THEY TRIED TO BURY US
THEY DIDN'T KNOW WE WERE SEEDS
This exhibit chronicles the history of Latiné students at Duke University, tracing their historical exclusion and subsequent pursuit of inclusion, highlighting their contributions, and shedding light on how Latiné students presently make sense of their identities. Created by and for students, this exhibit is centered around the student experience spanning over a century at Duke University. While anchored in the student experience, we utilize faculty narratives, Durham’s historical context, and the backdrop of national social movements to offer a portrayal of student life.

Our exhibit begins at the turn of the 20th century, when the first Latiné students were admitted to Duke University. At the time, the majority of Latinés were international students, and the university’s segregationist policies limited admission to non-black individuals. Latiné students encountered a climate marked by racial jokes and hostile attitudes, prompting many to try to assimilate as a means of coping and survival. Desegregation in the early 1960s paved the way for a more diverse group of Latiné students to attend Duke.

The 1980s and 1990s saw the founding of the first organizations established by and for Latiné students, including the Spanish American and Latin Students Association (SALSA). This period marked the beginning of a more visible and recognizable Latiné population on campus, where students collaborated to celebrate their cultural heritage and make demands to university administration. Our exhibit concludes in the present day, where we showcase student achievement, and explore the ways in which Latiné students foster a sense of community and envision Duke University’s future.
Throughout the exhibit, we use the term “Latiné” to refer to people of Latin American ancestry living in the United States. The term, akin to Latinx, emerged in response to queer, trans, and gender non-conforming people in the Latinx community who wanted a term that didn’t require people to choose a gendered label like “Latino” or “Latina.”

Many of the individuals featured in the exhibition would not have identified as “Latiné” at the time. The experience of Latinés is not monolithic, with individuals identifying across various racial and cultural backgrounds. Some who identify as Latiné might also align themselves with other identities, such as Black, White, Asian, Indigenous, or with specific indigenous communities like the Maya and P’urépecha migrants in North Carolina today.

For a link to a full digital timeline of the history of Latiné students at Duke, visit https://exhibits.library.duke.edu/exhibits/show/latinx/timeline. Unless otherwise noted, all materials you see are from the Duke University Archives. You can add more materials about Duke's Latiné history to the University Archives by contacting them here: https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/uarchives/ask.
Intro

Defining Latiné (1)

Defining Latiné (2)

First Latiné Students @ Duke

What is Jim Crow?

Latiné Students & the Racial Binary

Latinés in Durham

Black Latinés in Durham

What is Latiné
Our Culture Is Not Your Party
Embracing New Familias
Building Community
Latinés Drive Change
Nuestro Hogar
The Future Acknowledgments

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The Future Acknowledgments
This Zine was created by the students in the Fall 2023 course, “Latinx Social Movements.”

This Zine was created with the support of the Duke History Department, the Wilhelmina M. Reuben-Cooke Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Practices Project, and a Paletz Innovative Course Enhancement award.

We want to thank all of the former Latiné students who paved the way with their labor and their activism for future generations of Latiné students. A special thank you to the students who participated in this project in previous years and those who talked with us this year to help us make Duke’s current Latiné student voices heard.

While this work highlights the work of Latiné students at Duke we want to thank the immigrant parents of Duke students and fellow immigrant & Latiné staff, faculty, and students, without whom Duke would not be the same.

Acknowledgements

Curatorial Team

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Jessica Muñiz
For the summer session held at Duke University in 1952, the Southgate dormitory on East Campus was renamed the Spanish Community Dorm to house students who wished to selectively live with other undergraduate students who desired to explore their own Latinidad.

Dr. Lundeberg, the inaugural faculty advisor, played a crucial role in establishing the Alpha Theta Chapter of Sigma Delta Pi, formerly known as the Spanish Club. The group aimed to promote the study of Spanish history, literature, and language through regular meetings and annual public Fiestas starting in 1936.

Club Panamericano, founded in 1945 and revived in October 1947 under the guidance of Professor Juan R. Castellano, aimed to unite Spanish-speaking students and cultivate interest in Hispanic culture and language. The club disbanded in 1954, possibly due to financial reasons.
Students of Color @ Duke Build Community

The Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture (founded in 1983) was instrumental to Latiné student activism at Duke. It sponsored the establishment of several Latiné and multicultural organizations and mentored and empowered Latiné students, constructing one of the first bridges between minority student communities at Duke.

Spectrum was established in 1988 by Duke students of color and aimed to cultivate a support network for minority groups on campus, encouraging dialogue and collaboration between Duke’s cultural and identity organizations (including: Asian Student Association, Black Student Alliance, Duke India Association, Hillel, Mi Gente, Diya, Native American Studies Coalition, Students of the Caribbean Association). Read more about Spectrum’s vision for the future of Duke students in the pamphlet to the right!

Dr. Edward Hill (above) helped form and acted as a faculty advisor for the Mary Lou Williams Center, Spectrum, and the Spanish American Latin Student Association (SALSA)—one of the first Latiné student organizations at Duke. He is the epitome of solidarity and committed his Duke career to connecting students of color and inspiring their advocacy.

To The Future...

We believe that interactive social education is an important complement to education in the classroom. We believe that Duke students should be exposed to the rich minority cultures that have contributed to American society and world history.

Through the SPECTRUM organization and SPECTRUM House, we hope to establish an environment for multicultural programming on campus and an academic agenda that includes the expansion of non-Western civilizations studies.

SPECTRUM welcomes the participation of all students at Duke.

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S - Stopping stereotypes
P - Peaceful existence
E - Educating society
C - Correcting misconceptions
T - Together we are strong!
R - Reuniting the world
U - Understanding our differences
M - Moving into the future...
The article pictured below was published in 2022 in the Duke Chronicle in protest of Sigma Chi’s “Viva Mexico” party. Cultural organizations united to demand that selective social groups address racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, ableism and sexual assault.

Our culture is not your frat party

Signed,  
Arab Student Organization  
Asian American Studies Working Group  
Asian Students Association  
Black Student Alliance  
Define America  
Duke Black Alliance  
Duke Oye  
Duke Pamily Filipino Students Association  
Duke SHAPE  
Duke Students Government  
La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda, Alpha Chapter  
Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Incorporated Zeta Mu Chapter  
Latino Business Organization

Mi Gente  
Muslim Student Association  
Native American/Indigenous Student Alliance  
Our Urban Future  
Pakistani Students Association  
Persian Students Association  
Porcolumbia  
Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers  
Students for Justice in Palestine  
Students of the Caribbean Association

By Cultural Organizations Coming Together  
May 12, 2022 | 5:19pm EDT

In 1989, SALSA and Spectrum hosted “Hispanic Culture Breaks Out at Duke”—a weeklong celebration of Hispanic culture. This event featured a screening of “Stand and Deliver”, a free "Spanish" lunch, and a presentation by scholar Ana Celia Zentella. Aside from occasions like this one, Spectrum also organized student conversations to foster dialogue about the experiences of students of color on campus.
Our culture, our heritage, and our stories are priceless and ever present. No matter the space or conversations, Latinx students, faculty, and staff will continue paving paths and contributing to conversations surrounding our right and freedom to be here unapologetically.

I realized that expressing my culture was worthwhile, but I had to fight for my right to do that... Organizations like Mi Gente, where I was able to freely be myself and become grounded, sometimes feel completely antithetical to the systems in place at this university.

Grounded in the work of our predecessors, I am able to write this love letter to the Duke Latinx community in spaces suffused with la lucha Latina and a spirit of communal determination to progress towards a better hogar for our community members.

In uncovering stories of our institution’s harm, we also find decades of stories of hope, affirming the validity of the Duke Latinx community and capacity for unity, coalition-building, and advocacy.

The Duke Latinx community persists because we have a story. We maintain the fight to organize and create counter-spaces like our predecessors.

We may not see the end of this story, but know that our fight is won every day in the time we dedicate to building and embodying the future we imagine by leading with love for the Duke Latinx community.

Our communities have suffered from colonization, and continue to suffer from its influence... and now, our identity and our stories are also labeled, bordered, and taken from us.

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Our whole lives, the dominating culture has told us what or what does not constitute Latin American, Latinx, Hispanic, Latino, Latina, and Latine. At Duke, the dominating culture are systems like Greek Life, DSG, and administration, but this extends to systems in the real world as well.

Just like my mother and father, the workers in the farmers market, the youth in the barrios, my experience here at a PWI, and the students I serve – we are constant. La Latinidad will never go away.

Our culture, our heritage, and our stories are priceless and ever present. No matter the space or conversations, Latinx students, faculty, and staff will continue paving paths and contributing to conversations surrounding our right and freedom to be here unapologetically.
What does Latinidad mean to you?

"Remembering our roots and our culture and our background" - Rogelio Miranda

"Embracing your culture" - Jaque Gomez

"Culture, food, music, spending time with my family" - Juliet Peñaranda

What does it mean to be Latiné at Duke?

"A sense of community and it means belonging" - Diego Diaz

"Pride and representing who you are here in this setting" - Cristal Ortiz

What objects, events, beliefs, etc. help define your Latinidad?

"Embracing the overall culture and ensuring that we are acknowledging our culture, ethnicity, and sharing that with other people" - Maria Arciniegas

"I do like the community here. I feel like it really empowers me and even in the moments that I feel down I know that just being Latina at Duke it is seen by people" - Fernanda Villalva

Scan the QR code to hear Duke students share their perspectives on Latinidad!
CALL IT WHAT IT IS... RACISM

In 1937, the Duke ‘n’ Duchess, student-produced “humor” publication, wrote a piece that portrayed a Cuban student as a political agitator.

From the misspelling of “Diary” to talking about Cuban students shooting police to supporting Communism and getting violent with Capitalists, this article is filled with racist comments disguised as a comedy piece. It perpetuates stereotypes and highlights the racist sentiment towards Latiné students.
Invitations fashioned as expired green cards and organizers assuming roles as "border control" did more than poke fun; they made fun of the struggles of the Latine community. Humor, when misused, can perpetuate harmful stereotypes, contributing to an unwelcoming environment.

This racist "humor" is not just a thing of the past, in 2003 Sigma Chi, a Duke fraternity, threw a Viva Mexico party.

Minimizes Latine experiences

Racism still accepted?
Only Latiné students classified as white were allowed to attend. Even then, these individuals faced racism. Their beauty was never fully appreciated.
A rich, vibrant, and diverse community that makes their presence known on campus.

LATINE' NOW

A rich, vibrant, and diverse community that makes their presence known on campus.

Embrace Heritage

We aren't going anywhere

Activism

Philanthropy

Inclusivity
Starting in the early 20th century, Latiné clubs at Duke started as groups that often tried to explain their Latinidad to the majority, non-Latiné student body. From the earliest Latiné orgs like Club Panamericano in the early 1950s to now more than 15+ vibrant communities, the organization of Latinidad at Duke has changed.
Now, cultural orgs on campus have both expanded, diversified, and are more likely to be run by and for the group(s) they represent.

Duke’s Latino Student Recruitment Weekend (LSRW) @dukelsrw, 2023, photographed above and below
Evolution of Activism

Latinès have always been active on campus, but beginning in the 1960's and 70's Latinè activism grew.

With now 15+ organizations on campus, Latiné students continue to make demands of their university in the vibrant activist tradition.

...AND NOW!
How is Duke different now?

- **1998 Demand: Creation of Latino Student Recruitment Weekend**
  - The first Latino Student Recruitment Weekend was held in 1999

- **2003 Demand: Strengthen Latinx Studies programs and creation of Asian American studies program**
  - LSGS certificate launched in 2007
  - AADS (Asian American & Diaspora Studies) Minor

- **2016 Demand: Funding for Latinx Awards Night**
  - Latinx Awards Night (2017–2022)
  - Annual Multicultural Awards Night Started (2023–present)
What demands keep showing up over the years?

- **Meetings with Administrators:** Administrators have frequent meetings with Latiné Undergraduates

- **Cultural Center:** Establishment of a permanent and visible Latiné Cultural Center on campus

- **Latinx Studies:** Expansion of Latinx Studies into a Major and Minor

- **Representation:** Increase Latiné staff, faculty and administrators at Duke

- **Funding:** Scholarships, LSRW, Latinx Awards Night, need-blind admission for undocumented students
Current Unmet Demands:

- Permanent and Visible Cultural Center
- Hiring additional faculty to coordinate LSRW and compensation for LSRW co-chairs
- Creation and funding of Latinx Awards Night and permanent funding for Latinx stoles at graduation
- Establishment of a plan to hire Latiné staff, faculty, and administrators - including a plan for retention and creating paths to tenure - including hiring Latiné therapists/psychiatrists at CAPS
- Hire multilingual financial aid staff (especially Spanish-speaking staff)
- Expand Latino/a Studies in the Global South to include a major, minor, and its own tenure-track professors
- Reinstate Merit Scholarships for international Latin American Students
- Increase admissions office recruitment in highly Latiné concentrated parts of cities
- Create a President’s Council on Latinx Affairs that includes representatives from Latiné faculty, staff, alumni, and students that meets with the president and administrators at least twice a semester
ARE YOU OR YOUR ORGANIZATION MAKING DUKE HISTORY?

Make sure that your history is in Duke’s Archives!

What kind of things go in the archives?

- **Governance records**: By-laws, constitutions, charters, annual reports, mission statements, policies and procedures
- **Correspondence**: incoming and outgoing communications, letters, emails
- **Administrative files**: meeting agendas and minutes, handbooks, rosters, membership lists, registers
- **Publications**: newsletters, journals, announcements, petitions
- **Promotional materials**: flyers, brochures, posters, event programs, invitations
- **Photographs**: digital images, prints, and negatives of events and activities, scrapbooks, photo albums
- **Audiovisual materials**: recordings of activities, events, and meetings
- **Online content**: we can archive your group's website, blog, or other online content

Click on this QR code for more information or reach out to Rebecca Patillo @ Duke University Archives (Rebecca.patillo@duke.edu)
Mi Gente (instagram: @dukemigente)
Duke’s oldest Latiné support organization that strives to create a safe and welcoming environment for all students and staff.

Sabrosura (instagram: @dukesabrosura)
Duke’s Latin Dance Team that performs at a few events each year.

Por Colombia (instagram: @dukeporcolombia)
An organization focused on connecting students to their Colombian heritage.

Define America (instagram: @defineamerica)
An organization that advocates for justice for (im)migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in the U.S.

Lambda Theta Alpha (LTA)(instagram: @lta_zetamu)
Latina sorority

Lambda Upsilon Lambda (LUL)(instagram: @duke_lul)
Latino fraternity

Latinx/a Women’s Alliance (LWA)(instagram: @duke.lwa)
An alliance dedicated toward creating a safe, equitable space for Latiné women.
Latinx Business Organization (LBO) (instagram: @dukelbo)
An organization focused on forging connections between Duke Latiné students and the business sector.

Latin America Student Organization (LASO) (instagram: @dukelaso)
An organization compromised of Latiné undergraduate students at Duke.

Duke Brazilian Student Association (BRASA) (@brasaduke)
An association designed to connect students to their Brazilian heritage and forge a community.

Students of the Caribbean Association (SOCA) (instagram: @dukesoca)

Society of Hispanic Professional Engineer (SHPE) (instagram: @dukeshps)
A society dedicated toward bridging the gaps between the engineering sector and Latiné students at Duke.

Spanish American Latin Student Association (SALSA) (instagram: @dukelawsalsa)
An organization compromised of Spanish American students.

Gente Aprendiendo para Nuevas Oportunidades (GANO) (X: @duke_gano)
A student-run volunteer program offering free English as a Second Language lessons to Hispanic adults in Durham.

GET INVOLVED TODAY!
Go inside the minds of the creators behind this exhibit...

Photo of “Latinx Social Movements” Fall 2024 Class
Three Words to Describe Latiné
"What does it mean to be Latiné?"

"I like what Professor Marquez mentioned, that 'Latinidad is a verb, not a noun.' Latiné to me is a combination of origin, languages, experience, and cultural norms. The more you seek to rigidly define Latiné, the more it scatters within its own complexity. Overall, I think of it as a shared experience for people who deal with the long-term effects of Spanish colonialism in the Americas."

- Amelia Wyatt

"A connection with my roots, overcoming the struggles that have been passed down from past generations, and to continue fighting for the American Dream to make my family proud."

- Angelli Garibaldi

"To embody resilience in the face of challenges. It involves overcoming adversity, preserving cultural practices, and fostering inclusivity."

- Jaque Gomez

"To be Latiné means a lot to me. Essentially, it represents my roots and the connection I have with my family’s culture. It is something that makes me unique and brings a sense of pride when it comes to my personal background."

- Eli Dominguez

"To be Latiné means to be with people that are similar to me in cultures, beliefs, and traditions that relate to my latinidad and language."

- Yadira Paz-Martinez

"To be an individual of Latin American descent or origin"

- Niyat Asefaw
“What key insights do you hope viewers take away?”

Libertad by Cornelio Campos

“I hope that people can see the struggles that the Latino community had to go through throughout Duke’s history and how we fought against those issues. I want this to work as a moment of realization in where people see that there are still many issues that have to be addressed. And finally, I would like for people to see that the Latino community at Duke is increasing overtime, and we are not forgotten.”

-Eli Dominguez

“The resilience of Latiné students at Duke that continues to define us today”

-Jacqueline Rodriguez

“In the context of the exhibit, I would hope viewers take away inclusivity, identity exploration, and social awareness.”

-Niyat Asefaw

“I hope viewers leave with a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of Latiné identities and grow in their appreciation for the work that Latiné have done during their time at Duke.”

-Jaque Gomez

“I hope that viewers will take away the struggle that Latiné students went through in the early days at Duke. I want them to build a vibrant community on campus.”

-Ari Miller

“I hope they see the evolution of Latiné students at Duke and either see themselves in it and/or how their respective community is similar.”

-Amelia Wyatt

“Latino students’ strategies for navigating the university have shifted over time and as their numbers have grown... from more assimilationist to social justice oriented approaches.”

-Elizabeth Berenguer
Advice for Latiné students

“Follow your heart, let the pressure go. There are people that want to help you succeed, just seek help. Never forget where you come from and who you left behind. Make yourself proud and happy. Cry when you need to, but don’t leave your goals undone. The finish line is closer than you think, and we need more latinx crossing that line to make it easier for our next generation.”

-Angelli Garibaldi

“I would say that your experience is valid, no matter what variation of the Latine experience you have lived. Be proud! Know that you are part of a long lineage of people at Duke who have carved themselves a home within the world of academia.”

-Amelia Wyatt

“The advice that I would give Latiné students at Duke is to keep being themselves and constantly make an effort to show their presence on campus. I would also tell them to not shy away from building deeper relationships with other affinity groups on campus because allyship is very important.”

-Niyat Asefaw

“1) Always know why you’ve set out to get a college education, and specifically why you’ve come a place that can be rigorous or far away from home like Duke, to keep you centered 2) cultivate support systems at home and at school that you can turn to when times get tough 3) don’t be afraid to ask for help or admit when things aren’t going well!”

-Elizabeth Berenguer

“Embrace your identity!”

-Jaque Gomez

“I would tell all the Latino students at Duke to not be afraid to embrace their roots. Being unique and sharing our culture is the best way we can share our culture with others and educate people on what being a Latino really is.”

-Eli Dominguez
"La casa"

Front cover art by Amelia Wyatt (T'25), modeled after Yadira Paz-Martinez
Back cover: Cornelio Campos

They tried to bury us.
They didn’t know we were seeds.