

# **ETHNIC RELATIONS IN YORK SPRINGS, PA...:**

ATTITUDES AND RELATIONS BETWEEN THE HISPANIC AND THE LOCAL  
PENNSYLVANIA RESIDENTS.

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## **ETHNIC RELATIONS IN YORK SPRINGS;**

### Description/Definition of Ethnographic Study

Agriculture is Pennsylvania's leading industry; with Adams County P.A. ranking fifth in the nation for production of fruit (Kuhl 3). Despite recent advances in technology and mechanization harvest still requires laborers to hand-pick and prune all the fruit trees in Adams County. The majority of the agricultural labor force are minorities, with most cases in Adams County composing primarily of Spanish-speaking persons from Mexico, Puerto Rican and Jamaican origins; and creole-speaking Haitian refugees. (Kuhl 3) In the past these farm workers were referred as Amigrant and seasonal farm workers, although now many of the laborers are settling in the areas and communities surrounding the orchards which they work. These workers are now integrated members in their communities, especially the Borough of York Springs. York Springs or sometimes referred to as Atijuna Springs has formed a Mexican community. York Springs is located fifteen minutes from Gettysburg and thirty minutes from Carlisle, P.A. This convenient location has allowed Hispanic residents of York Springs to occupy factory jobs for the entire year or during the off-season. The Borough of York Springs is a bi-racial community which is having difficulties adjusting to the new demographical changes in their community. Throughout the past ten years, the Mexican community has begun settling in York Springs due to the close proximity of local orchards and factories. York Springs is a close-knit community with numerous elderly residents. The Anglo community has been settled in York Springs for many generations, with many families using dollar transfers to give their homes to their children (Ad. Co. Deeds).

These settled minority workers are finding limitations due to language, cultural barriers and low income. Many of these problems are the result of relations between the Anglo residents and their new Mexican neighbors.

### Statement/Hypothesis of Ethnographic Study

The relations between the local Pennsylvania residents and the Hispanic community have created numerous situations for the Borough of York Springs. There are many incidents and opinions which have been studied which demonstrated discrimination and racism on the part of the local Anglo residents toward the Hispanic population. The Anglo residents feel that the Hispanic population has brought crime, lower real estate prices and immorality to their peaceful town. The Hispanic residents of York Springs have adjusted to the opinions of the Anglo community, or many are too busy working to notice the overall attitude of the residents of York Springs. This study will support the hypothesis that crime, real estate and immorality are merely exaggerated Mexican stereotypes by members of the Anglo community who are stubborn and steadfast in their actions and opinions.

### Other Studies

There have been numerous other studies conducted regarding racism and discrimination. These Studies are of all types of racism including religion, race and gender. A specific study which was conducted by the United States Commission on Civil Rights in regard to Racial and Ethnic tensions in communities. It looked at the Latino community in the District of Columbia regarding discrimination in education and public services. The report researched the allegations of corporal punishment toward the Latino Students in District schools. The Commission began three days of public hearings to investigate these civil rights issues in May 1991. A Latino Mother=s testified in the open session hearing, in regard to her daughter=s class. AI realized that the teacher had a place in the back of the classroom where when she felt like it, all the Hispanic children were placed if they made a mistake. If they didn=t bring the homework, she would hit them with a ruler on their hands....(U.S. Comm. Civil rights 134).@ The District assessed the situations in their education systems, concluding that there is a lack of ESL Education programs, lack of bilingual counselor in the schools and that many local teachers were using corporal punishment merely because they do not understand the students. Although the commission also stated that in reality AIIt would be impossible

to look at the issues of the Latino community within the District of Columbia without addressing the larger needs, our partners in Congress, our partners in the Federal Government. (U.S. Comm. Civil Rights preface)

Another recent study was reported by The New York Times in reference to the Federal Education Department's Office of Civil Rights on the placement of minority students in special education programs. This study came about due to the disproportionate referrals of African-American and Hispanic students in special education classes. The analysis found that in 11 of the 32 districts, more than 20 percent of the students whose native language is not English were in special education classes in the 1996-1997 school year (Hartocollis 1). The study concluded that this situation was due to the lack of school district training regarding special education placement and that many schools were placing students in special education because they were schools under registration review which means that if their standardized test results don't improve, the school will be closed.

These are just two recent studies regarding discrimination and ethnicity, although there are many other analyses regarding this topic. These two reports are stating the hard facts of discrimination yet, the studies never report if the problems are resolved and new programs are begun. There are always many studies on communities and their problems although very rarely are these issues ever addressed.

#### Methodology Used in Doing the Study

This study was conducted in the Fall of 1998 by myself, Colleen Ruane and The American Mosaic Semester at Dickinson College in Carlisle, P.A. Each student in the semester project had a distinct research topic and focus. The American Mosaic Semester is a comprehensive in-depth study of agriculture, farm labor and community life in Adams County, P.A. It is a combination of disciplines in Sociology, American Studies, Anthropology and Spanish.

This study of York Springs was compiled through interviews, daily interactions and research. I had a two week in-depth classroom research session dealing with agriculture in Adams County and migration prior to beginning my fieldwork. I began my fieldwork by learning about the agricultural community through recruiting trips, home visits and labor camp visits. I collected

information through meeting business owners in York Springs by simply introducing myself and my study and many were very open to discuss the ethnic relationship in the town. I attended a York Springs Borough Council meeting where I met the important decision makers for the town. The Borough secretary was very useful in providing further contacts within the town. The Hispanic community was very difficult to contact due to the mere fact that the majority of the Hispanic community works double shifts at their place of employment. I did have the opportunity to meet with some Hispanic residents and was able to collect concrete data regarding the relations in York Springs. Additional information utilized for my study includes deeds, surveys, reports and studies which are listed in the Bibliography section.

### Major Findings

I entered the Borough of York Springs with no prior knowledge of the full extent of ethnic relations in the region. I simply became engrossed in the town by visiting the local businesses on Main Street to get an overall feeling of the two distinct races in York Springs. Upon arrival on Main Street, it is obvious of the Hispanic community through the bilingual signs and local business. This bi-racial community has many problems in dealing with the opposite race as will be supported throughout my major findings.

The local Pennsylvania residents have been settled in York Springs for many generations with the majority of families leaving their homes to their children according to the Adams County deeds office in Gettysburg. This demonstrates that the Anglo residents of York Springs are not accustomed to much change in their area which explains the resentment the Anglo residents hold toward their new Mexican neighbors.

Crime is a big issue with the Anglo residents. According to a local business owner before they came, there were no problems. Now there are rapes, assaults and drug problems. (Smith 1) The rate of crime has not increased since the Mexicans have settled in York Springs, according to the York Springs police chief (Bowers 1). The police chief sees the only increase in the last five years has been drunk driving, but rather there is no increase in rapes or assaults. The Anglo residents believe that the local police force is ignoring the problem simply because they don't want to appear racist or bigoted (Smith 1, Brown 1, Golden 1). The Anglo residents simply want the Mexican community to leave the borough, so they are willing to pin point

the blame on anyone that is within reach. This opinion is not accurate but has been misinterpreted with the fact that many of the Hispanic residents are illegal, so there isn't much that can be done except to issue citations and tickets to residents.

A specific incident occurred on a Friday night when a Hispanic resident went out into the town to buy cigarettes after a long night of drinking. He was pulled over and merely given a \$300 fine and sent on his way, without any question of identification. (Belen 1) The police have looked into the INS many times, but the INS states that unless there are ten or more Illegals in an area they won't come out, so the York Springs police unit has given up trying to capture the illegal residents in their borough (Bowers 1). This exaggeration of crimes which have come about due to the new Mexican residents is only a lack of understanding and respect for another race. The Borough secretary did not seem in favor of the new Mexican residents although she did state that "You may not like them, but they're here to stay so learn to get along." (Golden 1)

There is a large concern within the Anglo community that this new influx of Hispanics in the area has caused the real estate value of their community and homes to decline. Since the Hispanics have come real estate values have gone down 20-30% and people are having trouble selling their homes since the Mexicans have entered the town (Bill 1). I researched this opinion through the Adams County Deeds office in Gettysburg. I came to the conclusion that the real estate value has not decreased but the number of apartment complexes in York Springs with absentee landlords has increased. In 1994, two tracts of land were sold by a couple to another couple for 240,000 (Adams Co. Deeds office 1). This land was empty but now contains two apartment complexes named "The Igloos", due to their outer appearance. The Deeds records for the past ten years do not show any apartment complexes in the borough, yet one would notice that when driving thru the town there are many apartment buildings in the area. Beyond the apartment complexes, the real estate value of homes in the York Springs Borough has not declined in any way, in fact many of the homes have increased in value over the past ten years. A specific neighborhood in York Springs has sold fifteen houses within ten years at the estimated range of \$60,000. This is a town home community with spacious backyards; off the Main street. The average sized home on Main street in the Borough has sold at the estimated range of \$55,000 and up. These findings support my opinion that the real estate market in York Springs has remained constant for ten years.

A major reason which may contribute to the relations in the town may be that many of the residents are of several generations and have always resided in York Springs. The Adams County Deeds office displayed many dollar transfers between family members. This shows that the Anglo community has passed on land and homes to their children. These third or fourth generations may not be accustomed to change in the borough, making the arrival of the Mexican community very difficult for adjustment.

Through my research of race relations in York Springs, I encountered many incidents of discrimination towards the Hispanic community. The most incidents of discrimination have occurred at the local national bank. A specific incident which best describes the extent of the employee=s at the local bank was told to me while interviewing a migrant worker who has been coming to Adams County for twenty-five years. He feels that the York Springs bank has been the worst in his career for discrimination. He restates the story in his oral history with Mosaic student, Alicia Reynolds. AI got a U.S. check for my income tax and I took it over there. (York Springs Bank) I had some money in the bank. I had about eighteen thousand dollars in the bank you know. I went over there and I asked him to cash and he said AI am going to have to hold this check, you know to see if it=s real.@ He was a communist.@ (Reynolds 1) There have been numerous other stories from Hispanic residents in York Springs regarding the local bank. Belen, a three-year Hispanic resident of York Springs must go to the bank for her husband and brother-in-law to cash their paychecks. Belen stated that@ the bank won=t cash their checks when they go into the bank, but when I go in with our son, Sesa, they will cash it. I don=t know if it is because I am a woman and they feel sorry for me or what.@ (Belen 1) The local national bank was very suspicious of me when I entered and refused to talk to me, several times concerning this topic. The bank tellers were not busy, in fact there was only two other people in the bank. They told me that they didn=t have any comments regarding my topic. A bank teller told me AI wasn=t welcome in the bank with these accusations.@ I had simply asked of the relations in York Springs and if they had Mexican customers. I attribute this to the fact that this bank including it=s president is obvious of their treatment of the Hispanic population and still continues to refuse services to the other race.

The York Springs education system is an integral part of the community. A specific Hispanic resident repeatedly told me incidents of discrimination in the York Springs educational

system. He stated that the Hispanic children attend this regular school, although many times are placed in Special Education classes (Lopez 1). Carlos's children were in the Elementary and High School in York Springs. He stated that they used to call the migrants into special classrooms to learn English. I even showed them a certificate, but they insisted that my children who all spoke English already, take the English classes because migrants aren't supposed to know a damn thing (Lopez 1). I think that there is a lack of acceptance toward the Hispanic community and that the Anglo residents are using the children to ensure that they don't advance in their town. This incident is very similar to the accusation that the York Springs police force holds no authority because they are afraid of appearing bigoted or racist. The Anglo residents are looking for any way to exclude the Hispanic community from their tight-knit town. I believe that they feel that by placing the children in special education and being discriminative in their manner, then the Hispanic community will eventually leave.

There was an instance according to Carlos when the schools used to check the migrant children's heads for bugs (lice) and some of Carlos's friends children were sent home from school when the teacher supposedly found bugs, but when the children's parents checked there wasn't anything (Lopez 1). This instance is a form of discrimination against the Hispanics implying that they are stereotypically dirty and uneducated.

According to many of the Anglo residents of York Springs, the Hispanic children attend special classes taught in Spanish (Smith 1, Brown 1). Although the elementary school offers Spanish classes, there is controversy among the Hispanic residents concerning these Spanish-only classes. I believe that the community isn't willing to integrate the Mexican students into the classrooms and are many times neglected. According to the Borough secretary, a local teacher has two Hispanic children in her classroom and the two children just sit in the back with no response since they don't understand English (Golden 1). If a Hispanic child is enrolled in normal classrooms than they are often neglected in the back-row and simply continue advancing through the system without learning anything (Golden 1). This account is very similar to the study researched in the District of Columbia, where the Hispanic students were also placed in the back of the classroom because the teacher didn't feel like dealing with them. These are all forms of discrimination and hatred toward the Hispanic community in York Springs.

York Springs is a little town located amongst orchards and factories in Adams County, yet there are bigger issues within the community. There is a large amount of discrimination and racism between the two ethnicities. Although as Carlos stated to me during a visit at his camp Adiscrimination is everywhere like in Ireland, Yugoslavia, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Estados Unidos and everyone feels it inside, down here but it=s when it comes out..I mean, everyone has feelings (Lopez 1).@

### Conclusion/Analysis

The Borough of York Springs is a diverse community which is having problems accepting the new ethnic changes in their town. The Mexican community is settling in York Springs and despite the Anglo=s opinions toward them, they are staying in the Borough. The Anglo community is strong opinionated in their manners toward their new Hispanic neighbors. There are many incidents previously discussed which support the hypothesis. Many of the Anglo residents of York Springs are discriminative in all facets of daily life toward the Hispanic community from housing to the local bank. They have overly exaggerated opinions and stereotypes of Mexicans and demonstrate these opinions in their manners. The issue of crime has been expanded to allow all Anglo residents to believe that the majority of residents in the Hispanic community are alcoholic, drug-dealers who are only in the United States to get free welfare and steal from the honest local business owners. The truth is that the rate of crime has not increased with the influx of Hispanics in the Borough. The only factor which has increased in the last five years is Drunk Driving according to some residents, and since many Hispanics are illegal the only consequences are citations and fines. The real estate market in York Springs has remained constant for the past ten years which is contrary to some Anglo resident=s belief that the influx of Mexicans were causing housing market prices to drop. The Recent increase of low-cost apartment complexes and absentee landlords has grown over the years which can be attributed to the Hispanic community, although these complexes have not affected real estate in the Borough. The Anglo community is searching for excuses to why the Hispanics have entered York Springs and through this search they are desperately trying to force the Mexican community out of the borough. My hypothesis supported my opinion that the Anglo community is very colorful in their attitudes toward the Hispanic population. Many stories were exaggerated to the point that it was hard to figure out who and what to believe. My hypothesis was backed by numerous narratives concerning discrimination by national systems in York Springs. The local



national bank has been selective in their customers over the years, neglecting the Hispanic population. The local school system has been segregating the Hispanic students from the Anglo through special education courses. My hypothesis that crime, real estate issues and immorality are merely exaggerated stereotypes of the Anglo community was researched. I found various conclusions which may support my hypothesis, although I can not say that it has been proven without further fieldwork and research. The Anglo community has developed a stereotype for their Hispanic neighbors and they are stubborn and old-fashioned in their beliefs. Although the entire Anglo community is not discriminative in their manner, according to an Anglo business owner who states that A some people in the town are racist, I am not.@ He said that people are people and everyone is the same and he has had no problems with the Hispanics (Fudd 1).

### Problems

Over the semester, this study has proven to be very easy in obtaining information. Many of the local Pennsylvania residents were eager to talk about the new Mexican population in York

Springs and Adams County. They wanted to share their opinion with me and in a way, make sure I was on their side through their racial battles. I remained neutral throughout the study, although at many points this proved very difficult. I made friends with many of the Hispanic residents, getting to know and respect their lifestyle. The narratives concerning discrimination in York Springs were hard to listen to and remain calm and collected in my manner. I researched both races which allowed me to focus on the differing opinions. I believe this little, rural town is facing some grave difficulties which will only surface over time.

There were some problems with the research which are due to the time constraints of the Hispanic community. The researcher must be available at all times so as to make their research more conducive to the community in which they are studying. A student in college is busy with numerous activities outside of the academic sphere making this research difficult at times to maneuver. The Hispanic community is hard-working and many work double shifts at their place of employment. This can prove difficult to locate residents since many work day and night shifts. The Anglo community was easier to locate, although some of the elderly residents were unwilling to discuss the issue and many were ill. The Anglo and Hispanic residents which helped me compile this research were extremely willing to talk concerning

their opposite race. There were some limitations which delayed or impeded my research. I can only speak intermediate Spanish which restrained my research with the Hispanic community and many times was forced to use a translator with some residents.

I have some ideas for future research concerning race relations in York Springs. I would advise the new researcher to speak fluent Spanish and English in order to better communicate and develop personal relationships with the Hispanic community. I would recommend that the researcher fully engross themselves into the town, through developing residency in the borough and partaking in community activities. I believe that there is a lot that can be changed in this community; York Springs is a beautiful town and simply needs to understand that change occurs and as a community they must bond together to make it strong.

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\* denotes a name change due to privacy