

# How do Different Ethnic Groups Contribute to the Diversity of American Culture

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**Abstract:** *As is universally acknowledged, the United States has often been called “a nation of immigrants”. Under the great influence of immigration, there have been many great changes based on racial integration in all aspects of the United States, especially the aspect of culture. This article mainly focuses on five ethnic groups which take the largest percentage of the total number of population in America, analyzing their contribution to the American culture. In the end, the paper will give a further conclusion, summarizing the contributions and ways about ethnic groups to the American culture.*

**Keywords:** *Culture, Influence, Ethnic Groups*

## 1. Introduction

The United States has often been called “a nation of immigrants”. The United States is, from the beginning, a nation founded by immigrants. The first native people on the north American continent were the Indians. Then the Europeans (first The British) sent the criminals to America and slowly began the process of emigrating to North America.

The United States is, from the demographic aspect, a nation of immigrants. Americans can be classified not only by the color of white, black, and yellow, but also by Europeans, Black Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans and so on. Almost every American is an immigrant from another country.

The United States is, from the immigration policy, a nation of immigrants. The United States threshold is not too strict for immigration policy, thus in recent years the country continually absorb many new blood.

As a result, throughout the whole history, it's not an exaggeration that the United States was settled, built, and developed by generations of immigrants and their children. What's more, even today, America continues to take in more immigrants than any other country in the world.

According to U.S. Census done in the year of 2019, there were 336.01 million people in total in the United States. Of those, 61.01% were non-Hispanic whites; Hispanics were 17.09%, African Americans 12.96%, Asians 5.30%, mixed-race 2.45%, American Indians and Native Alaskans 1.18 percent, others takes around 0.2 percent (minorities were counted twice within other groups).

Therefore, it is not hard to imagine how American culture would be affected by such multiracial integration. In fact, the United States is gradually being replaced by multi-culture nation. America has changed to seek the national policy of coexistence of diversity and later become the birthplace of ceaselessly "anti-discrimination action".

In this paper, Europeans, Black Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and Native Americans become the five main bodies which will be discussed. By analyzing their history and changes, readers will understand how they adapt to their immigration role and influence the land through their own strength.

## 2. Europeans

As history goes, it were Europeans who arrived on the American continent and conquered Native Americans and their land. Thus it's not hard to understand why nowadays most Americans are descendants of white European immigrants who settled in the first colonies. Among these Europeans,

many came to the U.S.A. during the "Southern Reconstruction" movement after the civil War. The main European origins are Germany (15.6%), Ireland (10.8%), England (8.7%), Italy (5.6%) and Scandinavia (3.7%); Many also came from Slavic countries such as Poland and Russia; Other immigrants came from the French-speaking parts of Eastern and southern Europe and Canada.

Nowadays, a great majority of Americans are Caucasian, and the mainstream culture of America is primarily WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) in character. Despite the increasing richness of The American society, their morality, culture, value orientation and so on is still greatly influencing America's development. Of course, not all of them are elite. It's all over the social class, and even the poor white underclass who are ridiculed as "white trash" may be WASP. Indeed, American culture has developed from being a special branch of British culture to become not only independent but also perhaps the most influential culture of the West.

Nevertheless, America still reflects its European origins in ways that go far beyond the language, particularly in its architectural design and legal system. The American has its special *Rugged Individualism*, which urge for American System that only by ensuring orderly freedom and equal opportunity for the individual will the creativity and talent of the individual be maximized and society will progress. What's more, such a social rule also leads people to the concept of *American dream* and makes them eager to strive for a better life for themselves through their own efforts. That's probably why the United States is a dream place for many immigrants.

By the same token, continental Europe has managed to make its culture felt in America as well, especially in the fields of music, cookery, and philosophy.

### **3. Black Americans**

The history of Black Americans can be traced back to the 16th century when America was colonized by Europe. Since the entry of the first black slaves, the proportion of black Americans has been increasing. The sheer number of African Americans in the land is quite significant, for it helps them give their race a foothold on American soil.

Black Americans always play an influential role throughout the whole American history. They took an active part in the American Revolutionary War and the Anti-Fascist War, and made many achievements. They have also made great contributions to the development of American economy, culture, and agriculture. Black workers make up about a third of the steel industry and about half of the car industry. In music, literature and art, sports, the achievement of blacks is even more remarkable. Who is it that in the Grammy, WMA, MTV and other countless music awards cut a conspicuous figure? Who is it that in the NBA stage to create a basketball myth one after another? Who is it that led the contemporary American hip-hop culture? After the pain of exile and the torment of slavery, African Americans lived out their dignity in twentieth century America. Their endless musical talents and unique backgrounds have enabled them to create a wealth of literature and art in the United States. Their efforts have not only won a bright future for themselves, but also deeply influenced American culture and made American culture more diverse and colorful.

However, since ancient times, there has been a serious problem of discrimination against blacks on American soil. Of course, blacks have been always on the road to their rights. During the time of American Civil War, Lincoln tried his every effort and finally issued the emancipation Proclamation, which freed great number of black slaves from the suffering and miserable life. Moreover, the recent violent death case of Freddie Gray, an American black man who called *I can't breathe* before he died, has caused strong condemnation from the whole American society, and later even to the world. Many people spontaneously held large-scale parades, and even many stars joined in. Through this incident, we can also see people's efforts to fight against racial discrimination. Of course, Rome was not built in a day. To eradicate the reality of American soil from Black Americans, there is still a long way to go.

### **4. Latinos**

The word Latino or Hispanic does not denote a unified ethnic population, but is a huge term. In a broad sense, Spain and Portugal are of Iberian origin. The Italians and Frenchmen from neighboring countries, or the Hispanic or Portuguese speaking mixed race in Latin America, can be called Latinos. Today, Latinos are the largest minority in the United States. As they integrate into American society, they also influence American culture.

Latin American immigrants in the United States "not only care for the culture and traditions of their home country, regarding identification with their home country as a matter of course, but also are willing to identify with and assimilate into the mainstream society of America on the premise of not damaging national feelings of belonging".

Why do Latino immigrants have a "double identity"? This can be explained by Latin American culture. An important feature of Latin American culture is the "cosmopolitan tendency" to see the world as one's own country. This is conducive to the interpenetration and integration of language and cultural traditions in different regions.

On the one hand, Latin American immigrants accept American culture, on the other hand, they retain their unique national style and living habits. With the increasing strength of Latinos, their culture and traditions are gradually recognized by the mainstream society of the United States. Today, according to the statistics in 2019, 69.21 percent of American students choose Spanish as a foreign language, nearly six times as many as French (12.12 percent). Among the many free newspaper boxes on the streets of New York, there is a weekly favorite of Latino readers. It's called *El especialito*. The weekly, which covers about 1.2 million readers, is the largest Spanish weekly in the United States.

What's more, there are many other interesting examples, including eating. Mexican restaurants are popping up all over the country, and almost every American knows the names of a few classic Mexican dishes. Many people like the taste of guacamole and burrito which derived from Latin. And, the "right" way to drink tequila, Mexico's national drink, is also popular with Americans.

## 5. Asian Americans

Asian Americans are the ethnic minorities of the United States. Among them, Chinese and Japanese came to the United States earlier. Koreans, Filipinos and Indians moved to the United States from the late 19th and early 20th century, Other Southeast Asian countries, such as Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia and Indonesia, did not enter the United States until the mid-1970s.

Such a huge group attach unique labels to their identities, and use their power to influence the entire American community. They have integrated their unique cultural and emotional ways into the United States. They don't represent Chinese culture, Japanese culture or Korean culture, they don't represent American culture, ether. They just represent themselves. Even the language and expression they use are adjusted a little bit based on their life experience and culture, which is different from the original language in Chinese, Japanese, Korean or English and so on.

In the 1940s and 1950s, although the specific situation of Asian nationalities in America was different, their cultural choices tended to be similar to those of Chinese Americans, basically identifying with the United States without hesitation. In the 1960s and 1970s, the situation reversed, that is, the majority of Asians advocated abandoning the pursuit of American mainstream culture. More and more Asian Americans begin to find their own foothold in American native culture. They are no longer humble and pray to cater to American culture through their own changes, but start to influence the trend of the country slowly and with their own efforts. This is a landmark identity transition and consciousness awakening in the History of Asian Americans, and also the true cultural significance of the term "Asian American".

Nowadays, because of their hard work, steadfast and enterprising, Asian Americans are often praised by the local people. They are often viewed as the "model minority". This label encourages this group to stand in a new angle to understand themselves, define themselves, and explore the real meaning of being an Asian American.

What's more, Chinese Americans also inherit Chinese civilization in various ways. They pay attention to the learning and preservation of Chinese culture, and let their children study in Chinese schools, or hire tutors for their children to practice Mandarin. Traditional Chinese medicine clinics and Chinese martial arts have sprung up in some American cities with a strong market. Due to the Asian-Americans' huge purchasing power, more dealers and companies become delve into the group's specific cultural tastes and preferences.

## 6. Native Americans

Native American history is a chapter full of blood and tears in American history. Most of the Native

Americans are Indians, and the rest are Inuit, mainly in the north of North America. As early as the geographical discovery of Columbus, people across the long channel, found this pure land of America. As they settled in distinctive niches, diverse cultures evolved.

The Mayans, among the native Americans, invented Mayan writing and were very knowledgeable about astronomy. The Indians cultivated crops such as corn, potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, tobacco, and cocoa.

However, after the Europeans came to America in the 16th century, the native civilization was destroyed by the colonists, and the number of people decreased sharply. Due to such persecution and killing of Native Americans by western colonists, and the destruction of Native American culture, many treasures in ancient time were ruined. However, in recent times, such a history has attracted more and more attention of archaeologists, and American countries have begun to vigorously explore the ancient Native American culture.

Nowadays, the United States was famous in a small part of the United States, living in their unique primitive way. Native Americans are different from Black Americans. Because of the special historical tradition and some ideological differences of the nation, they have different demands. Black people strongly demand to break the apartheid, hoping to integrate into the mainstream society and fight for equal rights. On the contrary, The Indian is on the contrary. Although the government hopes to draw them into the mainstream society through preferential measures, the effect is not obvious. The Indian puts more emphasis on preserving land, enjoying the right of self-government and maintaining cultural characteristics.

## 7. Conclusion

The different characteristics of different ethnic have merged into the American culture today. Native American culture was the first to bring the foundation of the American land. The cultural influence they brought to the United States was mostly from a historical perspective. Although they do not fit in with the current American culture, their retention of self-characteristics also infuses the traditional and classical colors into the United States.

As for today's society, the mainstream culture in the United States is still derived from European Americans. However, other, more diverse ethnic groups are also on the rise, struggling to add their own national identity to American culture. For them, in the past, they were eager to find their own identity in American culture, wanting to change themselves in order to cater to the United States and make themselves more American. Nowadays, however, with their growing strength and more inclusive society, they begin to try to use their own efforts to inject their own elements into American culture, including the way of life, literature, language, art, way of thinking and so on.

In today's fast-paced world, we have reasons to believe that in this multi-ethnic land, everyday is different. We have also witnessed the impact of many different races on American culture. We have reasons to expect that under the influence of people of different races, American culture will show more possibilities, and become more colorful.

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