


## *Introduction*

Mexican Texans have a complex identity. They encompass people who call themselves *tejanos*, *mexicanos*, *indigenas*, *latinos*, Latin Americans, Mexican Americans, Hispanics, and more. The Mexican aspect of identity is equally complex—a blending of Spanish and indigenous cultures with additions from elsewhere including Moorish Africa. Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos described the mingling of races in Mexico as the origin of a “cosmic race.”<sup>1</sup>

People migrated north from Mexico over many different time periods to the northern frontier of New Spain, which later became Texas. Some stayed, settled, raised families, and made Texas their permanent home. In some cases, six and seven generations of their descendants have lived on the same land. They preserved elements of their Mexican culture while adapting to new conditions and initiating changes.

Spain claimed the area for over three centuries. During this long era, adventurers, soldiers, settlers, and priests streamed north from Mexico to Texas. They eked out a living in frontier conditions, formed alliances with native peoples, and created communities to address their needs. The Spanish colonial era sowed the seeds of a distinct identity in Texas. As soon as they arrived, the newcomers began to interact and blend with the native people, or *indios*. Their descendants became the Mexican Texans of today.

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