

SUNDAY MAGAZINE

Washington edition
Section G

PITTSBURGH'S
'INVISIBLE'
LATINOS
ARE EMERGING
AS PART OF A
NATIONAL
POPULATION
EXPLOSION

THE NEW BOOMERS!

When she arrived in Western Pennsylvania in 1948, the woman many local Latinos now know as Angeles Stiteler carried a much more freighted name from Mexico. It was a mouthful of family history that her new culture would soon pare down. As her husband Ed went to work for his father selling coal-company insurance in Greensburg, María de los Angeles López-Portillo y Vernon de Stiteler set out to find Spanish speakers. These were the days before Lucy and Ricky on TV.

That first Christmas, she called the University of Pittsburgh to invite people who spoke Spanish to her Mexican party. Pitt sent a U.S.-born student of Mexican parents and his wife for what was undoubtedly the quietest Mexican fiesta in history.

"I said, 'That's all?'" Stiteler recalls of the meager showing. "I was desperate to find people."

For more than 30 years, she taught Spanish at Seton Hill College. Today, retired in Pittsburgh, Stiteler belongs to the most rapidly growing census group in the city, as well as the nation. By next year, the number of Latinos locally are projected to have at least doubled since 1990, when the U.S. Census counted 8,700 Latinos in Allegheny County.

This rate puts local Latinos in step with the national trend: Whether in 2015, 2010 or 2005 — you hear all these dates — a projected 36 million Latinos very decidedly will represent the largest minority in the United States.

"Hispanic" is the government's official designation for their minority status and is preferred by many older Latinos, but used this way it neglects the Portuguese-speaking Brazilians. "Latino" aligns aurally with Latin America, defined as the entire Western Hemisphere south of the United States.

The U.S. Census Bureau considers "Hispanic" a subgroup; on most forms, the box appears down from "black/white/other." But Latinos represent an almost impossibly hard to categorize splay of cultures. Like the rest of us, they are members of the great American mosaic.

Imagine that tens of millions of United States and Canadian citizens went to a country that counted them under the name "Usas." With roots all over the world, we would be black, white, parts of both, indigenous and all jammed into the box marked "Usas." We would stop each other on the street and talk like lost cousins. We might hold festivals to celebrate our common bonds. As Usas,

an African-American from California, a French-speaking Quebecois and an Appalachian Presbyterian would have more in common than ever before.

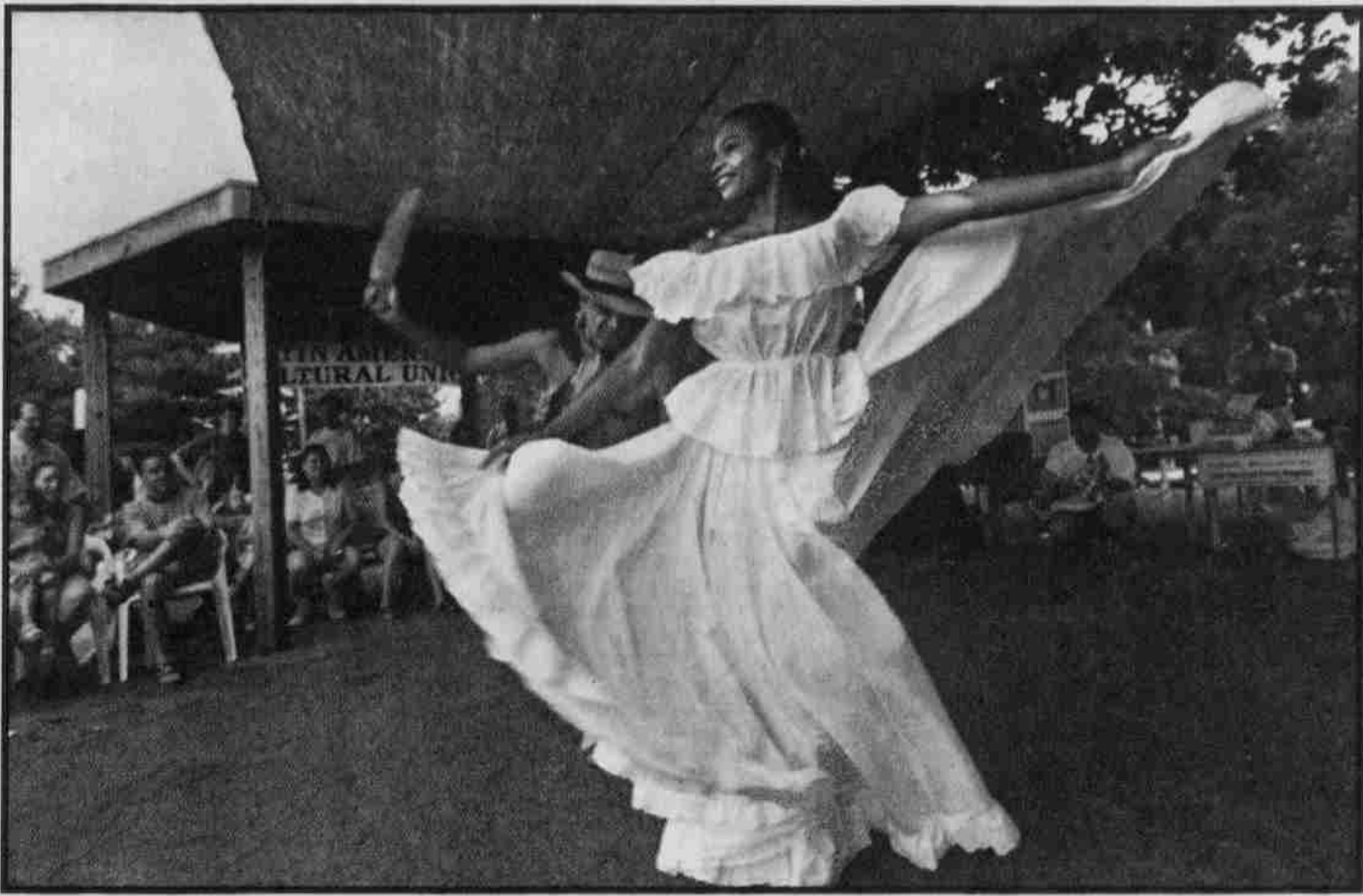
This is how Latinos find themselves and each other in the United States today — a tremendous melange whose numbers are growing at a rate seven times faster than the whole.



Above: Angeles Stiteler of Point Breeze, an historian and film-maker, has taught English to many Spanish-speaking immigrants since leaving Mexico more than 50 years ago to come to Pittsburgh.

Top: A portrait of Angeles Stiteler from 1948, the year she came to Western Pennsylvania, is among a stack of family photos.

Below: Elcy Gonzalez-Sandora, 30, of Mt. Lebanon and Luis Montañó of Highland Park perform the "Cumbia," a folk dance from their native Colombia, at the Latin-American Cultural Union Picnic in Schenley Park on July 31.



Newsweek reported in July that nationally, the Latino population has grown by 38 percent since 1990, mostly with legal immigration.

On a chart of the state's cities (see page G-13), horizontal bands represent the reach of each city's Latino population as of 1994. Lancaster's the winner, its 20.6 percent beating Reading's 18.5 percent by a half inch. York, West Chester and Harrisburg all line up at 7-plus percent, outdistancing Philadelphia's 5.6 percent. Furthest left, barely out of the gate, a notch represents Pittsburgh's .9 percent Latinos.

But even in a Latino microcosm as micro as Pittsburgh, this diverse subgroup finally feels the support of a national trend that acknowledges the dynamic force they are bringing to bear on the United States.

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Story by **Diana Nelson Jones**

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