

With openness, and empathy leading and serving the Mexican population in Boston during the global pandemic: [the conversation with Mexican Consul Alberto Garza](#)



#### **About the Consul Alberto Garza ...**

The role of a [Consul General](#) is dynamic. Alberto Fierro Garza and his team serve as a living link and connection between the Mexican government, Mexican [ciudadanos](#), and the Mexican-Americans living in the United States. Garza, a humble and experienced man, has held his office in Boston for almost a year now, as he took his position in the Mexican Consulate in Boston in June of 2019.

Prior to this, Garza was the [Minister for Culture and Education at the Mexican Embassy](#) to the United States, served as Director General for Educational and Cultural Cooperation/Deputy Director General for North America, as Deputy Cultural [Attaché](#) at the Mexican Embassy in Washington and at the Mexican Embassy in Canada and served as Consul of Mexico in Orlando, Florida and St. Paul, Minnesota.

#### **What about [COVID-19](#)?**

When asked about how he believed the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has influenced the Mexican population living in the United States, Garza expressed his concern. Garza reflected on how minorities have been [disproportionately affected](#) by the virus, attributing it to a variety of factors: Mexican-Americans have a higher disposition for underlying conditions such as diabetes and hypertension, which have been associated with higher risk for developing [severe illness](#) with contracting Covid-19.

Additionally, many Mexicans living in Boston (such as cities like [Chelsea](#) and [Lynn](#)) hold low socio-economic status and are deemed more likely to live in more crowded situations which increases the risks of infection. Garza spoke about how we simply do not know enough about the virus at the moment. He was empathic in stating that he knows what it's like to be a vulnerable person during a pandemic when no-one knows the concrete facts about transmission,

treatment or a cure. He spoke openly towards relating to those who are currently considered vulnerable persons, as it reminds him of his experience as a gay man living during the AIDS and HIV epidemics in the 1980's. With openness and empathy, he spoke about the aspirations he holds for a better future of both, Mexico and the USA emerging from this crises.

### **A response to COVID19?..**

Garza told us that while his office remained closed for the safety purposes, he is very busy as normal. During the interview, he even proceeded to sign a legal document, with which, a little girl officially became an official citizen of Mexico!

However, as far as his response to COVID goes, Garza told us that the Consulate has a 24/7 “teléfono de protección” or “emergency hotline,” where people can call seeking advice (medical or other needs). From here, members of the consulate office remain in contact with Mexican citizens and refer them to clinics and specialists based on need. This is especially helpful for undocumented individuals, those without health coverage, and people experiencing hardships (i.e. loss of employment or loved ones, food insecurity, housing instability, etc.) as a result of the pandemic.

As for the Mexican government, Garza couldn't help but smile as he compared president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador ([AMLO](#)) to president Donald Trump. Without discrediting either president, Garza says “while one is of the right wing and the other is of the left, but ultimately [they are] very much alike.” He refers to both presidents' respective tasks with maintaining populations healthy while simultaneously attempting to keep the economies afloat. Garza briefly reflected on the relationship and co-dependence between Mexico & the U.S. commercially and makes us students ponder over the need to uphold strong relationships between these neighboring countries.

### **A post-COVID world ...**

Ultimately, Graza is hopeful for the future, but remains realistic regarding the on-going situation. While he sees “new norms” arising for people to continue life with a hint of normalcy, he also reviews some of the reported statistics regarding COVID-19 with a solemn tone. He is earnestly concerned about the widening margin of poverty in Mexico, which could ultimately lead to more health concerns in the overall population. He reflects on a saying; “If the United States gets a cold, then Mexico gets pneumonia.” However, he knows this is not forever and hopes that the collective efforts will soon yield a vaccine that will better the situation. Until then, he says we should all take precautions and take life with a grain of salt.