

# What Are You?

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“What are you?” she asked.

“Excuse me?”

I said.

“Are you white, Hispanic, Latino, or what?” she inquired.

As you know, labels for people come and go. Some time ago, the use of the term “Chicano” was common; then “Hispanic;” and now it seems that “Latino” is becoming the “label of choice.” Are all the same?



“Chicano” was initially used to name an American of Mexican descent. Now it is not in use except to indicate the dialect of the border. I have a dictionary that translates Spanish to Chicano and Chicano to Spanish.

Quite useful!

**“Are you white, Hispanic, Latino, or what?”**

“Hispanic” is a current census category for a person who is living in the U.S. as citizen or permanent resident. It indicates someone whose primary language is Spanish or whose ancestors spoke Spanish. It excludes anybody without legal residency or who lives outside of the U.S. There are no “Hispanics” in Argentina. I myself became Hispanic in 1994,

when I received my green card. It is not a race, an ethnic group or a language category. There are roughly 1/3 of Hispanics who speak only English, 1/3 who speak only Spanish, and 1/3 who are bi-lingual. They may be black, white, yellow, red, brown, or any color in between.

“Latino,” on the other hand, covers anybody who lives in Latin America, and speaks one of the languages derived from Latin, such as Spanish or Portuguese. The U.S.A. is the fourth largest Spanish-speaking country in the world, so does that make it part of Latin America too?

By the way, if anybody asks you: “What are you?” just say “A child of God.”