

# A Timeline of Texas Migration and BIPOC Resistance

While there has been a long history of efforts to erase and exclude immigrants, BIPOC, and other marginalized communities, this timeline shows how powerfully communities in Texas have resisted. From Indigenous nations fighting to preserve their culture to BIPOC communities organizing to end the criminalization of Black and Brown lives, people have sought to protect their freedom to move, stay, work, and thrive.



GRANTMAKERS  
CONCERNED WITH  
IMMIGRANTS  
AND REFUGEES

14,000 BCE

Indigenous Americans, including the ancestors of 50 tribes such as the Karankawas, Akokisas, and Atakapas, lived in the modern-day Houston area with tools, arrows, and pottery shards recovered in 2009.

1700s-1800s

Once part of the Shoshone Tribe, the Numunah (aka Numunuu, Comancheria, or Comanche Empire) sustained dominance of the Texas region for 150 years, blocking European expansion into their land. Their territory stretched from the Canadian Plains to northern Mexico.

1821

Spain offered land grants in Spanish Texas to American immigrants to serve as a buffer between Mexico and Indigenous Americans. After Mexico gained independence in 1821, the land grants were honored on the condition that new Anglo arrivals convert to Catholicism, learn Spanish, and become Mexican citizens.

1827

Although Mexico's Coahuila y Texas's constitution barred the introduction of enslaved people to the Mexican state, Anglo immigrants arrived in Texas with enslaved people. By 1830, the number of Anglo arrivals far outpaced the Tejano population. Mexico barred U.S. immigrants for three years.

1830s-65

Mexico outlawed slavery in 1829, and 3,000-5,000 enslaved people subsequently fled to Mexico from the United States as part of a southern Underground Railroad. Some fled from as far as Alabama.

1835

The Texas Rangers were established. They removed Indigenous Americans from West Texas, engaged in bounty hunting of people who escaped slavery, and engaged in extrajudicial killings of Tejanos.

1836

Anglo Americans who had moved to Texas seceded from Mexico to establish the Republic of Texas, with slavery as one of the causes of secession. While Mexico abolished slavery in 1829, Texas legalized slavery and barred free Black and mixed-race people from entering the new republic.

1845

The United States annexed Texas as the 28th state. Soon thereafter, the U.S.-Mexico War took place between 1846 and 1848.

# 1848

Per the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the U.S. acquired 55% of Mexico (parts of modern-day Arizona, California, Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Nevada, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming, and Mexico gave up all claims to Texas) in exchange for \$15 million at the end of the U.S.-Mexico War.

# 1870

Nearly 250 Chinese men helped complete the Houston and Texas Central Railway line from East Texas to Dallas. Thousands more arrived in the mid-1870s to build the line from southern California to El Paso.

# 1904

The Mounted Guard of Chinese Inspectors operated along the northern and southern borders of the U.S. to enforce the Chinese Exclusion Act. After Canada passed a tax on Chinese migration and strongly discouraged immigration from China, immigration officials focused on the U.S.-Mexico border.

# 1906-14

50,000 people arrived through the Port of Galveston, including 10,000 Russian and Eastern European Jews. To help accommodate this growing population, the Jewish Immigrants' Information Bureau diverted Jewish refugees to Texas from the Atlantic coast in what came to be called the Galveston Movement.

# 1910-20

The Mexican Revolution led to nearly 900,000 Mexicans crossing the border to the U.S. The U.S. patrolled the border through a combination of armed forces, Texas Rangers, and state-sanctioned vigilantes, who killed thousands of Tejanos and Mexicans throughout South Texas in what came to be called La Matanza.

# 1917-20s

U.S. health officials campaigned to use chemicals, including gasoline baths, to “disinfect” Mexicans seeking to enter the United States at the border. 17-year-old Carmelita Torres was a domestic worker who sparked the Bath Riots when 200 Mexican women refused to go through the baths.

# 1924

The federal Labor Appropriation Act established the U.S. Border Patrol. Many of the recruits came from the Mounted Guard, Ku Klux Klan, and the Texas Rangers.

# 1929

The merging of four organizations led to the creation of the first national Mexican American civil rights organization—the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC, originally called the United Latin American Citizens) in Corpus Christi, Texas.

# 1938

21-year-old Emma Tenayuca organized pecan shell workers who were primarily Mexican women. 12,000 shellers went on strike in San Antonio, Texas—a state that produced 50% of the nation’s pecans at the time—for three months in response to dangerous working conditions.

# 1954

The Supreme Court ruled in *Hernandez v. Texas* that people of Mexican descent and other racial groups in the United States were entitled to equal protection under the 14th Amendment, broadening civil rights laws to include Latinx/e and all other non-whites.



1966

400 farmworkers in South Texas engaged in a work stoppage to protest low pay and terrible working conditions. After ranchers called in the Texas Rangers to beat and arrest them and started busing in workers from Mexico, the strikers blocked the U.S.-Mexico bridge in Roma, Texas.

1969

75 students led a walkout from the Abilene Independent School District demanding the freedom to speak Spanish at school without fear of suspension, an end to derogatory remarks from teachers, more teachers of Latinx/e descent, and representation in student government.

1978

The police killing of Vietnam War veteran José Campos Torres galvanized the Mexican community in Houston into action. One year after his brutal murder, the arrival of police at Moody Park during a Cinco de Mayo celebration erupted into violence as the community protested ongoing police violence.

1983

Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) entered into its first contract with the U.S. government to open an immigration detention facility in Texas.

1985

The Department of Justice prosecuted two activists in Texas and 16 activists in Arizona associated with the Sanctuary Movement, when churches provided sanctuary to Central American asylum seekers fleeing violent conflict in El Salvador and Guatemala.

2008-09

Immigrant detainees at the GEO Group-run Reeves County Detention Center in Pecos, Texas protested inedible food, a dearth of legal resources, use of solitary confinement for those seeking medical treatment, overcrowding, and poor healthcare.

2011

850 miles of fencing and vehicle barriers along the U.S.-Mexico border were completed, cutting across California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

2018

Seven-year-old Jakelin Amei Rosmery Caal Maquin died from a bacterial infection while detained by CBP in El Paso, Texas, one of several Indigenous asylum seekers who died in DHS custody in 2018 and 2019 without access to Indigenous-language interpretation or translation.

2021

Texas created Operation Lone Star, which targets Black and Brown men regardless of citizenship using state criminal trespass laws against migrants and works with landowners to prosecute asylum seekers.

2021

At the U.S.-Mexico border at Del Rio, Texas, the U.S. government removed 15,000 Haitians who had traveled to the border following the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse and a 7.2 earthquake that killed over 2,000 Haitians.

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