



## U.S. Latinx Service During World War II

500,000 U.S. Latinx served in World War II  
350,000 were Mexican American  
53,000 were Puerto Rican

Exact numbers are difficult to find as Latinx communities are racially diverse and were often segregated on that basis.

\* Photo: American G.I. Forum Picketers at LULAC Convention, 1967. Laredo, Texas

## Between the Wars: 1920s-1930s

1926 – The Porto Rican Brotherhood of America founded by Puerto Rican communities in New York

1927 – Liga Puertorriqueña e Hispana

1929 – League of United Latin American Citizens founded in Corpus Christi, Texas

These were groups founded to combat social and racial injustices such as lack of access to adequate housing and education, voting disenfranchisement. Their membership often included veterans of World War I who had returned home to continued racism.

1930s – Mexican Repatriation. It is estimated that 2 million people of Mexican ancestry were deported to Mexico in the 1930s. Sixty percent of those deported were U.S. citizens.



Photograph by Russell Lee. Dimmitt Texas, 1930s.



## Zoot Suit Riots

After the death of José Díaz at Sleepy Lagoon in August 1942, the Los Angeles Times begins to cover Mexican American youth culture. As the case gains more visibility so do young Mexican Americans who begin to be singled out for their zoot suit style that flagrantly resists the austere ideology of World War II. From the winter of 1942 into the summer of 1943, servicemen stationed at the Naval Reserve Armory look for and attack anyone wearing zoot suits. The violence culminates in June 1943 and eventually spreads into Watts.

Vincent Valdez. *Kill the Pachuco Bastard!*, 2000, oil on canvas, 48 x 72 in., collection of Cheech Marin



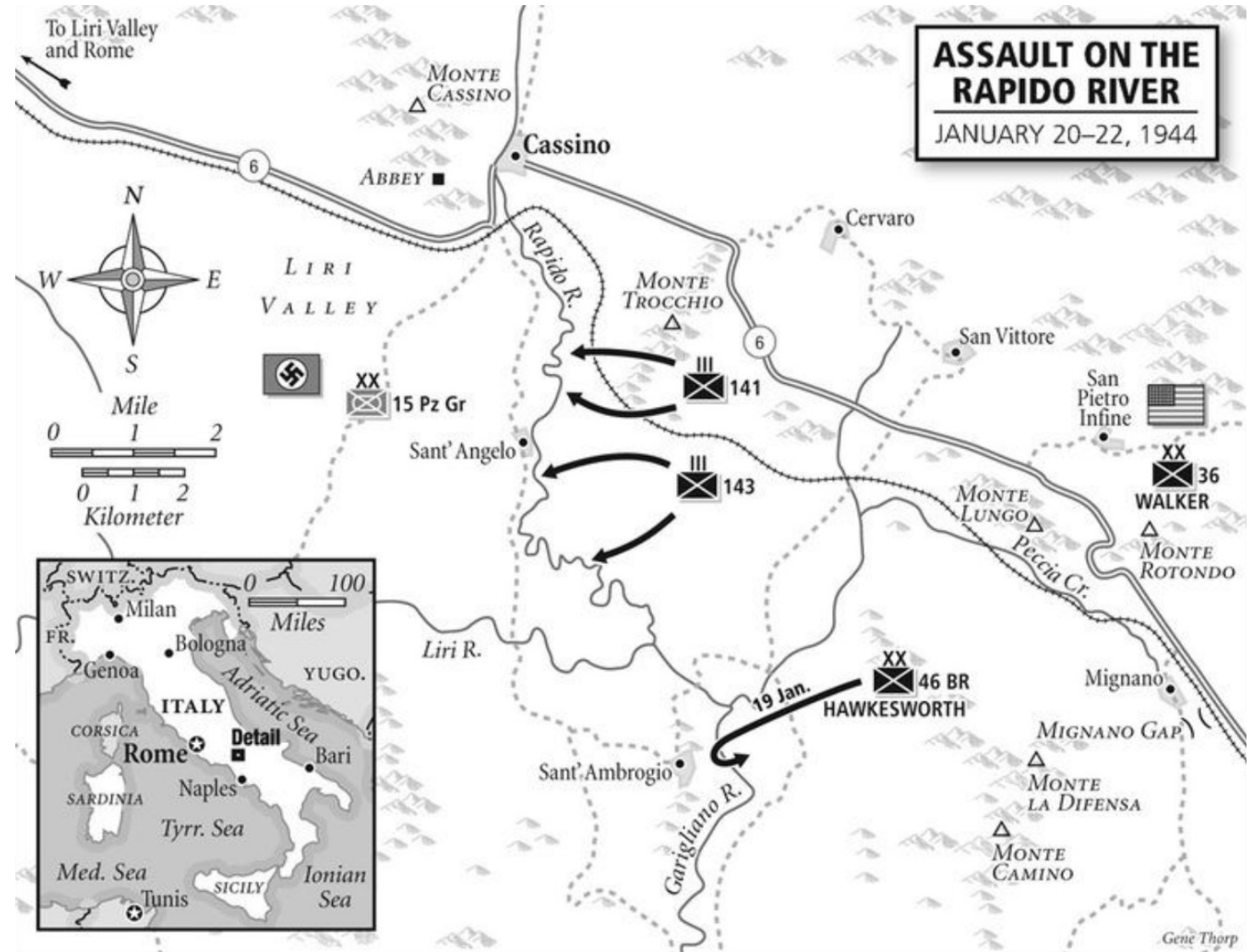
## The Men of Company E

- “I read Tom Brokaw’s *The Greatest Generation* and in it he covers President (Lyndon) Johnson, (John) Kennedy, Sen. (Bob) Dole and the Tuskegee Airmen, the African-American pilots,” Arnulfo Hernández, Jr. said. “And he also covered the Japanese-Americans out of Hawaii and the Code Talkers, but he never spoke of the Mexican-American contribution.”

- Who was Company E?

A Texas National Guard Unit was part of a one-time Army social program to train, educate and ‘Americanize’ young Mexican Americans in El Paso. They were an all Mexican American unit sent to open a corridor in Europe through Italy in 1944. Before the battle, General Fred L. Walker considered it destined to fail. It is considered one of the major U.S. blunders of World War II.

Of the 250 members of Company E, only 27 survived.







Company E Monument at 4321 Delta Drive in El Paso, Texas. 2018.



## **New Mexicans in the Philippines**

Most of the soldiers in the 200<sup>th</sup> and 515<sup>th</sup> Coast Artillery of the National Guard were from New Mexico who had been chosen because of their Spanish surnames to serve in the Philippines. The logic was they would be able to communicate easier with Filipinos. There were 1,816 who began the battle. After the Battle of Bataan and the Bataan death march only 987 members of the 200<sup>th</sup> and 515<sup>th</sup> survived.

Bataan Death March Memorial depicting John Martínez, Joe Martínez and Gilbert Canuela. Las Cruces, New Mexico. 2002.

# Tuskegee Airmen

Although it is widely written that there was no segregation of Puerto Ricans or Dominicans or Cubans during World War II, no literature of the time acknowledges the experience of Afro-Latinx communities. Those Latinxs who were of African ancestry were put into segregated units such as the Tuskegee Airmen.

Some of these men included:

Esteban Hotesse, born in Moca Dominican Republic but raised in New York.

Pablo Díaz Albortt in charge of the Special Service Office

Eugene Calderón, Red Tail unit Company Clerk



Photograph of Esteban Hotesse

## Puerto Ricans and Medical Experiments During World War II

Puerto Rican, Black and Japanese American soldiers were singled out as “ideal chemical soldiers” and were secretly exposed to mustard gas in order to determine their susceptibility to the poison. If they were more resistant, they could be used on the front lines while white soldiers stayed back (Smith 2008).



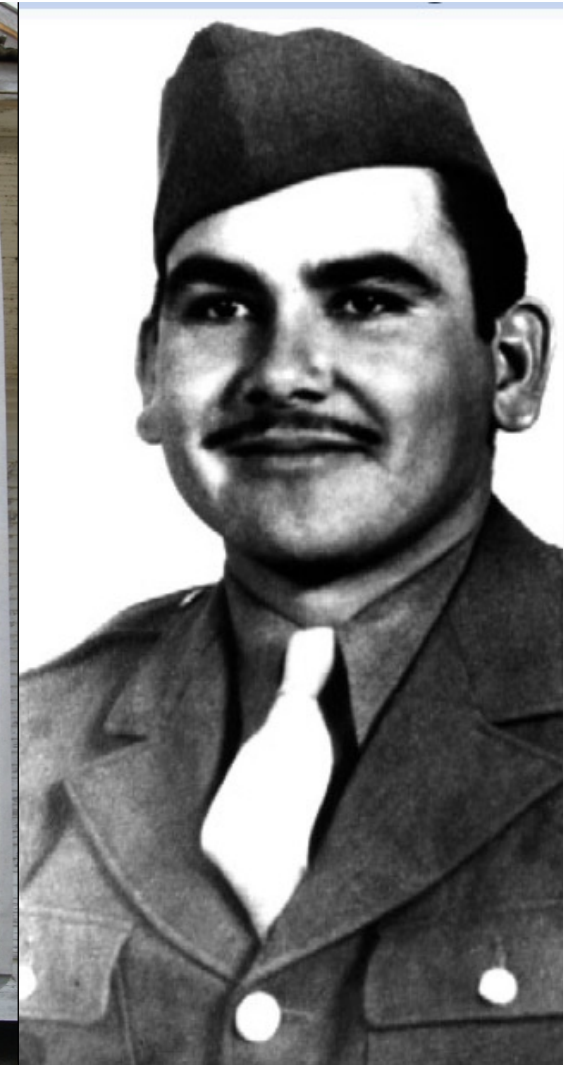
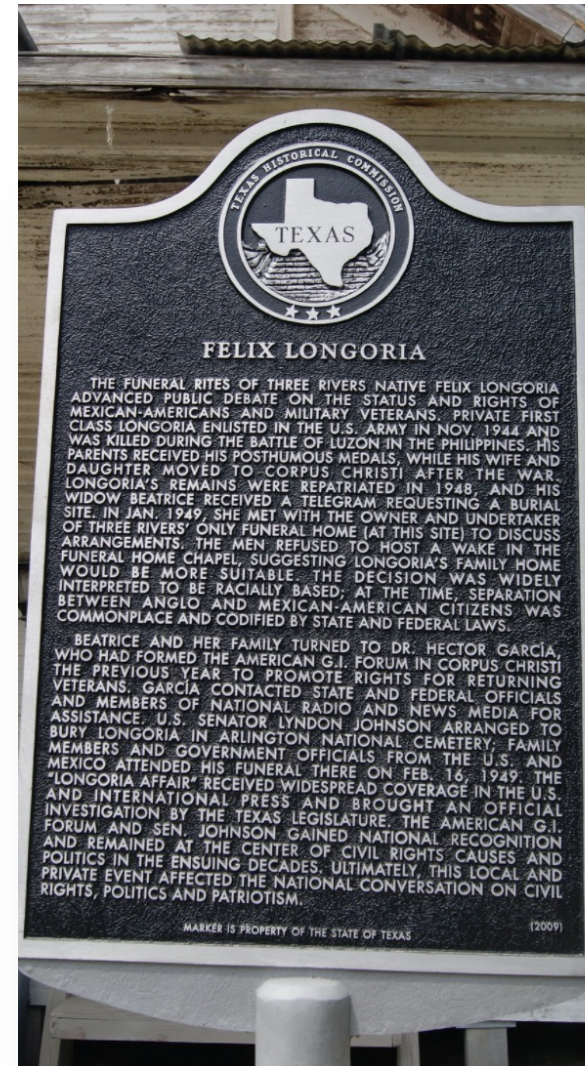
U.S. Troops in Panama. Photo Courtesy of Gregory A. Wilson.



## Felix Z. Longoria

Felix Longoria of Three Rivers, Texas was killed in the Philippines in 1945. His body was not returned to his family until 1948. When Longoria's remains arrived in his hometown, his family wanted to bury him in the local cemetery. There was only one funeral home in the small town. The funeral home denied services to Longoria's family because he was Mexican American.

U.S. Senator Lyndon B. Johnson intervened and Longoria was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



# Dr. Héctor P. García and the American GI Forum

Founded in 1948, the American GI Forum addressed the concerns of Mexican American veterans who were subjected to a variety of social and racial injustices. It's first campaign was to bring attention and advocate the case of Felix Longoria.



American GI Forum chapters by founding period 1948-1974



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