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¿Quién somos? Who are we?

We know we are Hispanic/Chicanos/Latinos/Mexican American or whatever other designation we use to describe ourselves. Our ancestors were also mestizos, mulatos, and genizaros. We have some culture and home language in common. But, what is in our blood, our DNA?

As an elementary teacher for twenty years I taught a unit in Social Studies on family ancestry. I assigned a simple family tree to my students and encouraged them to seek answers from their parents, grand parents, great-uncles and aunts. I also made an optional assignment for students whose parents did not want them to participate. (Some children were illegitimate or were not comfortable with researching an absent parent's family tree) Children were, for the most part, excited to share information with the class that they had gleaned from their families. Many stories they had not heard before were shared by their parents and grandparents. I also shared with them my DNA results and for the parents that were interested, I provided the websites for them to search and order their own testing material. It was well received by the children and parents.

I explained DNA in families and how our ancestors were Spanish (or other European, such as Portuguese, Greek, Flemish, etc.), Native American, Sub-Saharan Africans (Black not Moor). I gave a short history of the Iberian Peninsula and how the country of Spain had many settlers from many different countries in its history, therefore giving us multiple DNA markers, much more than other European countries.

I am more familiar with New Mexico DNA results than with other parts of the country but there is a wealth of information on the internet for you to research regarding this topic.

There are different types of DNA tests that you can take depending of what results you are seeking. I will touch briefly on the three types of DNA tests you can take and list several websites you can access for more information.

The Y-DNA (paternal) test will give you a haplogroup. A haplogroup is a designation of your DNA. The Y-DNA test can only be taken by a MALE. Females DO NOT have the DNA for this line. Y-DNA would be your father, your paternal grandfather, your paternal great grandfather etc. on back. (It would be what ever surname your father has) If you do not have a brother to test for the Y-DNA, then a cousin from the same paternal line can do the test for that line. (Example: Myself as Aguilar, a 1st Aguilar cousin of mine tested, we have the same Aguilar male grandfather) If not first cousin then a 1st cousin 1 time removed or 2nd, 3rd cousin can also test. Must be from the same male family line and

surname as your father. Although, sometimes the surname is not the same if it is from an adopted or illegitimate line.

The MT-DNA (maternal) can be tested by either a male or female. So if your brother tests, then he can also test for your mother. This DNA test would be your mother, her mother, your grandmother's mother etc. This test won't be the same surname as females change their name when they marry so every generation will have a different surname.

There are many European haplogroups and for more information on them do a Google search on DNA haplogroups. There are two Y-DNA (male) haplogroups for Native Americans. They are Q and Q3. All male Native Americans in the new world will have one of these groups. The maternal Native American DNA groups are A, B, C, D, and X. X can also be found in Europe. All Native American maternal DNA's belong to these four groups regardless of tribe. At this time DNA haplogroups cannot identify what tribes you would come from.

If you are a New Mexico Hispano/a, there is a NM DNA project where you can do a Y-DNA (paternal) and Mt-DNA (maternal) test. By joining the NM project you will have access to others in NM that match your DNA markers. This same company also has surname projects and projects from other parts of the US. The company's web address is www.familytreedna.com. Click on dual geographic projects, N, New Mexico. If you need more information feel free to contact the project director, Angel Cervantes, whose email address is listed in the site.

The third type of DNA test that I am familiar with is the Total Print DNA test. This test will not give you a haplogroup designation but will give your results by percentages. My total print DNA is as follows.

European 46%

Native American 39%

East Asian 7% (This is part of the Native American DNA as they came from Asia)

Sub-Saharan African 7%. (Black not Moor)

There are several websites that offer this DNA test. I used www.ancestrybydna.com

Of the 46% European, it can be Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, Flemish or many others who settled in the Iberian Peninsula. The Native American percentages can be from any tribes in the Americas, all the way from Canada, US, Mexico, Central America, South America, Cuba, Puerto Rico etc. The African percentages will be from Africa, whatever countries slaves and free blacks came from.

We are Hispanics, Manitos de Nuevo Mexico or whatever designation you choose to identify yourself, but our DNA's are a blend of European, African, Middle Eastern and Native American peoples. I suspect that all Hispanos have a blend of these DNA's. So when we talk about our language and culture we also need to be aware that we are a blend of the different DNA's.