supplement their farm income with her husband's cedar siding business.

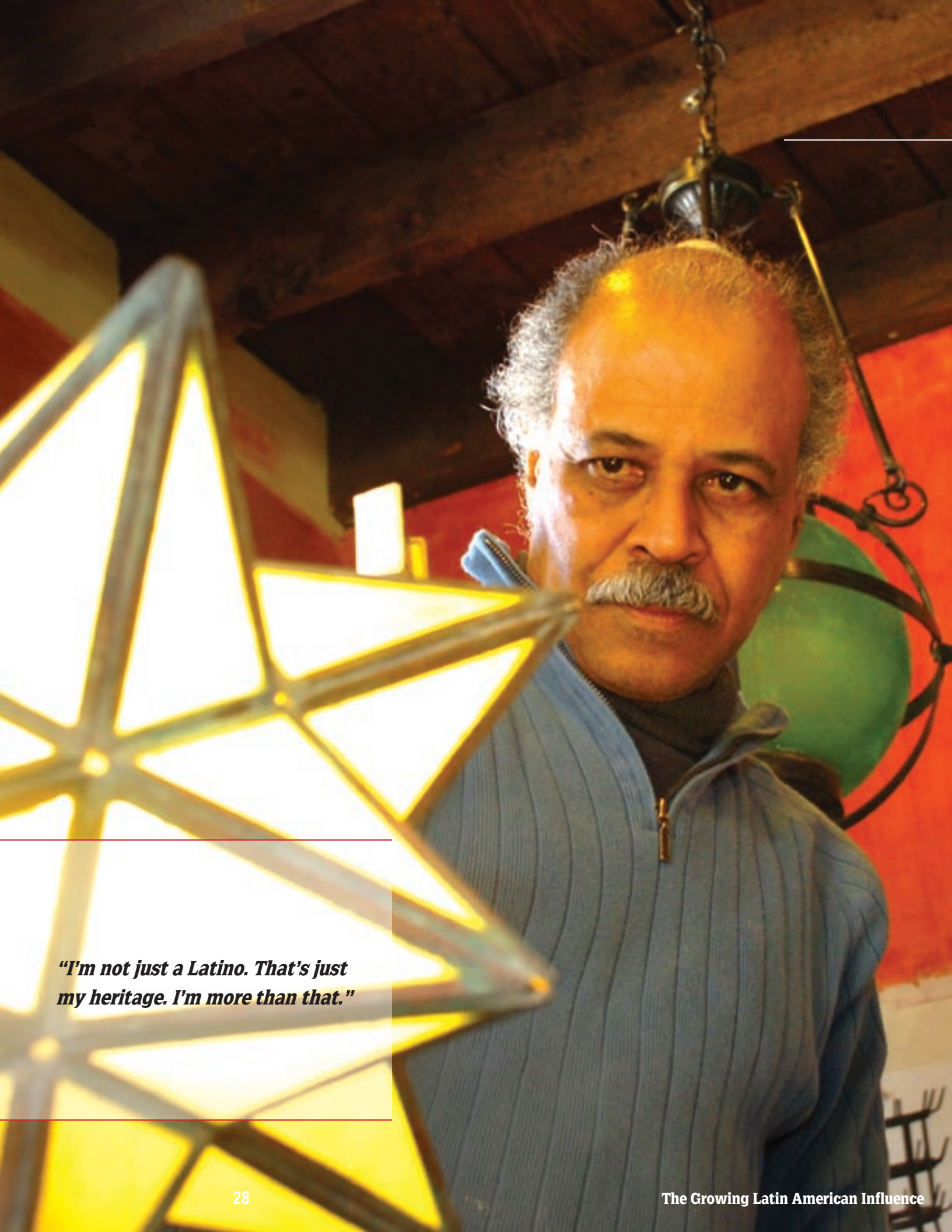
"I'm not going to get rich doing this, but I'm doing this for my children. They get good nutrition and you're helping other people get good nourishment too."

Slowly, people in this small town are getting to know and trust Miriam.

"At the beginning people in the community viewed me with curiosity and maybe a little mistrust. We have this negative side of immigrants and some people have that mindset, what is she doing here? They don't see we also have potential and education. It's a question of acceptance. People who get to know you, like you."

Currently, she is home-schooling her two children and contemplating a part-time job as they grow older.

"The best thing about living here is the weather. I love the changes in spring and in autumn. The colors are so gorgeous – all the tones of green and the yellow finish – you could be an artist and mix these colors."



"I'm not just a Latino. That's just my heritage. I'm more than that."

Rafael Clariot

Rafael Clariot is a finish painter, historic restoration expert, and artist with his own lighting and design studio in Portland. He was born in 1952 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic to a single mother.

"We were very poor. My mother in Santo Domingo was a maid; she worked for this Turkish family. We lived in a row house, where there were just rooms, and all three of us slept in one bed. And there was a little one burner stove in the one room. I was always a happy kid. I didn't know the difference. I do remember picking the trash, I did that to eat. You see that a lot in Santo Domingo. Of course, things have changed now, that was in the sixties. Santo Domingo has really grown now; a lot of investment has come in."

Born: **Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic**

Lives: **Portland, Maine**

Occupation: **Owner, Clariot Lighting and Design Studio**

When Rafael was eleven years old his mother's sister came to visit, saw their impoverished situation and decided to somehow get together enough money to bring Rafael, his mother and older brother to New York to live.

"We came here in March in the dead of winter. We landed at La Guardia airport from a hot climate, and there were all these people. We got off the plane and we were so scared. We'd never been on a plane or a train. We had to take the subway and that was a very frightening experience. You know how those doors close. Our bags got caught between the doors. We were freaking out. My aunt got outside and yelled to the conductor to pull the alarm to open the doors. That was our first experience of America."

Rafael went to live with an aunt, uncle and cousin in the Bronx and his brother and mother went to live with his other aunt in Manhattan. His cousin Alice was a concert pianist studying political science at Columbia University. Every Saturday she took Rafael to a book-club meeting at her Russian Jewish friends, Helen and Julius' house.

"I was the only child there. Helen was so wonderful. She realized how bored I was. She had this room full of art and she pulled out some papers, crayons and art books. 'From now on,' she said, 'when you come, this will be your room.'"

It was Alice and her friends who passed on to Rafael a love of art and books.

"The first museum I ever went to was the Museum of Modern Art. I was 13. I couldn't speak a word of English and it was just wonderful."

When Alice got a job teaching at the University of Southern Maine, she brought Rafael with her. She was in her late twenties at the time and Rafael was a fifteen.

"I remember when we got here, we thought it was the end of the earth. It was 11:00 at night. It was in North Yarmouth. Later Alice said she wanted to live out in the woods more. She loves the woods. So we moved to a house - an hour away. And we lived on this dirt road, up a hill in a hunting lodge, no insulation - in the winter time. It was freezing cold. I went to Livermore Falls junior high. I was the only black kid in the whole school!"

The commute in the winters became too difficult and Rafael and Alice moved back to Portland. During his last two years at Portland High School, Alice moved back to New York, and Rafael became a ward of the state. After high school, he worked odd jobs. His dream was to go to art school.

"I walked in one day to the art school office (then Portland School of Art) and said, 'I would love to go to school here.' The director said, 'What do you have? Do you have a portfolio?' So I showed him the collages and shadow boxes I'd been doing and he said, 'I'll get you a scholarship.' By September, I was in art school!"

He graduated in 1979. That year he married his junior high school sweetheart Bonnie and moved into the house they own and live in today. Rafael went on to receive a certificate in Interior Design from Boston Architectural and opened a cooperative artist studio on Middle Street in 1981. For many years, as their daughter was growing up, Rafael operated a floor re-finishing and insulation company while Bonnie worked at K-Mart.

"I started having problems with my back. I went to a chiropractor and she told me to get out of the business. So I decided to go into restoration and interior painting, fine finishing, decorative finishes, like washes and things like that. I went to work for Sears auction house in Gray, which is one of those premiere auction houses in New England. I was there for seven years as a runner, taking the stuff and showing it to people. I decided to specialize in lighting, I always had a passion for lights. I wanted to do more art with the light instead of as an antique dealer. I wanted to actually create pieces. I went to a show in New York of this Japanese American artist. I saw that, and I said that's what I want to do. I fell in love with his show"

Today, Rafael primarily designs and displays unique lighting pieces which serve to illuminate world cultures, particularly Afro-Caribbean art, ritual and mythology. His work has been featured in *Maine Home & Design*. As an artist Clariot has been inspired by three major cultural traditions: Dominican, Haitian and American. He strives to bring all three into his work.

"What I'm doing now is just supporting my passion, working, paying the bills. Since I was a little boy, I was always making things. In Santo Domingo, I used to go out and get sticks and make structures, like a slingshot... creations with a function and also a connection to a culture."

On November 22, 2007 Rafael became an American citizen fulfilling his aunt's dying wish.

"In the States I'm the Spanish kid, or Latino or Hispanic. In Colombia, I'm a gringo or El Americano, but in Bangor where I know hundreds, thousands of people who know me by my first name, who know my family, I'm home."

Maria & Santiago Rave

Maria and Santiago Rave are mother and son. Along with Santiago's father, Alejandro, they own and operate Thistles Restaurant in Bangor. The restaurant features fine cuisine and dining with an international flair and a decidedly Latin influence. Additionally, Maria Rave is a professor of Spanish at both the University of Maine's Orono campus and Husson College. She holds a BA in Liberal Arts and a graduate degree in Spanish Literature and Art Education. She was born in 1954 in Medellin, Colombia to an upper middle class family. Throughout her youth she visited brothers who had immigrated to the U.S. during the 1960's. She met her husband, Alejandro, an accomplished actor and opera singer, and married him after a long courtship. They lived in Argentina and had two sons. Santiago is her younger son. Shortly after Santiago was born, he became sick with hypoglycemia. A specialist recommended that he be seen by a doctor in the U.S. As Santiago recalls:

Born: **Medellin, Colombia**
Live: **Bangor, Maine**
Occupation: **Owners, Thistles Restaurant, Bangor**

"There was a specialist, in Miami, who was working on my case. We already had relatives living in Miami. I was in treatment for about a year. Once I was cured, we moved back to Colombia and lived with our grandparents up in our finca (farm)."

"I went to kindergarten in South America. And then later, my parents decided to come visit cousins who lived in Ellsworth, Maine. That summer in 1985 when they came to visit, they fell in love with the fact that you didn't have to lock your car doors, your house door. From a population of 3 million to 6 thousand was the population of Ellsworth. It was a huge change, but they thought that it was the best place to raise their kids. And so we ended up in Maine."

Literacy Volunteers provided the family with extensive help. The Rave's early years in Maine followed the pattern of many immigrants – hard work and low pay compounded by the language barrier.

"I don't know if my parents shared their early experiences or not, but I think it's important to know that all of these families, however we have come, worked for everything that they had, nothing got handed down. And I'm very proud of my parents for what they have offered to my life and my brother's life. They gave up a lot for us and I really appreciate that and love them to death for it."

"From the beginning, kitchens were the only thing my dad could get into. Because it was the one place where you didn't have to really talk that much. You chop carrots, you chop onions. My mother, who was able to take more classes and study, had to do her whole GED. And she did everything, at the same time working and taking care of the family. Her first jobs were pushing a cart at IGA because of the language barrier, and bagging groceries. My dad was at the midnight shift, making donuts at Dunkin Donuts. Those were the first two jobs they had. And from there, it just developed and developed. They worked, and they still work very hard. And I know a lot of families that come to the States that are immigrants, have it tough. It's just something that's a proven fact. All the hard work pays off. It won't get easier, but it gets more comfortable."

While Maria and Alejandro were working, Santiago and his brother, Andres were the first Latino school children in the Ellsworth School Department.

"My brother paved the road for me because he was five years older. It was a little challenging, difficult at first, because I didn't know any English. I remember the first day of school in first grade, my mother had to come with me, and I wouldn't let go of her hand for a whole two weeks. After two weeks a kid gave me a pencil. It was the first kid that came to talk to me. That was sort of the breaking point, of me realizing hey, there's someone here I can be friends with. And that day I forgot about my mom and was friends with the kid and we were best friends through all of elementary, middle, and into high school. And I remember every teacher I had, they were really phenomenal, with open arms and caring."

Growing up, Santiago remembers really wanting to be liked by everyone.

"The one thing that I felt I really needed to do to become American was join Boy Scouts. - to really be here, be someone, I needed to be a Boy Scout. So I did the whole Boy Scout experience. That was fabulous."

In high school, Santiago got involved in everything; soccer, theater, art, National Honor Society, but at home, his family was determined to retain their Latino heritage and language.

"My parents told us, we're always going to speak Spanish inside the house and outside the house we're gonna speak English. And then that way you'll grow up bilingual. I'm very grateful today that my parents did that, because it's opened a whole lot of doors in my adult life...with projects, work, travel experience, the family thing, being able to go to my home country, to meet with my grandparents and relatives."

In the summers Santiago worked with Americorps with the migrant workers up in the blueberry barrens helping with the rural health centers and driving the mobile medical unit. His parents also worked there at the migrant school.

"The experience in the barrens really opened my eyes, really made me understand that even though it was challenging and hard for my family in the beginning, everyday there are so many more families that have so many more challenges trying to do the same thing that we did. That was very important because I could really use my skills to help a community and be a force for change."

Like many young men at the time, Santiago was taken up by Star Wars and movie special effects. He researched what degrees people at George Lucas's studios had and decided to study industrial design at the Massachusetts College of Art. Moving to Boston from Bangor began another transition point in his life.

"I was kind of in an identity crisis. You're not the only different one anymore. There were a lot of Hispanics, a lot of African Americans, Asians, every aspect of the world. But at the same time, I felt more like I was a Mainer, like I was from a small town in Maine dealing with a big city and a big culture. We traveled a lot with my parents, so it wasn't like I was scared of the big city, but it was, now I'm part of this big world, so I have to choose and make my way. And do I really open up to my Hispanic culture or do I continue the path of- okay, I'm Hispanic but I'm from a small town in Bangor, Maine. So that was a choice I had to make. I chose both."

It was while Santiago was in college that his parents decided to open a restaurant. They had had restaurants in Colombia before, but in Maine they worked for

other people because they were worried about depending on the ups and downs of owning a business. As Maria describes:

"After many years working in the best restaurants as a chef here, the time came when my husband said, 'Ay! I am really tired, I want to have my own business again, where I can do whatever I want.' I said, 'Well, let's begin to do this.'"

"One day Alejandro came and picked me up here in Bangor, and we were almost going to sign on a place that we were going to buy. And I myself was not convinced about the business, I didn't like it. I said, 'Darling, I have the idea that this is not for us, this establishment, so let's keep looking.' 'Okay, let's go to lunch,' he said."

"So we came to this little place, and we began to have lunch. We began to look around, and I thought, 'See, a little place like this is what I want.' A small thing. That we can manage ourselves, alone, without partners, or anything. We began to notice that the place had art in it. So I asked the owner, 'My son likes art, who is the artist?' He said, 'They are my paintings.' I said, 'How come you haven't taken up painting again?' He said, 'Ay! I don't have time, because of the business.' I said, 'Stop doing it, and go paint.' He said, 'Maybe one of these days I will do that, but for now, I can't.'"

About a month later the Rave's received a call from the realtor with another business for them to look at. It was the same restaurant.

"We thought, what a coincidence, just the very place I had wanted! And so we begin the loan process to buy. And everything went well. I had a premonition. I don't know if this would be called "religious." But I am Catholic and have a very strong faith. And I think, if this is not what will benefit us, then it will be as God wishes. If it will benefit us, then please, help me to get what I need to attain this. And that is how it happened, and we have been here nine years."

Their two sons helped at the restaurant during vacations and whenever they could come to Maine.

"My husband was a very good chef, well-known. When we bought the restaurant, we knew that it had a reputation for being very good, here in Bangor. And we said, so let's elevate that, so it went up and up and up."

When Santiago graduated from college, he came to help out in the restaurant for the summer. He had an industrial design job lined up in Boston for the fall.

"When I saw my parents, they were exhausted because it was a big, big project for them to do by themselves. I thought I would be here for three months, get things going and then I could leave and things would be okay. But I fell in love with the business. I fell in love with meeting new people everyday. And every sweat, tear, hour that you put into it, is all for family. I really, really like that. I didn't go back to Boston. I found something that is much more special and important to me."

Since then, Thistles has received local recognition for its Tango Tuesdays, international cuisine and "sophisticated food from everywhere" from The Maine Campus, Downeast Magazine and the Maine Sunday Telegram. It has also been named best wait staff according to Market Surveys of America and the Bangor Metro Magazine 2007. It also won the People's Choice Award for the Governor's Great Taste of Maine Lobster Competition.

"There are just a lot of our roots to our menu. We go back to our ancestors. On my Dad's side, we're from Italy and Germany – so on our menu you see German-influenced dishes and Italian-influenced dishes. But those families migrated to Argentina. So then you have Argentinian dishes. On my mother's side, we're from Colombia. And then from her side, is France and Spain. So then we have a lot of French influence, Spanish from Spain, and Colombian influence. So right there, we're talking about a lot of countries that are key in culinary arts. My whole list of wines is from Argentina, every single one of them. And I've been to Argentina a few times now, and I've visited a lot of these vineyards, I've met a lot of these families who run these vineyards, and wanted to really showcase that up here in Maine."

"I'm very proud of where I'm from and where my family is from. My parents, ever since I was growing up, they danced tango. So I knew that'd be a really fun night for us to have here at the restaurant, where we could relax and be ourselves for a night. And we do. We dance tango. My father, after he's done cooking, he goes quickly and changes into a suit and hat and goes out and dances tango with my mom. My father is a Renaissance man; he's an artist and a chef. He's a musician- a tenor singer, an opera singer, so he likes to do those things once in a while, too."

The Growing Latin American Influence

Last year Santiago married a woman who also was born in Medellin, Colombia. They are living with Santiago's parents while they save up for their own place. For the Raves, Bangor is home.

"In Bangor you can really be somebody who makes a difference in a smaller town. The time and effort that you put into it, things really happen. That's something that I've been very fortunate to be involved with. You volunteer in a lot of groups, you donate to a lot of charities, and that's important. I'm part of a group called Fusion Bangor, a networking group of young business entrepreneurs. We've been getting together and creating projects, meetings, and all kinds of things to do to make Bangor a better place to live and play. There are young people here, and we are living, we are having fun."

Maria is also deeply involved with the community. She is the president of El Centro Hispano, an organization that meets regularly at the restaurant and hopes to buy and open a community center one day. She also continues to teach.

"We like to help, especially the young people. Our employees are also like family. Because at the same time as we are helping them, they are helping us, right? Help is a reciprocal thing. I often try to hire students from the university, because I know that they need to pay for their studies. Alejandro always likes to teach young people, teaching them cooking, to his liking. We have also been contracting students studying Culinary Arts in the area. And when they graduate, they stay with him. The two young people that we have in the kitchen now graduated this year in Culinary Arts, and might work with us a long time. And now that Santiago is married, his wife will be with us as well. It is beautiful to continue in this way."

"I love being in Maine. In Portland, people are very open to new cultures. I have never felt less because I am Latin."

Monire Child

Monire (Mona) was born in Maracaibo, Venezuela in 1974 to an Afro-Colombian mother and an American father of the B'Hai faith. Her parents adopted Mona's two cousins when their parents were killed in a car accident. She also has two younger siblings.

"I grew up in a very diverse culture. My father worked a lot. He was always working. We didn't have too much money, although we went to private schools. For my parents, it was the most important thing for us to have a private education. It helped because there were uniforms, so we didn't have to show that we didn't have any special, beautiful clothes. We were treated like everybody else and had food there every day. Besides that, my parents made many other sacrifices."

Born: **Maracaibo, Venezuela**
Lives: **Portland, Maine**
Occupation: **Owner, Uno, Dos y Tres Spanish Learning Daycare Center**

Mona and her siblings all went to university. Mona's undergraduate degree is in psychology. Only one of her siblings remains in Venezuela, the rest emigrated to the U.S. or Canada.

"My father moved to Venezuela as a pioneer to teach the B'Hai faith and that's how he met my mom. He loves the Latin culture and doesn't understand why we would move to the USA because he loves living there so much."

But Mona always wanted to come to the U.S. Since her father was American, she had her citizenship and her brother was already here. In 1994, Mona met and married a fellow psychology student in Venezuela.

"It's hard as a young couple to start a life in Venezuela. Many young couples end up living with their parents until they are able to afford a place. And I didn't want to do that. It was also expected of me to stay at home before I got married. And I didn't want that - so one of my options was to come here. It was my adventure."

She and her husband, Gustava first moved to Miami where they could get by knowing very little English. But Florida turned out be harder than Venezuela. They took labor jobs to get by and moved from middle class to poor.

"One of the good things about Venezuela is that you grow up in a house and it can stay in your family forever. I have had this same phone number for my parents since I was a child. People don't move as much as they do here. You can make strong connections with your neighbors, you really know people around you. Your parents build up a community. You don't realize that until you lack it. Even though I am educated, I couldn't work in my field because I didn't have the network."

"My husband applied for a dishwasher job. They said no because he was overqualified and they couldn't imagine him doing the job. He was so upset. "Oh my God, I can't even work as a dishwasher." That was hard. We needed money, it doesn't matter how it comes. When you don't have a job, getting the first job is the most important thing."

They decided to go up North in order to learn English and to be where Mona had relatives on her father's side.

"I didn't grow up with the American side of my family which is very different from my Latin side. I had seen them maybe five times in my life. Still, it's easier to move to a place where you know there will be somebody you can connect with."

In the Boston area, where Mona's grandmother lived, apartments were too expensive. A cousin in Falmouth suggested they come and see if they liked Maine. They did.

"When we came to Maine, we started with the fact that my cousins don't speak any Spanish. We stayed with them for about two weeks until we got a place. They found us work in a printing company. In the company, nobody spoke Spanish and we didn't have any friends that spoke Spanish because we really wanted to learn English. We had many headaches. Little by little we got it. It was a lot of headaches, but it worked."

Soon Mona and Gustavo decided to have children, but didn't want to put their children in daycare. So they thought that starting a daycare would be a good choice for them. Coastal Enterprises had a program to help immigrants start businesses.

"They gave us a lot of information. They helped us do it. Because this is a home business, the investment is not that big. Also Childcare Connection, which refers kids to you. So there you go, with two companies helping, it didn't make it that hard to start."

Their idea was to have an immersion program, where children would learn Spanish. But many of their first clients were subsidized and just needed any daycare situation. So they set their target higher toward parents who had a little more money. Today they have a mix of clients; those who want their children to learn a second language and those who just want a good, safe, child-care environment.

"It's a challenge. It's hard to find people who speak Spanish and who want to work in a daycare. It's hard to find somebody who is good with kids and then to meet all the prices that I can afford to pay them for the work they are doing."

Mona doesn't see the daycare business as her long-term career, but she isn't thinking too far ahead either. She'd like to have another child and as psychologists, she and her husband think about perhaps offering parenting classes or after-school programs.

"Through the daycare, I found so many wonderful people and friends. I don't know if my experience of having a family would have been as rewarding as it is in Maine if it was in another city. Here, I think, people take the time to play with their children."

Looking back on her decision to come to this country, Mona has few regrets.

"I had the idea that I would come to the U.S. to do my master's degree and so far I haven't done so. I haven't had the money to do it. So here I am without the degree, but happy. Happy as a clam, as they say."

"If my name were not Jorge, I don't think anyone seeing me walk down the street would say - there is an Hispanic. Keeping my name, knowing my culture, and staying with it - that is part of my identity."

Jorge Acero

Jorge Acero is the Employment & Training Specialist with the Foreign Labor Certification Unit of the Maine Department of Labor. He was born in Colombia, South America. His father was a practicing attorney but died when Jorge was a young child.

He was eight years old in 1963, when he immigrated with his mother and settled in the San Francisco Bay Area of California. His mother became a baker for a local restaurant.

"Fortunately for me, I was from a well-educated, middle-class family—mostly professionals. Through life, they have been a major force of influence in terms of the values and integrity of lifestyle for me. I looked to them, because I didn't have any relatives in the United States, I always looked to my family in Colombia for support and moral support."

Born: **Cucuta, Colombia**
Lives: **Waterville, Maine**
Occupation: **Employment & Training Specialist, Maine Department of Labor**

Jorge would return to visit relatives in Colombia during summers or Christmas vacations throughout his grade and high school years.

"In those days, life in Colombia was wonderful, because there was very little threat from criminal elements or the guerrilla movements or the drug people. Whereas now and from the mid-1980s on, it's become a little precarious."

Jorge's mother died when he was 17, and he lived with friends of the family until he graduated from high school. After graduation, Jorge entered a community college in Northern California to study agriculture. His plan was to return to Colombia to work on a small farm that belonged to his family. When that didn't work out, he attended the University of Arizona at Tucson and obtained his bachelor's degree in anthropology, specializing in the impact of agricultural development in developing countries. There he met Catherine Besteman, who later became his wife.

Jorge moved to New York City and pursued another of his passions— photography and curating photographic exhibits. While in New York, he conducted research with various museums and later attended New York University and attained his master's degree with a double major in Latin American studies as well as museum studies and museum administration. He developed a strong interest in Latin American photographers. When Jorge's wife was offered a faculty position at Colby College, they moved to Maine.

"I wanted to pursue work in museums and to work with photography collections, but it became very difficult to do that in Maine because I had become quite an expert on contemporary Latin American photographers. The museums in Maine really specialize in American art and American antiquities. I really had no expertise in this area. So I actually was a stay-at-home dad with a 6-month-old son and a 5-year-old daughter for about a year and a half."

Eventually, he accepted a position with Colby College to coordinate the study abroad program in Mexico, which involved traveling with students to Cuernavaca, Mexico for language studies.

"That was a wonderful job. I did that for three years. Eventually, another position opened at Colby, which was working in the Career Services office as the internship coordinator for the college internship program. I did that position for five years. It was a good position and interesting, but only part-time position and I wanted a full-time job."

"I kept looking for better opportunities. That is how I eventually found a position with the Maine Department of Labor at the Portland Career Center as a bilingual career consultant in Spanish and English. I assisted the Career Center with outreach to the Hispanic community in Portland and the State Monitor Advocate who oversees the migrants and farm workers."

Within a year, he was awarded a position to administer the Foreign Labor Certification program which includes the agriculture, non-agriculture (the H-2A and H-2B temporary worker visa programs respectively), hospitality industries and logging. This involves traveling across the state. At any given time, he could be in the St. Francis, Fort Kent, Caribou area meeting with potato and broccoli growers or logging companies or in the Fryeburg area with sod farmers, sod turf producers, apple orchards, or landscaping companies that have nurseries and bring in foreign workers. He also travels Downeast to the blueberry barrens.

"The opportunity to meet people face-to-face is the most rewarding thing about my job. I have been very lucky with the skill sets that anthropology provided. Because, anthropology and social science is really a holistic approach to social interaction, and really that's what life is. So, what I've been successful at is taking and building on skill sets, year after year."

When Jorge first came to the United States, he went through a period of wanting to be totally immersed in American culture. It was in Arizona when he made a concerted effort to re-identify with his Latino heritage that led to his decision to major in Latin American studies.

"Not because I was interested in becoming a teacher or an academic, but so that I could ground my Latinity a little bit more by studying all the different countries—the political, social, and cultural. So, I sort of have gone full circle."

"Right now the federal government is trying to work out a solution to the immigration problems, and the temporary programs are caught right in the middle of that. We are a federally funded program. So, our congressional delegation in Washington is constantly being asked questions by local constituents. What can you do for us? They will telephone me and ask for my advice or my opinion if they don't know something in particular. And that's very rewarding."

Jorge plans to stay in Maine. His wife is now a tenured, senior faculty member at Colby College and is committed to her job and her work with the Somali Bantu community in Lewiston. They have two children. Ultimately Jorge would like to get more involved with policy work and evaluation.

"I've always enjoyed my life here. Even in the small town of Waterville where I live, there are several professionals that are from different countries in South America, Central America, and Mexico. They either teach at Colby, or they're physicians at the hospital, or they're independent in some form, but they live a completely acculturated life in the United States. Yet, they still are Latinos or Hispanic, and that is what we are a part of."

"The best advice my parents ever gave me was 'Whatever you do, pick your career with your heart. You're going to have to work everyday for the rest of your life. Pick something you really like doing."

Felix Hernandez, M.D.

Dr. Felix Hernandez is a cardio-thoracic/vascular surgeon and the Chief of Surgery at Eastern Maine Medical Center. He was born in Havana, Cuba and came to this country when he was six years old. His mother was a child psychologist with the Cuban educational system. His father was a civil engineer.

"We left Cuba on Christmas Day of 1960 - my mother, my sister, and I. That was after Castro was elected and after the Revolution. Our family was afraid that his Communist policies were contra to our family values. They wouldn't allow my father to leave the country because he had been involved in designing some of the largest oil refineries and power plants in the country. We all had permanent visas to come to the United States and live here, but they wouldn't let him out. We used the excuse that we were coming to Miami to visit my uncle for the Christmas holidays. We never went back."

Born: **Havana, Cuba**
Lives: **Bangor, Maine**
Occupation: **Cardio-thoracic/vascular surgeon & Chief of Surgery at Eastern Maine Medical Center**

They stayed with another Cuban family until their father could join them. In February of 1961, the court denied his father's appeal for an exit visa.

"He decided to go to the airport and try to sneak on an airplane, which is a funny idea because he probably couldn't get away with stealing a candy bar from a busy newsstand without getting caught. Luckily, he ran into a college buddy of his who was an airline pilot for Pan American. He explained the situation and his friend gave him an extra Pan Am jacket and hat and said, 'Walk onto the plane and if anybody asks you any questions, tell them you're a food inspector for Pan American. If you get caught, I don't know how you got the jacket or the hat.' He was flying this plane to Miami, and my father got on it and left everything he had behind."

Felix's father got a job working construction in New York and when he had saved up enough money he moved his family there. Felix and his sister started public school in New York and learned English. They also taught their father English.

"It was kind of a fun time. We lived in a rented basement apartment in New York City. Once my father learned enough English, he was able to get a job as a civil engineer in New York. About a year later he found out that the company he used to work for in Cuba was actually an American company, and they were looking for him to see if he had made it out. They found him and hired him, and we moved back to Miami. I spent most of my childhood moving up and down the east coast to different sites of things he was building—sugar refineries, phosphate refineries, or warehouses."

Felix's parents had always stressed that education was the most valuable thing you could own.

"'Whatever you owned in the bank or houses or anything like that,' they used to say, 'Some idiot with a gun could take that away from you,' referring to Castro. 'What's in your head, nobody can take away.'

The family mooved to Connecticut and Felix attended a Catholic high school run by the same order of Brothers who taught his father in Cuba. Then Felix attended Fairfield University.

"It's a Jesuit school. The Jesuit priests named all their schools initially after famous Jesuits like Loyola College and Regis College. After a while they got sneaky and started naming them after towns, so you couldn't spot them so easily - Fairfield University, Georgetown University and Creighton University. If you were from a Jesuit school and applied to a Jesuit law school or medical school; then you were in. You had a little bit of an advantage.

The Jesuits look after the ones they educate. There are a lot of good principles in Jesuit education and Jesuit training. They teach you to think for yourself and teach you to always go back to the primary source of data and interpret that yourself. Other people may have interpreted that differently than you would."

After graduation, Felix went to medical school at the University of Connecticut. He originally intended to train in orthopedic surgery and secured a residency at the University of Connecticut. However, during his first year, he fell in love with cardiac surgery. Felix got married the year of his internship, and he and his new wife moved to Detroit to finish his residency. His current partner at Eastern Maine Medical, Dr. Robert Clough, was three years ahead of him at Hartford and had been a resident when Felix was a medical student. Later, they were residents together.

When Eastern Maine Medical Center was looking for a heart surgeon, Robert was selected to be the one to start the heart surgery program. Robert asked his friend Felix to join him.

Dr. Fernandez' full specialty is cardio-thoracic and vascular which includes all kinds of procedures on the adult heart including coronary bypass; valvular replacements; structural procedures like closing atrial and ventricular septal defects; and removing tumors from inside the heart. It also includes surgery on the chest, and anything involving the lungs or the esophagus.

His greatest challenge during the past three years has been his promotion to Chief of Surgery at Eastern Maine Medical Center. He now has to encompass all surgical specialties, the delivery of care and community needs. Currently, he is working on an MMM (master's of medical management) degree from Carnegie Mellon University. The program is set up for internet coursework and some campus courses.

"I felt I didn't really understand enough what the issues were on the business side. Physicians hand all of that over to business people who aren't clinically oriented. That always creates a disconnect in communication because we talk medicine and patient care, and they talk business and contribution margins. Ultimately, it became clear that somebody was going to have to go learn the other one's side of the fence. The hurdles are much too high for a business person to go through medical school to learn our side of the fence. So, I'm seeing a movement in medicine where a lot of physicians are going for business degrees like the MMA and MBA to get back into the administration of hospitals in the direction of health care and health care policy."

Felix has been in Maine now for 21 years. He has three children — two sons and a daughter.

"My greatest reward in life is probably my family. My wife and I are going on 28 years of marriage which is not so common these days. My children are very different from me in many ways. That's one of the beauties of life, that everybody's different."

"I feel very good in Maine because my job offers me everything I need for confidence and to build a future."

Bianca Soto Gomez

Bianca is a soil conservationist with the State of Maine's Natural Resource Conservation Service, a position she has held for the past year. She was born to a military family stationed in Berlin, Germany and was raised in the east coast town of Fajardo, Puerto Rico.

"We're a very small, but together family. My father is a veteran. My mother works for the U.S. Air Force in Puerto Rico. My brother is in the Army and my sister's husband is in the Navy."

She majored in animal husbandry at Santiagua Posta College and went on to get her master's in agricultural education. She met her husband while finishing her degree.

Born: **Berlin, Germany, from Puerto Rico**

Lives: **Skowhegan, Maine**

Occupation: **Soil Conservationist, State of Maine**

"Living where I did, it was like a tropical climate. You enjoy the beach and share with your friends. All my life I like the environmental aspects, because part of my mom's job in the Air Force was to clean the forest and I liked to go and help."

Bianca checked for internships on the internet and saw an opportunity to apply to the Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRSC). She was accepted into the Step program (student employment training program) and had the opportunity to spend a summer in Pennsylvania. Afterwards, she returned to Puerto Rico to finish up her master's degree and began to teach agriculture. She didn't enjoy teaching and decided she needed a change.

"NRSC encouraged me to come back and apply full-time when I finished my studies. But, then, when I called they said, 'we have a problem, the budget is very hard, you need to apply to another state. Maybe you can apply to Maine where there are some positions like resource conservationist.' And that is the reason I am here, I applied and I got a good job."

Bianca works as a soil conservationist. She provides technical assistance to small farmers or family gardeners to help keep water and soil clean and also improve production. She likes her job very much. Conservation Services helped Bianca move her belongings to Maine, but she was responsible for finding a house and a vehicle. Her husband came to Maine to help her get settled, but needed to return to Puerto Rico to finish up his degree.

"I needed money for the deposit for housing and to get a car. I have never driven in the snow, so I need to buy a good car, so I'm safe. I need to be economically prepared. We used part of our wedding money and my father helped me too because we needed some help. It's hard. This change is very drastic for me."

In addition to missing her husband, her greatest challenge moving to Maine has been learning English.

"I didn't feel comfortable to talk. I only listened every time and I didn't speak a lot. I take classes in Skowhegan, like conversation English, because I had some problems with pronunciation. I write fine, but you have to learn how to speak and express yourself. I have only been here for seven months and I have improved, because people understand me if I talk slowly and relax."

When asked about what she likes about Maine, Bianca is quick to say; 'quality of life.'

"I feel very relaxed here. I have time to spend with my friends. Although my family is very far away, I think I am improving myself. I try to keep busy, to study English, learn more about my job."

As a Latino working in conservation, Bianca also gets support from a national network, The National Association of Hispanic Conservationists, which consists of people who speak Spanish or who were born in Latin America. Every year she gets to attend a national conference and find out from her peers what is happening in other states and share ideas.

Bianca has very clear goals for her future and the type of lifestyle she wants.

"I told my supervisor that when I improve my language, I want to be a district conservationist. That is one of my goals in my professional life. Other goals are to have a real life, with my husband and be together to enjoy the life that is offered here in Maine. Be stable, married, professional and have good health. If you don't have health, you don't have anything. So I will keep being healthy."

"I say, let me not think about the bad things I have, let me think about the things I need to do and keep learning. If a Latin person wants to grow or improve he can, language is not the barrier to continue to obtain your goal. You need to move forward and keep positive. If you keep positive, you can do everything that you want."

"I lived in New York, Massachusetts, California. Comparing these three states with the Maine, they don't compare to the people. The people of Maine really welcomed me here. I love the people of Maine. That's what got me."

Juan Gonzalez

Juan Gonzalez was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic in 1969. His father had a good job and Juan was raised in a middle class environment. When he was four years old, his parents separated and his mother went to the United States. He stayed with his father. His mother began what would turn out to be a twenty year process to petition Juan to come to the United States to join her. Juan went to college in the Dominican Republic and became a telecommunications engineer. He met and married his wife Rosa and had his first child while living and working there. One day the letter came stating that he could now immigrate to the United States.

Born: **Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic**

Lives: **Scarborough, Maine**

Occupation: **Owner, La Bodega Latina, International Store and Restaurant**

"I dropped everything - because the mentality back then was, if you could make it in the United States, it was something that could definitely put you on top of the line."

He arrived in New York in 1994, at the age of 24 knowing just a little English. Juan's first experience with crime in the streets of New York made it clear to him that he could not live there.

"I remember it was like eleven o'clock at night. All of a sudden, I hear all of these shots. I look out the window, there are three people down, and people shooting each other. I told my mother, you get me out of New York, or I'll go back to my country."

Juan went to Massachusetts and tried getting a telecommunications job. It was difficult with very little English. He saw a sign at a recruiting office that said they were hiring people with technology backgrounds.

"I thought, 'I'm an engineer, that could be easy.' So I went in without knowing that it was a recruiter from the military. I signed up, took a test. I joined the Navy without meaning to, and I was in the Navy for eight years. Just like that, boom! I was like, man, what have I done?"

Six months after arriving in the U.S. Juan was able to bring his wife and son here because of his status as an enlisted man. Under ordinary circumstances the process for petitioning for his wife and child would have taken at least five years.

"Towards the end of my four years active duty, they sent me to Maine, to the Brunswick Naval Air Station. They said, 'You gotta go to Maine.' I said, 'Maine? Where the hell is Maine?' I came over here and then I liked the state. I joined the Reserve, to get an income. I spent four years in the reserve."

Juan got a job cleaning offices and at Taco Bell while doing an active job search for work in the telecommunications field. He found a job at John Hancock as a Telecommunications Specialist. He commuted two and a half hours from Maine to Boston in his Toyota Camry every day. His day began at 5am and ended at 8pm.

"One night, with a snowstorm, it took me nine hours from Boston to Maine. The following day I called them and said listen, 'I don't want to risk my life over this job.' Soon enough, I got a job at Maine Medical Center, right across the street - doing telecommunications. Less money, but it was good."

In Maine it was impossible to buy plantains or any other food from his native country and Juan saw an opportunity to start a small business. On June 20, 1998 he opened La Bodega Latina, a small family run store located near Maine Medical Center on Congress Street.

"I put together a business plan, together with the program that the city ran called StartSmart. I got confidence. I took a loan from them, and with some money I had saved, and opened the store. I was running the store in the morning. getting out of work at four, coming back for the night there. And I did that for two years. It was a struggle- work, store, work, store. But it was great. People loved it. We were the first ones exposing the Maine people to a different culture."

Juan began writing down what his customers wanted and learning how to supply it. If people from El Salvador wanted *pupusas* then La Bodega would figure out how to get what was needed. That's when things really began to boom. In 2001 La Bodega Latina won a prestigious award from the Maine Small Business Association. It was a very special victory for the small family run La Bodega Latina.

Shortly thereafter, Juan and his family purchased the adjacent building to open a restaurant that would serve Hispanic and Caribbean food. Juan quit his job at Maine Medical Center and became an independent contractor. He started Latino Telecommunications.

"I used the skills that I learned here, in this business and the skills that I learned in the Navy too, because the military taught me about discipline. When you have discipline and you have a goal, you can do a lot."

In 2001 La Bodega Latino community was tagged the "peoples' market" because it's not just Latinos that come through the door.

"We get people from Somalia, Kenya, Sudan - all people from Africa come here. The same with the Anglos. A bunch of Americans come to the store too, because we became popular. They come to try the flavor of Dominican, the Caribe, and they like it here. Now everybody knows who we are. We became more like a social establishment. More than a store, because not only do we do business as a store and a restaurant, we help people with papers or documents. When they need an apartment, I help them find an apartment. When they need a job, I help them find a job. So we became like a social service to the people in the community."

As a result, for some time, Juan was identified as the go-to person for the burgeoning Portland immigrant and refugee community. This was always rewarding but sometimes overwhelming.

"Every time someone had a problem, they said, let's go to Juan! I couldn't take it anymore. You gotta find somebody else, cause I'm going crazy. Guys, you gotta step in."

Juan notes that the Latino community has grown over the past twenty years with more programs to support it. Because he loved living here so much and has enjoyed success he has brought his sisters, and other family members here. His sister Marlen has started her own small business, Marlen's Bakery, selling special occasion cakes made to order.

In the next five years, Juan's expectations are that his son will be away at college and his daughter will be entering high school.

"Before I can say I'm all done, I got ten more years of hard work ahead at least. Because I need to see both of my children graduate from college. When they get through college, then I'll be all complete."

"My English is better even if what I say is a little funny, but everyone forgives me because I think that the chocolates speak for me. They speak Spanish and English."

Monica Elliott

Monica Elliot's life story is one of success, loss, adaptation, improvisation and creativity. It is also a story of a woman with an indomitable spirit. Liliana Monica Urbina was born in 1952 in Miraflores, Peru. Today, she resides in Lubec, Maine running a successful small business.

"My father had a gold business. He would sell to many jewelry shops in Lima. He was a man who invented businesses. And my mother raised her children, and later dedicated herself to the business of making gold for the dental industry. They made dental gold, which is similar to the jewelry industry, but with a greater purpose. They did this for many years."

Born: **Miraflores, Peru**
Lives: **Lubec, Maine**
Occupation: **Owner, Monica's Chocolates**

Coming from an upper middle-class family, Monica's life in Peru was comfortable and full of opportunity.

"I had a beautiful childhood. I received everything that my parents were able to give me. A very good education - I was educated by German nuns in a school that still exists. And we lived a life, thanks be to God, very good."

Monica was interested in business, particularly the fashion industry. In 1976 she graduated from the School of Design in Peru. For a brief period, she came to New York to study in an advanced design program set up by a Latino company. Eventually, she owned eight stores throughout Peru.

"I entered the business world when I was 18 years old. But I started to become famous at 25 years old, rapidly, when I began to be featured in magazines and the latest fashion reviews. I made designs for wedding dresses and evening gowns. I had very good connections, so I became successful very quickly."

She married at the age of 24 and had two daughters. The marriage didn't work out. She divorced shortly thereafter, raising her daughters on her own and managing her multiple stores. About the same time, Monica's parents got a divorce and Monica felt responsible for her mother and younger brother as well.

"As things were going very well for me, I decided to take responsibility for everyone. And my mother was used to this lifestyle, a beautiful home, servants, a chauffeur, everything. My daughters went to a private school, with German nuns as well. And for me it was madness. I began to work, work, work, to buy properties, to make money. And every day I made more money. And the reality was that I was alone, a woman alone. A single mother with two little ones and who lived with my younger brother and no one else."

After many years, Monica remarried, but it was a bad match. She helped her new husband get a loan to open a clinic, but he never repaid the bank.

"I lost $1,200. In my country, that is a scandalous amount of money. I had to work ten years to be able to recuperate that money."

Eventually Monica married Stanley Elliot, an American who was raised in Chile. Stanley was a fisherman who worked with other American fisherman in South America, receiving boats and packaging the fish in containers to send to the U.S. He spoke Spanish, English and three other languages.

"He worked with swordfish. My husband went back and forth to the United States every once in a while. I continued to work in Peru, in the business I had for 30 years. In Lima I had 65 stalls and two boutiques. It made sense for us to stay in Lima, particularly with my daughters. We never imagined going to the United States - there was no necessity to go. My whole world was Peru. My employees had worked for me for 28 years. They were my family; we were a very united group."

Stanley's friend Bob worked in Downeast, Maine and was having trouble with the salmon hatcheries. Stanley decided to come to Maine and help out for a few weeks. He ended up staying for seven months, frequently returning to Peru to see Monica.

"One day my brother came to tell me that my husband had had a stroke, that he was in Bangor, and that they were operating on him. They were sure he would die. I came here, thinking that he was going to die, still crying. But after ten years, my husband is still alive. But I was in Bangor 3 ½ months. They operated on his brain. At the beginning, my husband did not recognize anything. He was not paralyzed, but he did not even know who I was. And it was horrible for me. And they were asking me, 'Can you sign here? Can you sign there?' And I was signing, obviously, to save him, to do whatever. I never imagined that he didn't have any insurance. And when it came down to it, the reality was I lost everything, everything."

"I had money certified in a bank and I took it out to pay my people (workers) in Peru. I paid everyone, to come out clean. I was ruined. I didn't even have enough to buy a kilo of sugar. I told the doctor's office that I was going back to Peru, and that I would bring Stan. They said, 'Don't go, stop! That in my country he would die.' I had two options: leave Stan in a hospital for his entire life, and the American government would take care of him, or I could remain here. I remained here to be with him. It was a decision that hurt me greatly, because I had to separate from my two daughters - one was 17 years old and the other was 16. My daughters could only come on a tourist visa. But I didn't have enough to pay for tickets. For me, it was horrible, horrible."

The year was 1999. The following year Monica's mother died.

"Immigration told me, 'If you go, you don't come back. You can't leave because your papers are in process, or whatever.' And my poor daughter, she was the one who buried her grandmother. I have never returned to Peru. Not because I cannot - because now I can - but because to return would be to relive it all."

Thus began Monica and Stanley's life in Lubec, a hard place for anyone to make a living, but for an urban, educated, successful business-woman like Monica - torn from her daughters and only speaking Spanish - even more so.

"I entered into a depression. But how am I going to abandon a man who has been so good to me and my daughters? Just because he is sick? My oldest daughter said to me, Mom, stay there. That man needs you, stay."

For the next four years Stanley underwent therapy, treatment and daily doctor visits.

"He is disabled, but he is okay. It's very hard for him because he is a very educated man. But without working, I was going crazy. And what's more, we didn't have anything. We didn't have a car. I didn't even have money to buy clothing. I said to myself, 'I have to begin to get better, or I will drown here.' I didn't speak English, only "yes" and "no." I said, 'First I have to go to school.' I went to school for one hour each week. The English classes were free."

Monica got a job cleaning bathrooms in a factory. She fell and broke her wrist on the ice. Every day was a struggle.

"I said, 'No, this is not for me.' I went to my English teacher, 'If I don't find something to do here, I'm going back to Peru.' I can live alone, I will survive. My teacher said, 'Don't go. You are in the United States, the greatest country in the world, many other people would die to be able to come here. If you could make money in Peru, why can't you do the same in the United States?' I told her, 'This is Lubec, this is not the United States!"

That was February and Valentine's day was coming up.

"I don't know why the word came to me, but it was "Chocolate." That's what I'm going to make! The first thing my teacher said was, 'Did you make chocolates in Peru?' 'No, I have never made them in my life.' She said, 'You're crazy! How are you going to make chocolates?' 'I don't know. I will go to the library.'"

Thus Monica became a business woman again. It was not easy. There were many bad starts and set-backs. To begin with, there were no library books on the technical aspects of making chocolate. But the librarian found some on inter-library loan. She could keep them for two weeks.

"Stanley read them to me, translating every one. And he translated seven library books! I committed those books to memory."

Monica needed to buy the chocolate to practice with so she went knocking on the doors of the best houses in Lubec, asking if she could clean their houses.

"I asked them not to pay me, but instead assist me in buying chocolates on the Internet."

When the chocolate arrived, Monica called her father.

"I asked for the recipe for "Fil Peruano" because it is whiter (more delicate) in my country. 'What do you think if I make them like the *chocoltejas* of Peru?' He said, 'Yes, but the *chocotejas* of Peru you have to make like this and this, and then like this and this, what a lot of work! Forget it, you'll be back in Peru.' I said, 'Yeah, yeah, tell me!' So he told me everything that I had to do. It was an incredible effort- incredible!"

She found supplies like thermometers at her friend Bob's closed down fish factory, but all her first attempts were bad and the chocolates went into the garbage. She was working so hard that the disinfectant used for cleaning was burning holes in her hands. Stanley was very concerned and tried to persuade her to leave him and go back to Peru.

"I said, 'No, now I know why I am not going back to Peru. This chocolate cannot get the best of me. I consider myself more intelligent than this little piece of chocolate!' There is some error that I am making. I became aware of my mistake. That same night I made my first bon bon. I happily ate, you can't imagine how happy, my first chocolate, which came out beautiful and with a perfect color."

"The next day I said to the women who lived next to me, 'I have made these chocolates and would like your truthful opinion. If it is bad, tell me it is bad. If it is good, or marvelous, tell me it is good.' So the first to try was Mary Olsen, an American woman. She told me, 'Monica, this is marvelous! Where did you buy it?' 'I made it myself! 'She told me,' I can't believe it! You made this! You could sell this.'

"I brought a bon bon to my English teacher and she asked me how I was going to package it? 'I don't know,' I said. 'Get in the car, I am going to bring you to Marshall's.' She asks, 'How many flavors are you going to make?' 'Oh, I don't know. Well, five,' I told her. ' I am going to give you these as a gift, because I feel very proud of you' And I wrapped up the chocolates in the paper, just as they are now. I want people to have my work, not anything complicated. Tie it up, wrap it up, roll it up, make it more beautiful - but not with a machine, with human beings. Because, unfortunately, everything in this country is made with machines and that's why there is no work."

It was not easy getting the business off the ground. Her first business partner treated Monica badly. She worked for no salary. He refused to hire other workers. For three and half years, she was getting up at 4 AM and working all day making chocolates, creating new recipes, and creating new product lines. She had a 50% ownership in 'Seaside Chocolates,' but coming to work one day she discovered the partner had changed the locks on the shop. He told Monica that she would never be able to prove she was a part-owner. She had lost everything. Now there really was no reason to continue to stay in Maine.

"The owner of the ice cream shop called me and asked if I wanted to come over. I was so down I said, 'Why would I want to eat ice cream?' But he continued calling the house saying he wanted to talk to me. So Stanley and I walked over and arrived at a meeting of several people. They told me they didn't want me to leave Lubec and go back to Peru, that they wanted me to continue making chocolates here. I said, 'This all sounds beautiful but I don't even have one dollar. I don't even have money to defend myself. It's better if I go.' And one man told me, 'I have 10 thousand dollars. It is for you.' And then a woman, Diana her name was, told me, 'I have 5, 000 thousand dollars.' Well, they rounded up a total, $26, 000 on the table! They told me, 'You can pay it back when you can.' And I said, 'No, I don't have anything. I don't even have a shop.' The owner of the ice cream parlor had a space in the front of the parlor. 'That's where Monica's Chocolates will be! You can rent space in my house.' I said, 'But that house is in ruins!' She said, 'No problem, you have $26, 000 now. Let's go buy things in Marden's.' Four people came and started working on the house for me. They said, 'we don't want you to think that all of us Americans are bad.' 'No,' I said, 'There are good and bad people in Peru, too.'"

"Eventually some Latinos came by. I had never even seen them. They said, 'We heard that you were having problems here.' How quickly it gets around! I never even opened my mouth and everyone knew everything. 'We want to help you.' We did everything, and in one week I opened my doors. The Latinos left; they had only come to volunteer, but I paid them minimum wage. This was three years ago."

In 2005, Monica Elliott opened *Monica's Chocolates*. Today she employs 6 people year round and her chocolates are sold online and at the small store where she makes her home. In March of 2008, *Monica's Chocolates* was awarded 2nd place at the New England Products Trade Show. Monica's youngest daughter now lives in Maine with her mother.

"I am going to live forever, because when I die, everyone will remember me. With my daughter, the business will continue. I am putting the business in her name and my other daughter, who is in Peru, I was able to give her the one store that I was able to save. And she has made it prosper."

"I am very, very proud. I have photos, pictures of my first chocolates, I have a book of everything that people have sent me, letters.. this was the first magazine that we appeared in. I have won second place in New England for gourmet food. It is the first time that Washington County wins a prize. If you see the *New York Times,* the only thing that it mentions is the lighthouses in Maine, the leaves changing, and in a little tiny town called Lubec there is a place called Monica's Chocolates. Everyone is able to see that a Latina is doing all this. The whole world has treated me with so much kindness."

Recommendations

There are two sets of policies that have the potential to maximize opportunities for Hispanics and other immigrants in Maine. The first involves those policies that directly benefit all Mainers, particularly those with low and moderate incomes. These include strong minimum wage and labor laws, expanded access to affordable housing and health care, and policies such as the earned income tax credit and targeted property tax relief that reward work and offset regressive tax burdens. Promotion of such policies is central to MECEP's ongoing work.

The second set of policies are those specific to members of Hispanic and other immigrant communities and to the employers that rely on them. Consistent with MECEP's focus on promoting ideas for shared prosperity, these recommendations focus on activities likely to enhance economic outcomes. Successful implementation of these recommendations will require a combination of public and private action that draws on best practices from other states and on the knowledge and experiences of those already working on these issues in Maine. Other recommendations derived from the research such as those related to the status of U.S. based family members in instances of deportation and to banning racial profiling by law enforcement officers are highlighted elsewhere.

- ***Expand English language programs for immigrants.*** The discrepancy in educational attainment and income between foreign born immigrants and second generation immigrants is most often associated with language acquisition.[44] Indeed, high-skilled immigrants with limited English proficiency are two times more likely to work in unskilled jobs than those who are proficient in the language.[45] While many Latinos in Maine have assimilated and are fluent in English, the majority of foreign-born Hispanic and other immigrants who arrive directly in Maine speak little, if any, English. Students and adults with limited proficiency in English should have access to appropriate language courses. In particular, courses should be offered in conjunction with particular employment opportunities. Currently the state lacks a consistent or adequately funded means of addressing this need. In addition, the demand for such courses, particularly for adult learners, has outstripped availability.

- ***Guarantee a certain number of temporary or seasonal visas for Maine employers.*** 66,000 H2B visas are issued in the U.S. each year. These visas cannot be applied for until an employer is within 120 days of the issue date (i.e. the point at which the employee will commence work). This puts seasonal employers in states like Maine at a disadvantage since employers in states with longer production cycles, earlier growing seasons, or longer tourist seasons are better positioned to obtain such visas. Such a policy has an adverse impact on employers in Maine and may limit the potential for economic growth in certain areas of the state's economy.

- ***Develop better ways to recognize and capitalize on the skills that immigrants may already possess.*** A nationwide study revealed that immigrants with a U.S. college degree are three times more likely to work in a high-skill job than there counterparts with foreign degrees. Many Hispanic immigrants who come to Maine were skilled professionals including nurses, doctors, teachers and engineers, in their home countries. Unfortunately, many lack the certification needed to practice in the U.S. The state should work with universities and businesses to identify these experienced professionals and fast track them through programs that match existing skills with Maine specific demand and degree or credentialing opportunities.

- ***Invest in programs that promote and support entrepreneurship within the Hispanic community.*** Business ownership may be one of the best ways for skilled immigrants to pursue a livelihood. While many programs are in place, more can be done to support outreach and make resources available to Latino and immigrant business owners in Maine.

- ***Strengthen and improve state-level efforts to promote awareness and shared prosperity within minority and immigrant communities.*** The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) within the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) holds great promise but lacks adequate funding and staffing to take a leadership position in addressing issues effecting immigrants in Maine and in building awareness of their contributions. The Governor, DHHS, OMA and its advisory council should play a stronger role in identifying and providing feedback on policies related to integrating Maine's immigrant communities. ■

Conclusion

Hispanics are a diverse people, and rapid demographic growth is increasing their diversity. Immigrants come with a range of talents and abilities. They come from a variety of places, and they come under a variety of circumstances. Once in the U.S., many live in dense Latino communities with well-established civic and public institutions, while others venture into new settlement areas where Hispanics have a sparse presence. Aside from immigrants and their offspring, many Hispanics can trace their roots in this country and in Maine back multiple generations.

As in the U.S., Hispanics in Maine are occupationally and economically diverse. Indicators such as level of education and business ownership suggest a diverse, hard working, and entrepreneurial population. Furthermore, the prevailing evidence demonstrates that Latino settlements in Maine are scattered through the state rather than concentrated in central cities. Interstate migration from traditional Latino communities in neighboring New England states to communities in Maine reflects the trend of residential dispersal to small towns such as Topsham and Milbridge.

As Maine's Hispanic and immigrant communities grow, so too should interest in their success. Maximizing opportunities for Latinos and other immigrants in Maine to thrive is in the best interest of all citizens. We hope this report marks a beginning in terms of building awareness about the impact and potential for Maine's Hispanic community and in terms of identifying appropriate strategies for supporting and engaging an increasingly diverse population in the state. ■

About the Authors and Consultants

Neil Amalfitano, Graphic Designer: I was born in Waterville, Maine. My mother's family came to the United States from England and Scotland in the late 1800s, while my father's emigrated from Italy in 1919. From a young age I have always had a passion for visual arts and the creative process. After receiving a BFA from Rhode Island School of Design in 1987, I began my career in design working for a graphic artist from Chile and later a prominent Maine advertising agency before my current position as a graphic designer and pre-press technician for R.N. Haskins Printing Company in Oakland. I've been fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from, and work with many talented and diverse people during the past 22 years.

Diane Belanger, Researcher: I was born in Lewiston, Maine and moved to the Orono area in the late 1970s. My mother's family immigrated to Maine from the Quebec area of Canada during the early 1900s to look for work in the textile mills. My father's family owned a potato farm in Caribou, Maine. I am the first generation in my family to attend college with associate degrees in criminal justice and business management and a bachelor's degree in economics and political science. Upon retirement from state government, I returned to college to earn a master's degree in educational research and anthropology. I am currently a doctorate student in the interdisciplinary PhD program studying public policy and immigration studies at the University of Maine. I have traveled extensively but still think of Maine as home.

Victor Damian, Photographer: I was born in Peru in 1965 and came to the United States in 1984. I came to Maine after completing my active duty tour in the United States Marine Corps. My mother Victoria is an independent filmmaker. Since my childhood I fell in love with the art of stopping time by trapping something so fast as light itself into a tiny frame. Photography is a passion of mine. I have two wonderful children.

Juan Perez-Febles, Consultant: I am originally from Cuba and came here when I was sixteen right after the Bay of Pigs invasion in April of 1961. I went to college in Ohio and graduate school in upstate New York where I majored in Inter-American Studies. I came to Maine because in Cuba there is a beautiful monument to the victims of the Battleship Maine that had exploded in Havana Harbor in 1898 which gave way to the Spanish-American war. I had visions of encountering an equally majestic monument here in Maine. I fell in love with the beauty of this state and the ocean reminds me of Cuba. I live in Cape Elizabeth and as the Director of the Division of Migrant and Immigrant Services for the Maine Department of Labor, I am responsible for protecting the rights of migrant and seasonal farm workers who come to Maine.

Deborah Felder, Editor: My husband and I came to Maine in the 1970's during the great 'back to the land' migration. My father's family came to this country around 1918 to escape religious persecution in Russia. My mother's family came to the United States in the 1800's from Germany and Ireland. I was the first generation in my family to go to college. I have an undergraduate degree in telecommunications from the University of Southern California and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Maine. Having grown up in the rich immigrant communities of New York, I have often bemoaned the lack of ethnic and cultural diversity in Maine. This report gives me hope.

Garrett Martin, Editor: A child of the south, I came to Maine with my wife and children in 2003 from Mississippi. My wife's family lives in the state and traces their roots to some of our nation's earliest settlers from England. My ancestral heritage is less clear and includes a melding of English, Irish, Scottish, and Cherokee though I most identify with the red clay of North Carolina and the rolling hills of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Through work and travel abroad I have delighted in the opportunity to be immersed in different cultures and to appreciate the universal connections found through music, dance and sport. Work on this report has inspired me to dust off my dormant Spanish speaking skills and to appreciate the increasing diversity in our state anew.

Blanca Santiago, Researcher: I came to the mainland United States from rural mountainous farmlands of Barrio Cerro Gordo in San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico in 1959 as a five year old to be reunited with my mother who was living in New York. After settling in Worcester, Massachusetts, I came to Maine to visit, fell in love with Portland and moved my young family here in 1987. In 2001, while working for Catholic Charities Maine, Support and Recovery Services I completed studies at the University of New England with a degree in Organizational Leadership. Today I am the current President of Centro Latino Maine, an organization working toward making visible the presence and accomplishments of Hispanics and Latinos in the state of Maine. It is my hope that this profile lends another dimension to what is known about this young and vibrant community and its contributions to "the way life should be."

Nicole Witherbee, PhD Project Director: I was born in Massachusetts and have lived in Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, California, and Ohio. My family ties are from Scotland, Ireland, England, and the Cherokee tribe of North Carolina. In August of 2005, my family and I visited Portland, Maine for a wedding and fell in love with the city. In August 2006, we moved here having found the sense of community and quality of place that we had long searched for. Today, my husband and I are proud to live in a place where neighbors look out for one another, mountains reach from vast lakes to star studded skies, and our children learn about the world not only from their schools but from their friends who immigrated from all over the world. ■

Endnotes

1 U.S. Census Bureay News. U.S. Hispanic Population Surpasses 45 Million: Now 15 Percent of Total. Released May 1, 2008. http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/011910.html.

2 U.S. Census Bureau: Population Division. *Table 4: Estimates of the Population by Race and Hispanic Origin for the United States and States: July 1, 2007 (SC-EST2007-04).* Released May 1, 2008. http://www.census.gov/popest/states/asrh/tables/SC-EST2007-04.xls.

3 U.S. Census Bureau: Population Division. *Table 3: Annual Estimates of the Population by Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Origin for Maine: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006 (SC-EST2006-03-23).* Released May 17, 2007. http://www.census.gov/popest/states/asrh/tables/SC-EST2006-03-23.xls

4 U.S. Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy. (2006). *Small Business Profile: Maine.* Retrieved July 3, 2008 from http://www.sba.gov/advo/research/profiles/06me.txt.

5 U.S. Census Bureau, *2002 Survey of business owners: Hispanic-owned firms.* Released March 21, 2006.

6 Prior to 1970, determinations of Hispanic origin were made indirectly, such as through questions on Spanish surname, or tabulating people who reported Spanish as their "mother tongue." The 1970 census was the first to include a question on Hispanic origin, but only a 5% sample of households were polled. Beginning with the 11980 census, information on Hispanic origin was collected on all responding households.

7 U.S. Census Bureau, ACS Public Use Microdata Series.

8 El Nassar, Haya. *U.S. Hispanic population to triple by 2050.* USA Today. February 12, 2008. online: http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-02-11-population-study_N.htm. Maine estimate based on MECEP analysis of state and national trends.

9 Hondagneau-Sotelo, Pierette. (2001). *Doméstica: Immigrant workers cleaning and caring in the shadows of affluence.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

10 Min, Pyong Gap. (2002). *Mass migration to the United States: Classical and contemporary periods.* Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.

11 *Silva vs. Levi,* No. 76-C-4268 (N.D. Ill. Mar. 10, 1977).

12 Carey, David Jr. (2005). *Comunidad Escondida: Latin American influences in the nineteenth and twentieth-century Portland.* In Conforti, Joseph A. (2005). *Creating Portland.* Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press.

13 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (1986, November 11). *Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986* (IRCA). Public Law 99-603. Retrieved August 22, 2008 from http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=04a295c4f635f010VgnVCM1000000ecd190aRCRD&vgnextchannel=b328194d3e88d010VgnVCM10000048f3d6a1RCRD.

14 Camayd-Freixas, Yoel. (2006). *A Latino middle class emerges from the Diaspora: The case of New Hampshire.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association. Santa Fe, New Mexico.

15 Camayd-Freixas, Y., Karush, G., Koenig, R., Nemon, M., & Vasquez, V. (2007, February). *The Latino Diaspora: An emerging middle class.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association for Hispanic and Latino Studies Baton Rouge, LA. Submitted for publication to the Journal of Intercultural Disciplines. Retrieved July 9, 2008 from http://home.comcast.net/~drcamayd/Publications/LMC3US.pdf.

16 Hobbs, Frank & Stoops, Nicole. (2002). *Demographic trends in the Twentieth Century.* U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Special Reports, Series CENSR-4. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

17 Camayd-Freixas, Yoel, Strom, E. & Rivera, R. (1986). *Hispanics in Massachusetts: Population trends & policy implications.* Massachusetts Legislature Commission on Hispanic Affairs.

18 U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, 2007 Population Estimates.

19 U.S. Census Bureau. (2002). Profiles of general demographic characteristics: 2000. Retrieved July 7, 2008 from http://www.state.me.us/spo/economics/docs/census/prof1_4datame.xls.

20 Camayd-Freixas, Karush, Koenig, Nemon & Vasquez. (2007, February). *The Latino Diaspora: An emerging middle class.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association for Hispanic and Latino Studies Baton Rouge, LA. Submitted for publication to the Journal of Intercultural Disciplines. Retrieved July 9, 2008 from http://home.comcast.net/~drcamayd/Publications/LMC3US.pdf.

21 Owens, Antoniya. (November, 2008). *A Portrait of New England Immigants.* New England Public Policy Center. Research Report 08-2. Retrieved January 2009 from http://www.bos.frb.org/economic/neppc/researchreports/2008/rr0802.pdf

22 Sum, Andrew, Neeta Fogg, and Paul Harrington. (2002). *Immigrant workers and the great American job machine: The contributions of new foreign immigration to national and regional labor force growth in the 1990s.* Washington, DC: The Business Roundtable.

23 U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Small Business Administration

24 HispanTelligence. (n.d.). *Hispanic Economy in Transition.* Retrieved July 20, 2008 from http://www.hispanicbusiness.com/research/hispaniceconomy.asp

25 Congressional Quarterly. (2003, October 17). Latino's future: When will they wield greater political clout? *The CQ Researcher, (13)* 36, pp. 871-875.

26 Stoops, Nicole. (2003, June). *Educational attainment in the United States: 2003, population characteristics*. Current population reports, P20-550. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

27 U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2003.

28 Day, Jennifer Cheeseman and Eric Newburger. (2002, July). *The Big Payoff:Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings.* Current Population report, P23-210. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p23-210.pdf.

29 Reynolds, Paul D., Nancy M. Carter, William B. Gartner, and Patricia G. Greene. (2004, November). The Prevalence of Nascent Entrepreneurs in the United States: Evidence from the Panel Study of Entrepreneurial Dynamics. *Small Business Economics, 23*(4), pp. 263-284.

30 Van der Sluis, Justin, Mirjam van Praag, and Wim Vijverberg. (2004, Revised). *Education and entrepreneurship in industrialized countries: A meta-analysis*. Tinbergen Institute Discussion Paper, 2003-046/3, p. 17.

31 U.S. Small Business Association. (n.d.). *What is small business*. Washington, DC. Retrieved July 14, 2008 from http://www.sba.gov/services/contractingopportunities/sizestandardstopics/size/index.html.

32 Lowrey, Ying. (2007, April). *Minorities in business: A demographic review of minority business owners*. Washington, DC: U.S. Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy. Retrieved July 5, 2008 from http://www.sba.gov/advo/research/rs298.pdf.

33 HispanTelligence. (n.d.). *Hispanic-owned businesses: Growth projections to 2012*. Retrieved July 20, 2008 from http://www.hispanicbusiness.com/research/.

34 Junior Achievement Interprise Poll. (2000, December). Entrepreneurship 2000. Number 10. Retrieved August 18, 2008 from http://www.ja.org/files/polls/entrepreneurship_2000.pdf.

35 Barone, Michael. (2001). *The new Americans: How the melting pot can work again.* Washington, DC: Regency Publishing, Inc. Borjas, George J. (2004). *Increasing the supply of labor through immigration: Measuring the impact on native-born workers*. Washington, DC: Center for Immigration Studies.

36 Sum, Andrew, Neeta Fogg, and Paul Harrington. (2002). *Immigrant workers and the great American job machine: The contributions of new foreign immigration to national and regional labor force growth in the 1990s*. Washington, DC: The Business Roundtable.

37 Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). *Healthy Maine 2010: Opportunities for all*. Retrieved July 8, 2008 from http://mainegov-images.informe.org/dhhs/files/hm2010/oppforall/b04raeth.pdf.

38 Perez-Febles, Juan. (2008, August 13). Director of the Division of Migrant & Immigrant Services. Personal communication. Columbia, Maine.

39 Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). *Healthy Maine 2010: Opportunities for all*. Retrieved July 8, 2008 from http://mainegov-images.informe.org/dhhs/files/hm2010/oppforall/b04raeth.pdf.

40 Yarborough, David. (2003, March). *The wild blueberry in Maine*. Series 4: Issues in Maine's natural resource industries. University of Maine College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture White Papers. Retrieved July 8, 2008 from http://www.nsfa.umaine.edu/WhitePaper/blueberries.pdf.

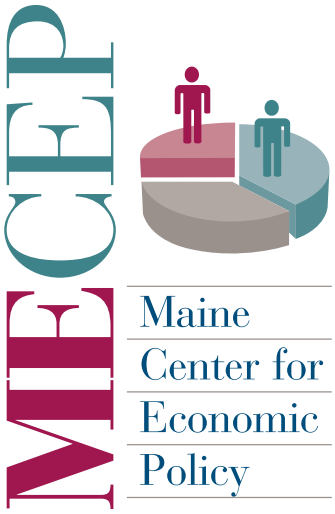
41 Urban Institute. (2008, February 12). *Unauthorized immigrants*. Washington, DC. Retrieved July 13, 2008 from http://www.urban.org/decisionpoints08/05immigrants.cfm.

42 U.S. Immigration Support. (n.d.). *Immigration to Maine*. New York, NY. Retrieved July 13, 2008 from http://www.usimmigrationsupport.org/maine.html.

43 Rosenbaum, David E., and Robin Toner. "To Social Security Debate, Add Variable: Immigration" *The New York Times,* Wednesday February 16, 2005, A18. and Greenspan, Alan. "Remarks by Alan Greenspan" paper presented at the Symposium sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Jacksonhole, August 27, 2004.

44 Allen, James Paul. *How Successful Are Recent Immigrants to the United States and Their Children?* Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers - Volume 68, 2006, pp. 9-32.

45 Batalova, Jeanne and Michael Fix (2008, October). *Uneven Progress: The Employment Pathways of Skilled Immigrants in the United* States. With Peter A. Creticos. Washington, DC, Migration Policy Institute. p. 2.



66 Winthrop Street
2nd Floor
P.O. Box 437
Augusta, ME 04332

Tel: 207-622-7381
Fax: 207-622-0239
www.mecep.org