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Raul H. Castro

Born in Mexico in 1916, Raul H. Castro made history in 1974 when he was elected the first Mexican-American governor of Arizona. The son of a copper miner and a midwife, Castro put himself through school by plucking chickens, panning gold and waiting tables. Eventually, he would work his way into the highest office in Arizona.

The second youngest of 14 children, Castro's family fled Mexico following the 1916 Revolution and settled outside of Douglas, Arizona. When Castro was 12, his father died, leaving Castro and his siblings to fend for themselves. Still, he graduated with honors from Douglas High School and went on to earn a degree from Arizona State College. He also became a naturalized citizen.

As a Mexican-American, Castro encountered discrimination early in his career. Applying for a teaching position in Douglas, he was denied because the school board voted not to hire more teachers of Mexican descent. Disappointed, Castro left Arizona to pick fruit and ride freight trains.

Eventually, Castro found his way back to Arizona and entered law school at the University of Arizona. He graduated in 1949 and after two years of practice, was elected deputy Pima County attorney. In 1958, he was elected to Pima County Superior Court.

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Castro the U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador. After four-year term, he was given the ambassadorship to Bolivia in 1968. The job was a dangerous one as a house in Bolivia was bombed twice by terrorists. However, this position would expire when Johnson ended in 1969.

Castro continued to dedicate his life to public service. In 1971 he ran for governor of Arizona on the Democratic ticket. With the environment and bilingual education, Castro immediately gained support. However, in one of Arizona's closest elections, Castro's opponent Jack Williams was elected with 50.9 percent of the vote.

In 1974, Castro again entered the race and this time, he defeated Williams to become governor of Arizona. During his term, he helped Arizona



Arizona Reputation
Raul Castro poses for the cover of his 1970 campaign



Arizona Republic File Photo
Castro shakes hands during his
1974 candidacy for the governor of
Arizona.

highway construction funds, established an Office of Tourism the Office of Affirmative Action. However, in 1977, Castro de his term early when President Jimmy Carter offered him an ambassadorship to Argentina.

Even after an illustrious and busy political career, Castro doe sit on the sidelines. He currently practices international law ir Arizona.

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