

## **Growing up Mexican**

Growing up as a Mexican American youth in a predominantly white Mormon community can be a unique and challenging experience, marked by both cultural enrichment and occasional identity struggles. One of the primary challenges is often the feeling of being different or standing out in a community that may not fully understand or embrace cultural diversity. This can lead to feelings of isolation or pressure to conform to the prevailing norms, which may not always align with one's cultural background. Navigating these differences requires resilience and a strong sense of self, as well as support from family and friends who understand the cultural nuances.

The cultural and religious practices of the Mormon community can be quite distinct from those of Mexican American families. For instance, Mormon communities often emphasize close-knit family structures, regular church attendance, and adherence to specific moral and lifestyle guidelines. Mexican American families, while also valuing family and community, may celebrate different traditions, foods, and festivals, such as Día de los Muertos or Quinceañeras. The youth in these communities may find themselves balancing dual identities, participating in Mormon activities while also trying to keep their Mexican heritage alive. This balancing act can be both enriching and demanding, as it requires a deep understanding and appreciation of both cultures.

However, there are also opportunities for growth and mutual understanding. Many Mexican American youths bring unique perspectives and experiences to their communities, enriching the cultural tapestry and fostering greater inclusivity. By sharing their traditions, foods, and languages, they can help to educate their peers and build bridges between different cultural groups. Additionally, being part of a supportive community, even one that is culturally different, can provide a strong foundation of values and ethics. Over time, these youths often develop a rich, multifaceted identity that draws strength from both their Mexican heritage and their experiences within the Mormon community, leading to a more inclusive and understanding society.