

Spanish & Portuguese Influence on Latin America

Discovery of the Americas

Christopher Columbus was sponsored by Spain.

- His mission: find a quick and safe route to Asia

Columbus never reached Asia; he **landed in the Americas in 1492** and claimed the surrounding land for Spain.



Columbus' First Landing



Spanish Colonization

Spanish explored, conquered, and settled areas of **Florida, Mexico, and parts of Central and South America.**

- also claimed many islands in the **Caribbean**

Today, most people in these areas speak Spanish.





Portuguese Colonization

Portugal claimed the land from the Atlantic Ocean across South America to the Andes Mountains.

- It covered most of the vast Amazon River region, in what is now present-day **Brazil**.

Today, most people in this area (Brazil) speak Portuguese.





Cultural Diffusion

The Spanish and Portuguese spread their culture and religion across the region:

- developed colonies that were similar to the ones in Europe
- conquered the natives and forced them to learn Spanish and Portuguese and convert to **Roman Catholicism**

Languages in Latin America

green-Spanish
orange-Portuguese
blue-French



Latin America Today

The term “*Latin America*” started in the 1800s.

It refers to the **group of countries that spoke mostly languages based on the ancient Latin language.**

- Spanish and Portuguese are both derivatives of Latin.

The shared **religion (Catholic), culture, & languages (Spanish & Portuguese)** have united the region.

What does this image tell you about Latin America's culture?



Diversity in Latin America

Latin America's cultures are diverse.

- Each region has its own history, languages, customs, beliefs, foods, music, etc.

Latin America also has diversity in its races:

- Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans are the largest groups.
- Members of these groups have intermarried and developed unique cultures over time.

Native Americans



Europeans began colonizing the Americas in the 1500s.

- They forced the natives to work on plantations & in mines.
- Many native populations were completely wiped out by European weapons and diseases.

Some natives were able to preserve their cultures by moving to remote regions.

Many people in Venezuela are **mestizos** (ancestors were both European and Native American).

Africans

Europeans brought Africans to the New World and forced them to work as slaves.

Descendants of these people still live in Latin America today.

- Many live in Brazil, Panama, and islands in the Caribbean.



Religion

The main religion in Latin America is Roman Catholic.

However, practices of Native Americans & Africans have blended with Christian beliefs.

- Example: “Day of the Dead” in Mexico—blends Native American beliefs about the afterlife with Christian beliefs.

El Día de los Muertos



El Día de los Muertos



Cultural Controversy...

People with European ancestors often have better paying jobs, better education and health care, and more money than people of Native American or African descent.

Other culture groups have begun to demand equality in their countries.

- Example: In Bolivia in 2005, a Native American was elected president for the first time.