

A History of the Hispanic Student
Experience at Indiana State University:
1870 to 1985

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Introduction

“What the United States does best is to understand itself.
What it does worst is understand others.” (Carlos Fuentes)

In 1970, there were about 10 million Hispanics living in the United States out of approximately 200 million total population. By 2000, this number had more than tripled to about 36 million (12 percent of the total U.S. population) and in 2006, the number had quadrupled to 44 million (15 percent of the total U.S. population) (United States Census Data). Today, there are 53 million (17 percent of the total U.S. population) By 2050, if this trend continues, about 25 percent of the population will be of Hispanic origin. Given these remarkable trends, why is so little known about residents or citizens of Hispanic descent in this country? As the above quote by Carlos Fuentes, renowned Mexican writer and author, alludes, this quote holds true in several aspects of the United States. Mainstream textbooks and other school curricula have only recently recognized the contributions of this minority group in America. Regrettably, researchers, educators, and historians have only in recent decades begun to reconstruct the story of people of Hispanic descent in this country.

Until recently, American universities have been generally inattentive to the distinctive experiences of the Hispanic student. This humble essay is only a beginning in the telling of the story of the student of Hispanic origin at Indiana State University. The researcher hopes that this essay will spur others into researching this long neglected history of this remarkable group both at Indiana State and at other universities and colleges across the country.

This essay examines the student of Hispanic descent at Indiana State from 1870 to 1985. Although Indiana State was established in 1865 and admitted its first students in 1870, the story of the Hispanic student at ISU seems not to have begun until the early 1960s. The essay then narrows in on two distinct periods in the School’s history: 1963 to 1966, the Cuban Students and 1975 to 1985, the Three Waves of South American Students. A description of each period is included with firsthand accounts when available with a heavier emphasis on the Cuban period.

For purposes of this essay, the researcher uses the term “Hispanic” which refers to persons of Hispanic origin: Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American (including Brazilians) or some other Hispanic origin regardless of race, ethnicity, or American citizenry. “Chicano” will be used to refer to Mexican Americans or United States citizens or residents of specifically Mexican descent. The term “international” will be used to refer to those individuals who are not citizens of the United States.

1870-1962: The Early Years

During the years 1870 to 1962, the world witnessed a once-divided and largely agrarian nation emerge as an industrial and manufacturing giant. In less than a century since the first day of classes at the Indiana State Normal School, the United States would emerge stronger from four bitter wars; thus, by 1962, the United States would be one of the strongest nations on the planet. One of these bitter wars was the Spanish American War in which the U.S. intervened in a struggle between the Cuban people and their Spanish rulers. Victorious, the U.S. directly ruled Cuba for four years and indirectly ruled the island paradise for decades.

However, while the United States was strong economically and militarily, she still had a long way to go in terms of her treatment of minority groups. One such group that remained in the shadows was its citizens and residents of Hispanic descent. Although the infamous U.S. Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) with its “separate but equal” had been dismantled with Supreme Court cases such as *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947) in which the Supreme Court ruled children of Mexican and Latin descent could not be segregated; *Hernandez v. Texas* saw the Supreme Court rule that Mexican Americans and all other ethnic groups were entitled to equal protection under the United States Constitution; and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) in which the Supreme Court ruled that separate schools of minority children were inherently unequal, there was still much to be done in this country in terms of all its racial and ethnic minorities. In terms of the Hispanic population, discrimination and poverty were still large aspects of Hispanic life in the United States.

In the period prior to 1963, the story of persons of Hispanic descent, especially Mexican Americans is similar to the African American story. Segregation, poverty, illiteracy, discrimination, perseverance, and unity were all aspects of this experience. Concentrated largely in the Southwestern part of the United States, this population at this time was relegated to the most menial jobs, to second rate educational facilities, and to seats in the back of the bus. Unlike other groups of Hispanic descent, such as Puerto Ricans and Cubans, many Mexican Americans resisted assimilation to the mores and culture of the dominant group. They chose to preserve their culture and their own traditional and historical lifeways, including the preservation of the Spanish language.

For the Normal School, Teachers College, and then state College in Terre Haute, Indiana, these 90 plus years was a period of remarkable growth. The School witnessed the leadership of six presidents; the education and training of thousands of students, including African Americans and Asian Americans, to teach in the schools across the United States and the world; the cementing of the School as one of the premier teachers’ colleges; and the knowledge that the institution contributed to the uplifting of the surrounding communities, especially the city of Terre Haute.

However, for Hispanics at Indiana State, this period can be characterized as the invisible period. There was barely a footprint of Hispanic students at the School at this time. Though these were

the decades of growth for the College, growth would not include this population. Unlike the African American student who was a part of the Institution from the very first year of its existence, the student of Hispanic descent does not share in that history. The absence of Hispanic students at Indiana State before 1963 is likely the result of the absence of Hispanics in Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, and Kentucky in general. ISNS/Teachers College was until 1950 essentially preparing teachers for the schools of Indiana and the students were primarily Hoosiers.

The story of the African American student at Indiana State began in 1870, the student of Asian descent began in the years immediately following World War II, and it is this researcher's contention that the story of the student of Hispanic descent does not truly begin until the early 1960s.

Prior to 1963, only a handful of students of Hispanic descent graced the campus. Largely concentrated in California and in the Southwest, students of Hispanic descent did not venture to Midwestern colleges in any great numbers and when they did, Indiana State was not the most popular academic destination. Chicago seemed to be the most popular Midwestern destination for students of Hispanic descent. Those international students of Hispanic descent who did attend Indiana State did so through word of mouth and only if their families or countries could afford the cost of a four year stay in the United States. Prior to 1963, South American and Latin American countries were experiencing their own economic woes and financing the education of their young people to American colleges was not feasible or a priority even though tuition and standard of living costs in the Midwest, especially Indiana State and Terre Haute, were very low.

Given the lack of priority for many Hispanic countries and the school patterns of citizens of Hispanic descent, in the pre-1963 period, Indiana State cannot boast of having many members from this unique aspect of the diversity wheel. The exceptions include four students of Hispanic descent: Maria (Del Socorro) Hernandez, a student from Parsons, Kansas who received her bachelor of science degree in 1952; Yolanda Madrigales of Panama, Central America who received her master of science degree in 1953; Elfa Rodriguez of Mexico who was the president of the International Relations Club (IRC); and Julio Fernandez of Mexico who was the treasurer of the Club in 1959.

Remarkably, in addition to this handful of students of Hispanic descent, there was a faculty member of Hispanic descent at the School, Colleen Chirinos. It is this researcher's contention that Chirinos was the first faculty member of Hispanic descent at Indiana State as she arrived on the campus in 1956. Dr. Liang L. Hsiao (Economics, 1959) and Dr. James Conyers (Sociology, 1962) would be the first Asian and African American faculty members, respectively. Chirinos was a clinical instructor in Nursing at Saint Anthony Hospital School of Nursing (now Terre Haute Regional Hospital) which was linked for many years to Indiana State Teacher's College. Chirinos, who received her educational training at the University of Mexico (Mexico City), taught in the School of Nursing until 1964.

In the early 1960s, the enrollment of Hispanic students at ISU would begin to change significantly.

Employment of Hispanic faculty and staff did not reflect the change.

1963 to 1966: The Cuban Students

American society during the first half of the 1960s period experienced significant change and upheaval including the beginning of a war in Vietnam and a war on poverty; the assassination of a popular president, John F. Kennedy; the rise of Black and Brown voices; the leadership of Martin Luther King, Che Guevara, and Cesar Chavez; the Sit-in; the Invasion of both Bay of Pigs and the Beatles; and the Immigration and Nationality Act (1965) which set strict quotas on immigrants from Latin American countries.

For Hispanics in the United States, it was a time of protests, fights for justice, and attempts at getting a piece of the American pie. At this time in our country's history, Americans of Hispanic origin began fighting to end both racial discrimination and socioeconomic disparity. Mexican Americans (Chicanos), located largely in California and the Southwest; Puerto Ricans living on the Island and in New York City; and Cubans in Miami were three of the largest and most active Hispanic groups at this time.

At Indiana State College (1960 to 1965), change was clearly on the horizon, although the storm of discontent, with its resulting student riots that was arising throughout the country did not emerge on the campus until the late 1960s and early 1970s. The first half of the 1960s at ISC was notable for the change in designation of the School from a teachers college to a college, the tremendous growth in the student population, the growth in program offerings, and the physical expansion of the campus, including the construction of the Statesman Towers and Married Student Housing (now Family Student Housing Units).

At this time in the School's history (the early 1960s), there were only a few students of Hispanic descent registered. Lina Del Vecchio, a social students and Spanish major from New York and Joseph Flores, a foreign language major from East Chicago were two such students. Classified as international students, Elfa Rodriguez of Mexico; Juan Ortega and Monnel Lopez of Venezuela; and Roberta Samaan and Ester Henricksen of Brazil were among this group as well. A couple years before in March 1961, the *Statesman* newspaper did a feature story on all of the foreign students attending State, including the students from South and Central America.

What was life like for international and students of Hispanic origin at this time? Students of Hispanic origin (in particular international students) seemed to adapt to American college life well. Apparently they adapted to the ways of the dominant culture while maintaining their own customs as well. Efforts to interview any of these students at the present were unsuccessful. But what is known and can be concluded through anecdotal and newspaper accounts is that these

students were successful at the School and tended to associate mainly with other international students attending State.

Although notable were the experiences of the international students of Hispanic descent, what was equally as notable was the emergence of the first footprints in any great number of students of Hispanic American descent that occurred during these years. In 1963, the College embarked upon an exciting journey in the form of a first of its kind program in the nation that in its first phase brought 45 Cubans to the campus to train them to become Spanish teachers in the various schools across Indiana. These 45 Cuban students constituted the first phase of this program. The second phase would occur in 1964 when, due to the success of the first wave of students, the College took in another wave of 50 students. The education of these teachers would fill a need in the state, for by 1965 all Indiana high schools were required to provide at least two years of a foreign language to all its students despite the fact that there was a severe shortage of foreign language teachers.

The Cuban Program was cosponsored by Indiana State, the United States Office of Education Cuban Refugee Project, and the Indiana Languages Program, which was supported by a Ford Foundation Grant whose goal was to increase the number of foreign language teachers in Indiana public schools. A federal grant to the School provided support for the students and their families' maintenance. The director of the Cuban Program at State was Dr. Louis Curcio, the Director of the Department of Foreign Languages.

The first 45 Cuban students were chosen from among a group of 200 recently exiled Cubans who had been residing in Miami from two months to three years. Remarkably, the students were accompanied by their families, the College believing strongly that the family units should remain intact. On September 12, 1963, the College's newspaper the *Indiana Statesman* reported on the families:

Maintenance of the family unit was imperative in the selection. The entire group, including wives and children, will number 103 persons. There are 31 married couples, two single women, two single men, and one married woman, and 46 children. Nine of the married couples are both participants in the program, and in most other couples, the husband is the student accepted in the program. ... The children ages range from two and three-old toddlers through teen-agers and a college age girl. (Page 3)

The students and their families' arrival came on the heels of the Cuban Revolution that had successfully brought Fidel Castro to power. The Cuban Revolution, reached its climax in 1959 when Castro and his band of guerilla fighters under the leadership of Che Guevara, successfully overthrew the pro-American government of Fulgencio Batista and replaced it with a pro-Soviet Union Marxist government in the midst of the Cold War.

As the Revolution took hold, the harsh realities of life under the new regime, Fidel Castro and the Communist government, precipitated a mass exodus of many Cubans to the United States. Not only did many lose their wealth, real estate, personal property, and personal freedoms, but even more devastating was that some Cuban children were also being taken from their parents and sent to the Soviet Union to be indoctrinated into Communism. Ana Marie Perez- DeCamino, niece of one of the First Wave families who came to Indiana State with her aunt and uncle and the “college age girl” mentioned in the 1963 *Statesman* article, in a March 2014 interview with the researcher remembered the situation in Cuba:

The situation in Cuba was becoming more desperate. Freedom was taken away. Control of neighborhoods became a big part of daily life. People had to report any activities to the neighborhood police, such as whereabouts of all the family members during the week. The banks confiscated the accounts. The government controlled all aspects of people's lives. Any property was confiscated. If you had a large home, you would have to move to a smaller house, just because the Revolution needed it. Total control of the children. Boys and girls had to move away from families and go to camp to be indoctrinated into Communism. Churches were closed and all the Clergy was expelled to other countries. Food was rationed by the government. Total control of people's lives. The enemy was the U.S. Everything bad was the fault of Uncle Sam.

In four distinct waves of immigration from 1960 to 1980, approximately half a million Cubans abandoned Cuba for a better life in the United States. During the first wave, the early 1960s, thousands of the middle and upper class well educated Cubans came to the United States. During each subsequent wave the socio-economic and educational status of the Cuban immigrations would decrease (Wave 2, 1965-1975; Wave 3, 1980; and Wave 4, 1993-1995) The First Wave Cubans, who were highly educated and professional people and loyal supporters of the overthrown government of Batista in particular, had seen their land, property, and possessions confiscated by the new Cuban government. The 45 students who were destined for Indiana State College were members of this professional, even elite group of First Wave Cubans.

These 45 students were chosen on the basis of English Language proficiency and educational background by a four person panel, one of whom was Dr. Louis Curcio who personally flew to Miami to interview the Cuban students. The students were highly educated: 32 held the doctor of laws degrees, seven had earned the doctor of pedagogy degree, six held the doctor of philosophy degree, and three had 100 plus credit hours (comparable to a senior) (*Statesman*, September 12, 1963).

The program of study was three semesters in length and would consist of courses in American history and civilization, Spanish literature, student teaching, methods of teaching Spanish, and psychology and philosophy (*Statesman*, September 16, 1964). Once the program was completed, these students earned a bachelor of science degree in education.

The students received a warm welcome once their plane landed in Indianapolis in September 1963. Indiana Governor Matthew Welsh, along with other dignitaries, welcomed 70 Cuban students and their families to the state (the remaining 33 individuals arrived in Terre Haute by car later). Once they arrived in Terre Haute, the group of 70 were welcomed by the city's mayor Ralph Tucker; Dr. Raleigh Holmstedt, President of ISC; and Dick Tuttle, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, in an official ceremony officiated by Dr. Louis Curcio (*Tribune Star*, September 9, 1963).

The students were housed in the college's residential facilities. The Hulman Center (formerly the Hotel Deming) was a new residence hall that accommodated several of the Cuban families. The Mary Stewart House apartment building (part of ISU at the time and located adjacent to the present day Science Building on North Sixth Street), Reeve Hall, The Scherer House (North Center Street), and the Terre Haute House would also house the Cuban students and their families.

The students appeared to have enjoyed their stay at the Stewart House and at the campus in general. They were very appreciative of the opportunity to attend ISC to obtain their teaching license to be able to earn a living. To them Indiana State was a heaven compared to the hell that was Castro's Cuba. Perez-DeCamino, in a March 2014 interview with the researcher, had fond memories of her time at the Mary Stewart House, Indiana State, and Terre Haute:

Children of the attorneys would get together in the basement of the Mary Stewart House and watch TV. When {President} JFK was killed we all sat in the basement and watched the television coverage together. We also watched his funeral together as well. The community would also bring food to the House, and we would have great meals. The community also brought us clothes. They brought us winter coats because weather was very warm in Miami and we did not have any coats.

Perez-DeCamino is one of only a handful of the original First and Second Wave Cuban students still living. Most of the attorneys and other professionals who immigrated to this country and later attended State are now deceased, for most of this population were in their forties and fifties when they enrolled in the School.

What was life like for the First Wave Cuban students at Indiana State? According to Perez-De Camino, her parents and the other older Cubans "studied, studied, and studied." All of the Cubans were non-traditional students with the average age of 40 years old. This group of highly educated Cubans had left a life as prominent attorneys to be retrained to teach Spanish in the schools in Indiana. Therefore, having a traditional campus life was not an option or a desire for the older Cuban students. What was at issue for them was to improve their English and obtain their education degrees and teaching certificates. The majority of the students had only limited English skills. Therefore in order to be successful in their classes, they would have to translate

the English textbooks into Spanish. They developed a system to do this and it was a team effort. Students were assigned groups and each group would be responsible for translating a certain portion of the text for all the groups. Through team work, the Cuban students were able to translate the textbooks, complete their assignments, and excel in the classroom.

Melva Zabarte, one of the last surviving members of the First Wave Cuban elders and one of the youngest in 1963, echoed Perez-DeCamino's assessment of the parents work load. In a March 29, 2014 with the researcher, Zabarte now 82 years old stated that, "English was very hard for some of us, we had to study very hard. We did work hard, but we made it through."

They not only excelled in the classroom, but they also excelled once they left the classroom. Perez-DeCamino contends that all of the 45 original Cuban students had very successful careers after graduating from State. Her aunt and uncle, Eva Fernandez-Cuervo and Ovidio Cuervo, both of whom were students, went on to successful teaching careers in Indiana.

Eva and Ovidio, both attorneys, left successful legal positions in Cuba to escape the horrible conditions facing them in 1959 Cuba. While they were extremely sad to leave their friends, property, money, family pictures, and personal items, they knew that they had to seek a better life for themselves and their children Ovidio and Alina. Once they graduated from State, Eva obtained a job at Southwood High School in Wabash, Indiana and Ovidio taught at Manchester University in North Manchester, Indiana where they remained until they retired. They also taught Spanish classes at night at Indiana University at Kokomo.

Carlos and Delores Aballi, also attorneys from the First Wave Cubans, also went on to have successful teaching careers in Indiana. The Aballis, along with their children Lourdes and Carlos, arrived in Terre Haute in 1963. The children arrived first coming on the "Peter Pan Flights" (Operation Peter Pan or "Pedro" Pan), the joint CIA and Miami Catholic Church charity relief flights in which the Cuban children escaping forced relocation to the Soviet Union were brought to United States ahead of their parents and placed with relatives, sponsor families or in orphanages until they could be reunited with their families. Once they obtained their degrees and teaching licenses, the Aballis taught in schools in Syracuse, Indiana until they retired.

Melva and Francisco Zabarte represent a third example of a couple who had a successful teaching career once they graduated from State. Francisco had been a successful attorney in Cuba prior to the Cuban Revolution and Melva had been a kindergarten teacher there. Once in Terre Haute, they both had to adapt to a new way of life. Melva found the climate very cold and had a hard time adjusting. But she found the people both at the College and in the city very friendly and helpful. After graduating from the School with their education degrees, they both found success in school systems in Gary, Indiana. After a few years in Gary, Francisco taught in the Chicago school system, retiring there as head of bilingual education.

However for the children and younger relatives of these student-professionals, a traditional elementary, middle school, high school, and college life was possible. These students were able

to have a traditional life because the language barrier of their parents and older relatives was not as great a factor. This group had been formally learning English since kindergarten, the learning of English and French having been mandatory in pre-Castro Cuba. For Perez-DeCamino, who enrolled as a freshman at State in 1964, having such a life was a reality for her. She enrolled at State in 1964 as an education major initially living in on campus housing with her parents and her brother. Her brother Carlos, who was 16 years old at the time he arrived in Terre Haute, attended the College's Laboratory School for his junior year in high school. While at the Lab School, he was very active in sports, excelling in basketball. Reminiscing about his experiences fifty years later in a March 29, 2014 interview with the researcher, Aballi has only wonderful memories of his days at the Laboratory School:

I had a good experience at the Lab School. Teachers were nice. Dorothy Drummond was fantastic. Dr. Mullican was wonderful. My English was terrible at the time, but thanks to them, I improved. Coach Ness was my basketball coach and was a good man. I made friends, lifelong friends. I had a great time there.

The College's Laboratory School was the most popular school choice for the Cuban parents with its affiliation with the College and its all-inclusive grades kindergarten through twelve, but a few kids attended the Catholic high school, Schulte (now defunct).

In terms of the classroom and learning environment, all of the students, both generations, worked very hard and achieved in the classroom despite the language barrier. For all of them, failure was not an option.

In 1965, the students had two of their own in the faculty ranks at the College. Colleen Chirinos in Nursing was joined by her colleague Dr. Felix Illarras in the Department of Foreign Languages. Illarras of Spanish Basque heritage received his bachelor of science and masters in philosophy and letters degree in Bombay, India and his doctorate at the University of Madrid. In 1967, he was later joined in the same department by his wife Aurora in the adjunct ranks. Aurora, a native of Spain, received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the Department of Foreign Language from State in 1966. At the College, she was on the Dean's List and in the IRC.

Perez-DeCamino maintains that the teachers were fair to her and her fellow Hispanic classmates. She believes that they went out of their way to make the Cuban students feel at home, and she contends that her foreign language instructors, including Dr. Curcio and others, were extraordinary professors. Dr. Curcio was able to recruit top notch instructors to teach Spanish and French to these students. Perez greatly enjoyed these foreign language instructors:

In the 1960s, Dr. Curcio invited French professors from Europe to come teach at the University. We took Spanish from Argentinian, Spanish but no American professors. There was a couple from

Spain, the Illarras'. They were in their late 40s; they were very good instructors.

Unfortunately, the identity of the Argentinian professor to whom Perez-DeCamino refers could not be identified.

In-class learning was not the only aspect of the students program of study, student teaching was also a part of the School of Education curriculum. The Cuban students were not exempt from this requirement. However, because Spanish teachers in Indiana were in short supply, the Cubans were allowed to do their student teaching as a group with one classroom teacher. Aballi-Haun did her student teaching in a group with her cousin and his wife, the Olivellas, also Cuban exiles. Aballi-Haun's mother had also done her student teacher with a group of students. Aballi-Haun remembers the challenge that the development of the lesson plan presented to her mother:

All of us did student teaching in the schools and had to make lesson plans. We did student teaching in groups with one teacher. I remember my mother sitting at the kitchen table spending hours and hours working on her lesson plans.

In the area of clubs and organizations, the younger Cubans participated in various clubs, including the Spanish, French, and the International Club. Both Ana Perez-DeCamino and Lourdes Aballi-Haun were in all three clubs and greatly enjoyed their experiences in these. Carlos Aballi was in the Newman Club (religious organization), the Spanish Club, and the Union Board. He was even a candidate for "Bachelor of the Year" contest at the College.

As for social fraternities and sororities, this was not an option for this group of students contrary to other minority students attending State at this time. They believed that since they were all on Ford Foundation scholarships, which supported the families, they should not use the money in ways other than for classes, books, and necessities. This belief was very admirable. However, there were a couple of exceptions to this belief. Aballi did join a fraternity in his later years of college and resided in the fraternity house. He remains lifelong friends with his Sigma Pi fraternity brothers.

Unlike their African American and Asian counterparts, the researcher could not find any record of students of Hispanic descent participating in either organized or intramural sports at the College at this time. The students, however, did engage in informal sports, such as soccer and tennis.

For extracurricular activities, the Cuban students often attended Friday and Saturday school dances. The Cuban students were also often invited to parties and dances at Rose-Hulman Institute in Terre Haute. In fact, Aballi-Haun met her future husband at one of the Rose-Hulman dances in the mid-1960s:

I went to a lot of dances. I love going to dances and parties. I had a great time on campus. I felt accepted. There was no antagonism toward us. I dated a lot of boys. I married a boy from Paris, Illinois, who was a student at Rose-Hulman.

For fun, these students also would go to the coffee house at the now defunct Terre Haute House.

We used to go to the Terre Haute House and drink coffee and eat donuts. I remember once one of the older students came in and tried to order a donut but because he could not speak English well he kept asking for Donna instead of a donut and the clerk kept telling him that there was no Donna that worked there. (Perez-DeCamino, March 10, 2014)

Movies seemed to be a popular past time for the younger Cubans as well.

When the students were not busy studying, they had a lot fun activities. The people my age went to movies, read books. The young Cubans made good friends. Sometimes they would go to the Union for socializing. (Perez-DeCamino, March 10, 2014)

However, there were times when both the parents and children alike would engage in social activities. Families would often host each other in their small apartments enjoying each other's company.

The apartments were equipped with kitchens. Several families socialized by having dinner parties for each other. Several of the lawyers played instruments. Once in a while one very special man would recite poetry to the group in Spanish. All the apartments had televisions. Some attended special programs on campus. The downtown was in walking distance from the apartments. Terre Haute had a great shopping downtown with great restaurants. South of town ISU had a lodge where several parties were given for the Cuban students. I don't think it's there now. (Perez-DeCamino, March 10, 2014)

However, Aballi-Haun would not partake of the fun times with the other Cuban families, but would have an equally great experience with an American family. Once her parents graduated from the School in May 1964, they both took jobs in other parts of Indiana taking her brother Carlos with them to finish his senior year of high school; however, she remained in Terre Haute to finish college at State. Therefore, for the remaining three years of her college life, she lived with her sponsor family, the Carls, local real estate owners. The family treated her as if she were their own daughter:

I lived with the Carl family. They acted like I was their daughter. I was integrated into the family. When we first moved to Terre

Haute from Miami, we had an old car with no heater. Once winter set in, we were freezing in that car. One day Mr. Carl took the keys from dad and got a heater installed in the car. They were very good people.

Aballi-Haun was not the only family that had a sponsor family, for each Cuban family was assigned a sponsor family in Terre Haute. These families were there to help the students make the transition to American life. The Cuban students often had holiday meals with the sponsor family. Carlos Aballi believes that the Carl Family went beyond the call of duty. Like his sister, he also believes that the family was amazing people.

At the end of three semesters, all 45 students had earned the Bachelor of Science degree. By the time the Second Wave Cuban Students arrived in fall of 1964, all but two of the original 45 students had been placed in public schools across Indiana as Spanish language teachers. (*Statesman*, September 16, 1964).

Not only did the original 45 Cuban students have successful teaching careers as Spanish language teachers, so did their children and other younger family members. Ana Perez-De Camino had a long and successful teaching career in Indiana, first teaching at Macanoquah High School, in Bunker Hill, then Northfield High School in Wabash, and then retiring from Wabash High School in 2010 after many years of teaching there.

After graduating from State in 1968, Lourdes Aballi-Haun also taught for a couple years in Elkhart, Indiana before teaching in St. Louis as her husband pursued a medical career. (note: Aballi-Haun's graduation date is outside of the researcher's 1966 end date of this period). She then taught for many years in Evansville, Indiana at both Reitz and Harrison High Schools. She remains in education today, heading a gifted and talented program in Miami. Her brother Carlos Aballi, who received a bachelor of arts degree with a Spanish major and then a master of science in education taught briefly in DeMotte, Indiana, then taught for seven years in Nappanee, Indiana before returning to Terre Haute. He then took teaching positions at West Vigo High School and other local Terre Haute high schools for several years before assuming an administrative position with the Vigo County School Corporation from which he retired in 2004. He is currently a principal at a school for disabled students in Miami.

The second phase of the Cuban Student Project occurred in the fall of 1964. With the success of the first phase of this program, School officials decided to accept more students. Dr. Curcio led a delegation of professors and administrators who interviewed 500 Cuban refugees in Miami, Florida and from this group, 50 applicants were chosen for the coveted slots. The applicants were chosen based on educational credentials and English language proficiency. They arrived at State in September 1964. Unlike the First Wave students, the Second Wave students would be required to be in school for four semesters, and take out special low interest student loans of \$1,333 to help defray the cost of attending the College. Similar to the First Wave Cubans, this group was also composed of the highly educated Cuban elites. However, unlike the First Wave Cubans that

was largely comprised of attorneys, there were also teachers, journalists, politicians, and high government officials represented in the second group.

Dr. Frank Jerse, Professor Emeritus in Educational Psychology, discussed the Second Wave Cuban Students in a March 22, 2014 interview with the researcher. In the spring of 1965, 33 Second Wave Cuban students were placed in his Educational Psychology course along with two non-Hispanic students. Dr. Jerse enjoyed teaching the Cuban students and greatly admired their perseverance and sense of community:

I had met people who faced diversity and met it with dignity and met the challenge and admired them for it. Their world was destroyed and they bounced back and became very successful American citizens. ...It was certainly a rewarding experience for me, and I grew as a result of my contact with them. I believe that the Cuban students had a great sense of community and that they all were in this together and that they all needed to help each other succeed.

As for as the course itself, Jerse did not adjust his syllabus for the students but rather he adjusted his teaching style a bit. Because some of the students had English language challenges, he did most of the lecturing and did not require as much discussion in the class, but he also slowed down his speech during lectures and repeated the course material often. Jerse also allowed for the more advanced English speakers to translate the lecture in class when other students were confused or when they did not understand the course material due to language issues. Jerse's efforts were greatly appreciated by the Cuban students and perhaps his efforts in the classroom helped to foster this mutual admiration that he and the students appeared to share.

Not only were Jerse's relationships with the Cuban students great in the classroom, they also were stellar outside the classroom as well. Jerse has fond memories of him and his wife Dorothy entertaining some of the Cuban couples at his home in Terre Haute:

We had two couples at our home for dinner. I remember them sitting in our backyard and talking with them. One of the Cuban students was very fond of baseball. He knew Connie Mack and had his autograph. Mack was a great manager and the grandfather of baseball. We had good times in our backyard with the Cuban students.

One of the students he entertained at his home and also developed a great relationship with outside of the classroom was Fernando Ferran. Fernando was one of four brothers who were among the 50 students in the Second Wave Cubans to attend the School. The four Ferran brothers came to the United States via Miami from Cuba in July 1960 on the heels of the Cuban Revolution. Their parents, the father a prominent Cuban attorney, joined their sons in Miami

later. Fernando and Rene attended Indiana State, Francisco attended a college in Florida, and the youngest brother Xavier attended Schulte High School (now defunct) in Terre Haute. Fernando and Rene, who along with their brothers were fluent in English, lived in the Mary Davis apartments (*Statesman*, October 14, 1964). Speaking 50 years later, Jerse now 88 years old, was in awe of Fernando. He greatly admired his journalistic skills. Prior to immigrating to the United States, Fernando had been a well-respected journalist having interviewed kings and queens:

He was a journalist in Cuba, a newspaper reporter. He was often in Spain interviewing Franco, the president of Spain. Fernando was very scholarly. I learned much more from Fernando and the other Cuban students than they learned from me.

It would appear that the editors of Indiana State's student newspaper also were in awe of Fernando and his brothers, for the newspaper did a feature story on the four brothers in 1964. This was the only story of individual Cuban students by the *Statesman* that the researcher could uncover. The article was very complimentary toward the brothers, and the writer spent the bulk of the article on Fernando and his journalistic skills and background.

Due to the success of the Indiana State program, two other colleges in Montana and Colorado initiated similar programs at this time using the First Wave graduates as consultants in this endeavor.

1975-1985: The Three Waves of South American Students

The years 1975 to 1985 were years of economic prosperity for the United States. These 10 years witnessed three American presidents, Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter and George H. W. Bush. The last half of the 1970s was notable for the groundbreaking miniseries *Roots*, the Iranian Hostage Crisis, Three Mile Island Nuclear Accident, and the opening of the play *Zoot Suit* (a play by Luis Valdez that in 1979 became the first Chicano play to ever appear on Broadway). The first half of the 1980s was highlighted by the identification of the AIDs virus, the personal computer, Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the Mariel Boat Lift, and the Garfield High School incident (National Educational Testing Service forced 18 Mexican American high school students in Los Angeles to retake a standardized test because cheating was suspected because their scores were very high; students all scored high on the retest).

For many persons of Hispanic descent in America, the timeframe 1975 to 1985, was a time of self-discovery. At this time several Hispanic groups including Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans were engaged in an anti-assimilation movement. Forced to be part of the dominant culture, having to adopt Anglo American mores, values, culture, and language, people of Hispanic descent began to rediscover their own history, culture, and traditions. This anti-assimilation manifested itself in the embracing of the Spanish language, the wearing of historically Hispanic clothing, and the search for and recounting of Hispanic history. For Cuban Americans, a group who embraced the culture of the dominant group historically choosing

assimilation, it was a time of the rise in political power in America. More than any other Hispanic group, these Americans quickly rose to political offices in places like Florida and New Jersey.

At ISU, with its student protests and social revolution behind it, the years 1975 to 1985 can be characterized as the period of the student athlete. ISU gained prominence and was put on the national stage through the athleticism of several of its student athletes. Notable were the feats of Larry Bird, who along with his fellow basketball players took the little-known School to the national championship in 1979; Kurt Thomas, world class gymnast, who won several gold and silver medals in the 1980 world gymnastic championship earning him a best American amateur athlete award; and Bruce Baumgartner, four time Olympic medalist in wrestling, who won his first gold medal in 1984. All three of these athletes would forever etch the name Indiana State University in the American psyche.

While the School celebrated the great achievements of its student athletes and its being catapulted to the national stage, students of Hispanic origin would have something to celebrate as well: the rise in the number of Hispanic students attending the College. Prior to 1975 with the graduation of the Cuban students, there were approximately 20 students of Hispanic origin enrolled at the Institution. During the years 1975 to 1985, the number of students of Hispanic origin rose from approximately 20 in 1975 to 77 in 1982 to 100 in 1985 (includes citizens and international students). (The International Student at Indiana State University: Present and Future” and “Analysis of International Student Population” 1984) This rise in the Hispanic student population occurred in three waves: Wave One, the Venezuelans; Wave Two, the Colombians; and Wave Three, the Argentines and Brazilians.

Wave One, welcomed the Venezuelans. During the years 1975 to 1980, approximately 33 to 40 residents of Venezuela, South American were students at Indiana State (“The International Student at Indiana State University: Present and Future “and “Analysis of International Student Population” 1984). Venezuela is a South American country who in the early 1800s declared independence from Spanish rule with the help of the revolutionary Simon Bolivar. Because the country was experiencing an economic boom in the 1970s, it could well afford to finance its students to attend American colleges and universities in the Midwest. Through word of mouth and through the efforts of former Director of the Office of International Students, Roger Lehr, Indiana State University became a favorite educational destination of college bound students from Venezuela. At first there were only a few students in summer school but then as word spread to family and friends about the School and the city, more and more Venezuelan students came to Indiana State:

Venezuelans started around mid/late 70s. One or two each semester and throughout the summer. Then much larger groups as the word spread about the school and other South Americans being there for support. They later became the largest Hispanic body.

(Interview with Director of Office of International Students, Roger Lehr, November 1, 2013)

The Venezuelan students appeared to enjoy the School and what it had to offer. This feeling was mutual, it would seem, for the Venezuelan students were very popular on campus. They often put on festivals and cultural programs in which their native clothing, foods, and customs were on display. In a November 1, 2013 interview with the Director of International Students, Mr. Lehr echoed this sentiment:

They were interested in everything. They often put on festivals and style shows. They paid for these events themselves. They were very popular among the other students on campus. Students loved to attend their programs.

However, while the Venezuelan programs were well attended by both students and faculty alike, this was the exception maintains Lehr. He contended that while faculty continued to support the international students of Hispanic descent, the traditional student population did not. The former director lamented the lack of support of the majority student population for the dynamic Hispanic cultures:

I cannot recall any Latino/Hispanic faculty teaching at the College at that time. However, I will say that there were quite a number of faculty that did respond to individual students in a positive manner. The invitations to festivals, dinners, style shows, national days and such were often quite well attended. We had very little interest or real ongoing responses from any of the American student body. Our Indiana students were very insular and had very little understanding of the outside world. Therefore, far too few of the internationals had any idea of what living in the United States or the culture of the American student was all about. They were an enclave to themselves and had very little mixing with American students.

During Wave Two, the years 1980 to 1985, approximately 20 to 25 students from Colombia, South America enrolled at the School.) (“The International Student at Indiana State University: Present and Future”; 1980-1985 ISU Yearbooks). Colombia, whose capital is Bogota and is home to the Andes Mountains, sent many of its young men and women to colleges in the Midwest during this period. Similar to Venezuela, because the country was experiencing an economic boom, it could also afford to send its young people to study in American colleges and universities. Indiana State as well as several other Midwestern colleges benefitted from this development. Most Colombia students enrolled in the Schools of Education and Business, and most of them were women. Once the students graduated, the majority of them returned home to pursue careers in education or in business, according to Director Lehr. Interestingly, maintained Lehr, many of the female graduates returned home to arranged marriages as well.

Of the Colombia students who attended Indiana State, Lehr believed that the University benefitted from their presence: “We were lucky to have them. . . . We were very pleased to have our South American students.”

One of the students that both Lehr and Frank Jerse were lucky to have was Marcos Coronado. Coronado was a graduate student from Colombia in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He came to State the first time to do a master’s degree in school psychology. Once he completed this degree, he returned to Colombia only to return a couple years later with his wife, also a student, to pursue his doctorate in the same area. According to Jerse, Coronado was an excellent student and because of his talents and skills he hired him to do educational testing in the schools as part of a project that he himself was working on. Upon graduating with his doctorate in school psychology, Coronado worked in the Phoenix, Arizona school district as a school psychologist. Because he was bilingual, he was very much in demand in the Southwest with its large Hispanic population.

When asked why he remembers Coronado so well and so fondly after all these years, Jerse stated, “He became a friend as well as a student, and I still get Christmas cards from him every year and he still calls me once in a while. He was a very bright guy and a good student.”

Wave Three was comprised of both Argentinian and Brazilian students and began in the mid-1980s. Approximately 20 to 25 students from these countries were on the campus in the mid-1980s. (*The International Student at Indiana State University: Present and Future; 1985-1987 ISU Yearbooks*) Argentina and Brazil are both very populous South American countries. Argentina, whose capital is Buenos Aires and is the second largest country in South America, can boast historic leaders such as Eva Peron and Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner. This 2016 host of the Summer Olympics and Paralympics, Brazil, whose official language is Portuguese, is the largest country in South America and the fifth largest in geography and population in the world.

Students from these two countries also seemed to enjoy the campus and became leaders on campus in both official and unofficial roles. Many students, especially female students, were elementary education majors. Many of the male students chose business majors. Among the two groups of students were several singers and dancers who often performed traditional South American dances in native costumes for the students. Also included in the groups were very talented visual artists. Twenty years later Lehr remembered the Argentine and Brazilian students:

Argentines and Brazilians were hot red pepper. Great group of workers, real leaders, singers, dancers, party people, but also good students.

This era ended with economic downturns in both countries bringing a decline in funding for travel abroad. Unfortunately, the number of students in both these groups declined due to the fall of the currency in these two countries. Many of the families of these students were in business related enterprises.

What was life like at ISU for students of Hispanic origin from these Spanish speaking countries? In terms of the academic life, anecdotal evidence suggests that the students did well in the classroom. The majority of the students who came to the college received their diplomas. However, unlike their Black and Asian contemporaries or the Cuban students during the years 1963 to 1966, students of Hispanic origin did not have very many Hispanic professors or staff to interact with on campus at this time. At this time, to the researcher's knowledge, there were only two documented faculty or staff of Hispanic origin at Indiana State: Manuel P. Martinez, Assistant Professor of Special Education (1978) and Conrado Alminaque, Instructor in Spanish (1967). It is the researcher's contention that next faculty of Hispanic origin would not come to ISU until the naming of Dr. Gaston Fernandez in the Department of Political Science in 1990 and Dr. Carmen Montanez to the Department of Foreign Language faculty in 1994.

In the area of housing, these students predominately resided on campus and some with families lived in Married Student Housing. Off campus living was usually not an option for these students due to their residency status.

While the South American students were not as active in campus clubs and organizations as were their counterparts, they were very active in the international clubs and events. These students often organized cultural events showcasing their individual countries.

National social sororities and fraternities were usually not popular with this group of students. Recognizing that they would return to their home country, they chose not to commit to American based organizations.

In general, the majority of the students from these three waves returned home once they graduated opting not to remain at Indiana State to pursue graduate degrees or in the United States in general. Economic and personal reasons appear to be the dominant reasons for this return. Lehr remembered that:

Everyone returned home to cash in on the boom and to find mates and get married and begin careers of their own or continue the business of their families.

However, while these students were at State, they tried to make their presence known and to share their culture with the campus.

Conclusion

The full story of the "Hispanic" student at ISU is one that remains largely untold. The researcher has described the story of the Cubans who were educated at State in the early to mid 1960s and have discussed briefly the three waves of South Americans in 1975 to 1985, the complete history of the Hispanic student at the School remains unknown. The Cubans' experience reveals how an organization and a School were able to aid a group because of compassion and necessity. Indiana needed Spanish language teachers, exiled Cubans needed a livelihood, and the Ford Foundation had the resources. In 1975 to 1985, South American students wanted to experience the American education system and due to an economic boom in their respective countries and

because of the stellar reputation of Indiana State, they were afforded this opportunity. However, these groups would not have been able to succeed at the School had it not been for the support of the administration and the leadership of the Directors of International Students, Dr. Curcio and Dr. Lehr in their respective eras.

In sum, this essay was only a survey of the students of Hispanic descent who attended Indiana State from 1870 to 1985. Due to lack of archival records and access to some registration records and data, it is only possible to estimate the number of students from the various Hispanic groups. Anecdotal and newspaper accounts are used to recount the history of this population when available. However, this short history is just the beginning and much more needs to be recounted of this remarkable but often overlooked group.

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Special thanks to the following editors and reviewers: Richard Clokey, Ph.D.; Nancy Latta, Ph.D., Donald Layton, Ph.D. and Mr. Graeme Reid.

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