

Because of their seasonal employment in agricultural work, Mexicans were among the first in Los Angeles to experience the consequences of the Depression. ... Agriculture could no longer absorb urban workers who increasingly needed to supplement their low wages from unskilled industrial jobs. This development caused Mexican workers to depend even more heavily on wages earned in urban Los Angeles.

Finding work in the city, however, became more and more difficult. By April 1930, one of every seven Mexican laborers was unemployed, a figure twice as high as that of any other ethnic group in Los Angeles. Moreover, as Anglo Americans found themselves without work — particularly after several months of unemployment — they began to exert pressure on city employers to hire only “citizens” for work that had normally or occasionally been limited to Mexicans. ...

Many Mexican families were forced to turn to public and private charities for help in surviving unemployment and economic deprivation. Yet here, too, discrimination became the norm. During the 1920s, Mexicans constituted about one-fourth of all city residents who received some form of public assistance. ... But during the Great Depression more Anglo American residents also found themselves in difficult circumstances. The result was increasing pressure on public officials to give preference in welfare allocations to American-born heads of households. ...

-George Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900 – 1945* (1993) excerpt