**HTS-YML\_Negocios- The Cornerstone of the Latino Community Transcript**

<https://youtu.be/pEVLUkSkBJI?si=GK_koM8-JqB1IyYL>

- For over 100 years, Latino-owned businesses have experienced massive growth throughout the United States. Latino immigrants arrived in the U.S. seeking better opportunities. Some of the first Latino-owned businesses served these communities and fulfilled their needs. Many of these businesses did more than just sell products; they became cornerstones of the community. These cornerstones laid the foundation for the massive growth and success of Latino-owned businesses today, such as Forward Roofing in Beloit.

However, it wasn’t always a story of massive growth. In the 1920s, Latino business owners, for the most part, had not advanced economically in the U.S. During this time, U.S. laws after World War I restricted immigration from Europe, which resulted in an increase in migration from Mexico. The U.S. had to rely on workers from Mexico to fulfill its need for low-cost labor, a demand that could no longer be met by European immigrants. Later, during the Great Depression, work slowed down, and workers were not needed as much. Then, during World War II, the demand for labor increased again as American workers were shipped off to fight. As a result, the U.S. established the Bracero Program, allowing millions of Mexican workers to enter the U.S. legally to fill the worker shortage.

All of this provided a chance for Latinos to establish communities across the country, including in Wisconsin. These communities created opportunities for some of the first Latino-owned businesses, which served the needs of the people. Some offered comforts from back home, such as ingredients and food from their home country, while others provided services like barbershops, pharmacies, cinemas, and hotels. One example of an early entrepreneur is Arturo Morales, who was recruited by Pfister and Vogel to work in their tannery. He saved and borrowed enough to open the first Mexican grocery store in Milwaukee in 1925. This tradition continued into the 1950s with Jose Cardenas' Mexican grocery store in Milwaukee.

By the 1970s and 1980s, Latino commerce grew dramatically, becoming the fastest-growing sector of the U.S. small business community. These grocery stores allowed Mexicans to build wealth within their communities—not just for the business owners, but for their workers as well. Many of these businesses did more than sell products; they became community hubs. People went there to buy things, meet people, catch up with friends, and hear the latest gossip. Grocery stores are just one example of the types of Latino-owned businesses.

In 1972, there were 81,000 Mexican-owned businesses in the U.S. By 2002, that number had grown to 1.6 million, and today, there are 5 million Latino-owned businesses in the United States. Currently, the number one type of Latino-owned business is construction.

Companies like Forward Roofing of Beloit, Wisconsin, are part of this long history of Latino-owned businesses. "We're very diverse. We have African-Americans, Caucasians, Latinos. We are a mix of everything. Our teams are bilingual, which is pretty awesome. Our crews on the roof are also bilingual, and we have an office team that is bilingual," says a representative from Forward Roofing. "For the future of our business, I see it as a great opportunity for Latino youth to learn and be more involved in the industry—not just on the labor side of things."

A hundred years ago, some of the first Latino immigrants were brought to the U.S. as low-cost workers. This led to the first Latino-owned businesses, starting with small shops serving immigrant communities. Today, there are over 5 million Latino-owned businesses in the U.S. The perseverance of these businesses is an inspiration to our generation.