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# Mexican Enclaves in the U.S. Northeast: Immigrant and Migrant Mushroom Workers in Southern Chester County, Pennsylvania

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## ABSTRACT

Mexican farmworkers are not limiting themselves to farm areas in the U.S. Southwest, nor has this ever been the case. Today, as before, Mexican laborers venture into communities and work in agricultural industries found throughout the country, including the U.S. Northeast. In New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, vegetable, fruit, and horticultural producers are hiring Mexican laborers in unprecedented numbers. In some industries, like the mushroom industry of Pennsylvania, which produces nearly half of the country's crop, Mexicans make up the majority of the work force. The relatively new Mexican enclaves in Southern Chester County, Pennsylvania, a major mushroom region of the country, are examined in this paper. In these communities, they are changing the demographic characteristics of neighborhoods, from aging and Anglo to young and Mexican. At the same time, the Mexican populace is altering the culture by introducing the Spanish language, another way of life, and traditional Mexican practices. Mexican immigration, residential concentration, and housing and living conditions are presented, as is a brief demographic and socioeconomic profile of the immigrant and migrant populations. The arrival of Mexicans in these communities and others is contextualized within other population changes in Southern Chester County, namely the settlement of White professionals immigrating from surrounding metropolitan areas and the exodus of Blacks. The reasons behind the growth of the Mexican enclaves are also covered. It is argued that the mushroom industry and the Special Agricultural Workers Program together are responsible for the ongoing Mexican enclave process.