

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: "THE SWINGING DOOR": U.S. NATIONAL
IDENTITY AND THE MAKING OF THE
MEXICAN GUESTWORKER, 1900 - 1935

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This study examines U.S. national identity in the first third of the twentieth century. During this period, heated discussions ensued throughout the country regarding the extent to which the door of American society should be open to people of Mexican descent. Several major events brought this issue to the foreground: the proposed statehood of Arizona and New Mexico in the early twentieth century, the increase in Mexican immigration after World War I, and the repatriation of Mexican immigrants in the 1930s. The "Swinging Door" explores the competing perspectives regarding the inclusion or exclusion of people of Mexican descent embedded within each of these disputes.

This dissertation argues that four strategies evolved for dealing with newcomers of Mexican descent: assimilation, pluralism, exclusion, and marginalization. Two strategies, assimilation and pluralism, permitted people of Mexican descent to belong to the nation so long as they either conformed to an Anglo American identity or proclaimed

a Spanish American one rooted in a European heritage, whiteness, and a certain class standing. Exclusion denied entry into the U.S., or in the case of those already there, no role in society. Marginalization, which became the predominant strategy by the 1930s, allowed people of Mexican descent to remain physically within the country so long as they stayed only temporarily or agreed to accept a subordinate status as second-class Americans. The prevailing view changed depending on the economic and political power of people of Mexican descent, their desire to incorporate as Americans, and the demand for their labor or land by other Americans.

One of the most significant findings of this project is that as the marginalization strategy gained adherents, the image of Mexican immigrants as temporary workers or “guestworkers” became the primary way in which Americans, Mexicans, and the immigrants themselves regarded the newcomers from Mexico. Despite the fact that this image was often false, the notion of Mexicans as only temporarily in the U.S. proved too seductive for the many divergent voices to resist as this image theoretically allowed Mexicans to enter the country and to provide their labor without threatening extant notions of American identity.

“THE SWINGING DOOR”:
U.S. NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE MAKING OF THE MEXICAN
GUESTWORKER,
1900 - 1935

By

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In memory of my grandmother

Susan Ethel Reynolds Noel Allin Steineke

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Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Acknowledgments..	iii
Table of Contents.....	v
Note on Terminology.....	vi
Introduction.	
Chapter One:	2
Part I. The Statehood Years, 1900 to 1912	
Chapter Two: The Door is Shut: Exclusion Reigns Over Assimilation.....	30
Chapter Three: The Door Swings Open?: Pluralism and Marginalization.....	62
Part II. Transformations in the World War I Era, 1917 to 1922	
Chapter Four: Changing Strategies for a New World.....	97
Chapter Five: The Marginalization Strategy Evolves: Origins of the Temporary Worker Image.....	120
Part III. Immigration Restriction Debates, 1926 to 1930	
Chapter 6: Closing the Swinging Door?.....	146
Chapter 7: “Nómadas:” The Promotion of the Temporary Worker	170
Part IV. Repatriation, 1930 to 1935	
Chapter Eight: “To Keep America American”: The Temporary Worker is Sent Away.....	199
Conclusion.....	236
Bibliography..	241

Note on Terminology

The United States has appropriated the word “American” for its citizens. While many North, South, and Central Americans object to this imperialistic decision—and I understand why—I continue to use American because it is commonly used in the United States and other terms seem too cumbersome or equally problematic, such as North Americans. I use Anglo Americans or simply Anglos to refer to persons considered to be “white” Americans—regardless of their actual ethnicity—during the time period studied. While it is becoming more common to use Euro American, I avoid this term to eliminate confusion since a part of my argument involves people of Mexican descent claiming a Spanish or European identity. I analyze the views of Anglo Americans since they held the vast majority of the political and economic power in the nation during the first third of the twentieth century. I also analyze the views of people of Mexican descent—mostly those of middle-class standing. I use “people of Mexican descent” to signify people who have this ethnicity, regardless of their citizenship status. Sometimes I make further distinctions such as “immigrant” or “Mexican American” when the need to differentiate is particularly relevant. I use the terms “Mexican” or “Mexican national” to refer to someone from Mexico. This could include Mexicans still residing in Mexico or Mexican immigrants in the U.S., depending on the context. I use the term “*nativos*” to refer to people of Mexican descent in the territories during the era of the statehood debates since that was the language typically used for them, regardless of citizenship status. I also use the term “American,” without quotes, when I mean Americans more generally, Mexican as well as Anglo Americans.

Introduction

Chapter One

Introduction

Today, Americans continue to struggle with definitions of what it means to be an American and the consequences of these decisions as they debate levels of border enforcement, the extent to which civil rights and benefits should apply to immigrants, and whether or not there should be any amnesty policy, guestworker program, or border crossing assistance. Americans in the early twentieth century grappled with an earlier generation of these same questions surrounding national identity: who was an American, who could become one, and who could enjoy the full rights of citizenship.

Historians also have considered these questions and long studied how it was that second-class status or the denial of citizenship continued to exist in a nation that professes a commitment to equality. They now recognize that Americans wove racism and inequality into the initial fabric of the nation, and even within its revered founding documents. As a result, topics still being explored include the persistence of these traditions and the extent to which being American meant the barring of others based on race or ethnicity. Historians interested in these problems of national belonging, however, often neglect the significance of class as a central factor in excluding others. They also concentrate primarily on people of European, African, and Asian descent, and overlook how people of Mexican heritage fit within and participated in the debates about their status as Americans.

During the first third of the twentieth century, heated discussions ensued regarding whether the door of American society should be open to people of Mexican descent and how these decisions would affect U.S. national identity. Particularly in that

era of expanding empire and voluminous immigration, questions about who would be included or excluded as Americans, and the extent to which their presence would affect national unity, had great import. While most Americans at the time agreed that a homogeneous population was necessary for unity, they differed in their understanding of just *how* Americans needed to be homogeneous, specifically if they needed to share the same race, class, or culture.

Four major events brought the issue of who could be an American to the foreground: the proposed statehood of the Arizona and New Mexico territories in the early twentieth century, the establishment of a temporary worker policy during World War I, the surge in Mexican immigration in the 1920s, and the push to repatriate many of these same immigrants in the 1930s. This dissertation, “The Swinging Door,” explores the competing strategies (and the inclusionary and exclusionary elements embedded within each) for how Americans dealt with these newcomers of Mexican descent. Understanding the history of how these strategies developed and the arguments behind them helps to explicate not only why and under what circumstances people of Mexican descent would become American, but also what being American meant. The central question, then, is what do we learn about how Americans define themselves when we examine the debates concerning the inclusion or exclusion of people of Mexican descent?

“The Swinging Door” argues that in the course of these disputes about national identity, Americans initially relied upon the existing strategies of exclusion and assimilation when dealing with newcomers of Mexican descent. Later, they forged new strategies grounded in notions of marginalization and pluralism when the former ones proved to be unsatisfactory. A strategy’s predominance at any given time depended upon

the socioeconomic clout of those espousing it, the class background and perceived race of the new arrivals, the newcomers' interest in becoming full members of the United States, and the labor needs of the capitalists.

Exclusionists, who included Anglo American nativists and their political allies, envisioned an America in which only people of northern and western European heritage (who they presumed would have a middle-class status) would continue to be admitted into the nation. Assimilationists, including various types of reformers and their political supporters, had a broader vision for their ideal America, and viewed anyone with a pure European heritage as capable of entering the country and becoming American, providing that they agreed to forego their native language and customs in favor of the dominant Anglo American mores. Regardless of the newcomers' class status, these Americans believed that the new arrivals had the capacity to improve their economic position in society. Much like the assimilationists, pluralists, who primarily lived in the Southwest and claimed an European heritage, imagined an America populated by people with a pure European lineage. They disagreed, however, that these descendants, particularly those from Spain, should have to renounce their native language and culture. Instead, they believed that those who held a Spanish heritage were every bit as American, and perhaps more so, than those with English ancestors. Marginalizationists, including agribusiness leaders, other major employers, and their political cohorts, dreamed of an America in which Anglo Americans would continue to be in charge of the nation, but in which people of various backgrounds, including those not deemed to be European or white, would be allowed to enter the nation to work in the lowest class jobs in society. These newcomers, then, would either enter only temporarily or remain permanently in jobs with

no social or economic mobility. By the mid-1930s, this image of America was the one that prevailed.

A key conclusion of the “The Swinging Door” is that when Anglo and Mexican Americans debated the issues of statehood and immigration in the early twentieth century, they were actually discussing who could and could not be American. Previously, these topics have been considered matters of importance only to those studying the southwestern United States or Chicano/a history and were isolated from the narrative of most American histories. Yet the debates over whether to extend the boundaries of the nation to include the people within the territories of Arizona and New Mexico, and whether or not to admit new immigrants from Mexico on a permanent basis, said as much about how Americans perceived themselves as it did about the newcomers’ possibilities for being American. That is, in the process of deliberating over whether people of Mexican descent could enter the nation via statehood, through special exemptions, or as temporary workers, Americans defined themselves. When they agreed during the statehood debates to admit people of Mexican descent because of their European heritage and middle-class status, Americans implicitly emphasized that those were the characteristics with which they identified as well. When, during the 1920s, they classified Mexican immigrants as outside the bounds of American society due to their mixed race, low class status, and transient habits, they were drawing an unspoken contrast to their own self perception as middle-class European descendants settled in permanent communities.

Another significance of this dissertation is in unraveling how Mexican immigrants came to be defined as temporary workers. During the course of the struggles over the

four nation-defining events, Mexican and Anglo Americans, the U.S. and Mexican governments, and Mexican immigrants all helped to establish and promote an image of Mexicans as temporary workers who (regardless of whether they had any such contractual stipulation or entered with legal sanction or not) would return to Mexico eventually. This image of Mexicans as “birds of passage” was part of a marginalization strategy that balanced the demands of capitalists who desired an ongoing stream of workers and open borders against those who favored more restrictive policies that would preserve the nation’s homogeneity from the threat posed by the new arrivals.

Finally, this dissertation also demonstrates how class status, along with race, was a central criterion in determining who could be American. The class standing and socioeconomic clout of people of Mexican descent mattered greatly in decisions about whether or not they would be accepted into the nation. Exclusionists and marginalizationists weighed the newcomers’ racial and class background and, deciding that they were of mixed heritage and low economic standing, used these as the rationale for excluding or limiting their participation. Pluralists and assimilationists also considered the newcomers’ race and class status, but came to different conclusions. They viewed the newcomers as having an European or white racial background and as either holding or capable of attaining a respectable class position in society. Consequently, they argued that people of Mexican descent should be admitted into the nation with all the rights of citizenship.

General Historiography

The work of John Higham, a leading historian of U.S. national identity and one of the first scholars to consider questions about the making of Americans, has been

influential for this dissertation. Higham argued that in the years following World War I, some Americans, frustrated by the unsuccessful liberal agenda of the war years and the resumption of high immigration levels, sought to re-establish a unified citizenry rooted in racial and cultural homogeneity. These Americans believed that both the Americanization campaigns and existing immigration laws had failed them, since they had permitted the ongoing admission of nonassimilable immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, places then suspected of harboring and breeding dangerous radicals.¹ Consequently, the U.S. Congress approved various restriction bills to slow the tide of immigrants surging into the country, culminating in 1924 with the severely restrictive National Origins Act. Interpreting this act as the highpoint of American nativism, Higham contends that the restrictionists failed to pass additional legislation after this date due to the improving economy and Americans' weariness of any crusade reminiscent of the Progressive Era.² Yet, because Higham omits Mexicans from his analysis, he fails to notice how nativism continued into the 1930s via the campaigns for Mexican repatriation.

More recently, the historian Gary Gerstle and political scientist Rogers Smith examine the racial aspects of U.S. national identity; yet they, too, neglect how people of Mexican descent contributed to ideas about American identity and the notion that Americans were members of a white race. Gerstle argues that in making Americans an ongoing conflict existed between exclusionary racial nationalism and a more open and inclusive civic nationalism, one that would accept people of various ethnicities. He finds

¹John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1965). Aristide Zolberg contests this and argues instead that this quest for homogeneity has been embedded in the nation since its inception, and even earlier among the colonists. See Aristide R. Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).

²Higham, *Strangers in the Land*.

that racial nationalism took hold in the post-World War I period, much as Higham concludes, and then interprets the 1930s as a period of expanding civic nationalism. By leaving out people of Mexican descent from his analysis, he overlooks how Mexican immigrants failed to enjoy civic nationalism. Instead, many were deported or pressured to return to Mexico.³

Rogers Smith adds another twist to how Americans were made, noting an “ascriptive” or inegalitarian tradition that existed alongside America’s liberal and republican ideologies. Adherents to this tradition ascribed a status to people based on their race, religion, and sex (with white, Anglo-Saxon males at the top of this scale) and supported citizenship laws reflecting these hierarchies.⁴ Such an ideology provided a rationale for various forms of second-class citizenry, or the denial of citizenship altogether, in a nation with a professed commitment to individual and equal rights. These ideologies intertwined in a variety of ways, sometimes rendering a more positive and open Americanism, at other times limiting the definition. Just as the republican goals of a shared community could morph into the need for a racially homogeneous society, thereby narrowing the definition of Americanism, the opposite result also could occur such as in the case of the 1897 *Rodriguez* decision. The judge in this federal case reluctantly designated the Mexican immigrant, Rodriguez, as “white” for naturalization purposes, relying on the precedent established under the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (ending the Mexican American War). Pursuant to the terms of this official document, the United States granted full citizenship to all Mexicans in the newly

³Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 162-63, 185, and chaps. 3 and 4 more generally.

⁴Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 2-3.

acquired territory. In applying its terms to Rodriguez, the judge expanded the definition of “American” to include Mexicans. In doing so, he allowed the liberal tradition to prevail over an ascriptive one.⁵ Yet Smith explores this interesting development no further—as his primary objective is to prove the existence of the ascriptive tradition—leaving unanswered questions about how this ruling affected future conceptions of Mexicans’ American qualities.

Historian Lawrence Fuchs also deals with the question of what it meant to be an American and does include Mexicans in his analysis. He believes that Mexicans could find a place within American society through “sojourner pluralism,” which he sees as less restrictive than those who faced “caste pluralism,” or a second-class American status. Fuchs argues that while Mexicans initially experienced a more limited incorporation in the Southwest, they did not have the same difficulties when they moved outside it. Yet his interpretation neglects to consider how the words “sojourner,” “transient,” and “temporary” reflected a lack of permanent belonging in the nation, and how the use of these words would shape the Mexican immigrant experience in the U.S. This leads Fuchs to neglect the repatriation campaigns of the 1930s, many of which occurred outside the Southwest.⁶

None of these historians of national identity spend much time considering the class status of the new arrivals as a key criterion, along with race, for being American. Often the two are so entwined that it is difficult to discern them separately, yet this dissertation argues that the newcomers’ inclusion or exclusion had much to do with their class standing as well as the perception of their race—or that one would determine the

⁵Smith, *Civic Ideals*, 370-72.

⁶Lawrence H. Fuchs, *The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity and the Civic Culture* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1990), 111, 121.

other. The participants in the struggles over statehood and immigration often spoke in terms of excluding newcomers due to their racial origins. Yet, underlying this language of race were intimations of concern about the newcomers' class status as well.⁷

Recently historians have begun to grapple with the place of Mexicans in the American nation, particularly in how they have defined themselves—as Mexicans, Mexican Americans, or Spanish Americans—and the constraints hindering or aiding these processes. But mostly these studies have concentrated on specific locales, primarily in New Mexico and California, and do not consider how people of Mexican descent contributed to and changed overall definitions of what being American meant at the national level. An example of this is George Sánchez's well-regarded study, *Becoming Mexican American*, which focuses on how people of Mexican descent understood themselves in Los Angeles during the first decades of the twentieth century. More recently, Gabriella Arredondo applies Sanchez's model to Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s and looks there at how people of Mexican descent defined themselves in relation to black and white Americans. Historian John Nieto-Phillips skillfully describes the creation of a Spanish American identity in New Mexico in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These works also do not address how the debates over the four

⁷When I refer here to the significance of class status, I am arguing that it is a key component in determining who could or could not become American as Americans would consider this economic standing when making decisions about whether or not to accept new arrivals into the nation. My intention is not to present the views of working-class people of Mexican descent—as Russell A. Kazal does for Germans in *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 2004)—as there are few extant sources for this. I do include their views when I have them, and indirectly as filtered through the interviews of middle-class reformers and their own actions such as returning to Mexico and retaining Mexican citizenship. In this way they affected the strategies forged by their middle-class counterparts and Anglo Americans.

nation-defining events discussed in this study have affected and changed understandings of what it meant to be an American.⁸

Theoretical Influences

Other historians, while not specifically addressing either questions of U.S. national identity or the meaning of the debates over statehood, temporary workers, immigration restriction, or repatriation, have been influential in shaping how the state, class, and race are used in this dissertation. Ian Haney López and Linda Gordon explain how the state racialized people of Mexican descent and how such racialization affected their citizenship and American status. Haney López finds that the U.S. courts used a variety of methods to explain what being white meant in cases where plaintiffs claimed this racial status for naturalization purposes. Increasingly the courts relied on “common knowledge” as the decisive factor in determining race since science failed to confirm what they believed they could see with their own eyes.⁹ The establishment of a new census category in 1930, which set Mexicans apart from whites, further indicated the fragile and shifting racial categorization and American standing of people of Mexican descent.

⁸See Gabriela F. Arredondo, “‘What! The Mexicans, Americans?’ Race and Ethnicity, Mexicans in Chicago, 1916-1939”(PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1999); John M. Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2004); George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). For more on why people of Mexican descent relied on a Spanish American identity, see Charles Montgomery, “Becoming ‘Spanish-American’: Race and Rhetoric in New Mexico Politics, 1880-1928,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* (Summer 2001): 59-84. For a later period, see also Vicki L. Ruíz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food-Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

⁹In this spirit, the courts ruled in the early twentieth centuries that Chinese and Indian immigrants were not “white” and as such not qualified for naturalization and citizenship. Although the judge in the 1897 *Rodriguez* case ruled that Mr. Rodriguez was white for naturalization purposes, this decision was not applied to other situations, leaving Mexicans’ racial status in doubt. In fact, Haney López refers to a 1933 court case that addressed this same issue, suggesting that the question of Mexicans’ racial background and American standing remained unanswered 36 years after the court’s decision. See Ian Haney López, *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 61 and chap. 2.

Linda Gordon also emphasizes the importance of the state in defining racial categories and effectively demonstrates how class affected racial status. Gordon finds that Mexicans in mid-to-late nineteenth century Arizona occupied an intermediate position in the racial hierarchy. Anglo Americans (whom Gordon refers to as Euro-Americans) sometimes perceived people of Mexican descent as members of the white race, and socialized and intermarried with them. Mexicans who married Euro-Americans improved their economic status and often gained an opportunity to move up the racial scale to become white. This system worked so long as the Chinese immigrant population continued to accept the lowliest jobs. But once the federal government implemented the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, the Chinese population declined, thereby diminishing the “whiteness” and social standing of Mexicans as there was no longer any group beneath them. As more Mexicans arrived to take the jobs of the Chinese, and a greater number of Euro-Americans migrated to the area, interaction between Euro-Americans and Mexicans declined. By the first years of the twentieth century, people of Mexican descent had replaced people of Chinese descent on the bottom rung of society, and become foreign.¹⁰

Historians A. Yvette Huginnie, Tomás Almaguer, and Alberto Camarillo all provide useful ways for thinking about how class factored into the formation of racial categories. Huginnie argues that while race was one of the primary ways in which late nineteenth century Arizona society organized itself, class status helped to establish those racial categories. She demonstrates this by showing how Euro-Americans wrote about the squalid living conditions and low wages of people of Mexican descent and then used these facts to justify why these people were not fit to raise white children. In Euro-

¹⁰Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

American eyes, a person of Mexican descent was someone who was lower class and had a low standard of living. These same Euro-Americans believed that white people should not have to endure such a lifestyle. This definition of Mexican helped to define white Americans as the antithesis of Mexican; if Mexicans were lower-class, so the thinking went, whites were middle- or upper-class.¹¹

Almaguer and Camarillo examine race relations during the same period in California and shed further light on how class contributed to racialization. Although Almaguer argues that white supremacy and race were the primary explanations for how the society arranged itself, he discovers situations in which class status determined a person's place in the racial hierarchy. When the Anglo Americans expanded into the West, believing strongly in their own superiority and desirous of forging a white state and nation, they quickly wrested political and economic control from some groups in the West but could not do so from *californios*—people of Mexican descent who were native to California and of a higher class status than others indigenous to the area. The *californios* not only held land titles but also retained control of local politics as a result of treaties that rendered them citizens with the right of suffrage. The Anglo Americans did not fully accept the *californios*, and spoke of them as being indolent and extravagant, yet they could not discount their power. They ended up acknowledging their partial European heritage and intermarrying with them. This tenuous acceptance of the *californios*, however, did not extend to the lower-class people of Mexican descent; the Anglo Americans contested the latter's claim to being white and instead identified them

¹¹A. Yvette Huginnie, “ ‘Mexican Labour’ in a ‘White Man’s Town’: Racism, Imperialism, and Industrialization in the Making of Arizona, 1840-1905,” in *Racializing Class, Classifying Race: Labour and Difference in Britain, the USA and Africa*, ed. Peter Alexander and Rick Halpern (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2000).

as Indians without any rights of citizenship. According to Almaguer, Anglo Americans began to perceive the lower-class newcomers who arrived in large numbers as “darker” than their predecessors, and therefore unable to make any legitimate claims to a European heritage, whiteness, and citizenship.¹²

Historian Albert Camarillo shows how the *californios* with high status claimed to be white to improve their chances for becoming American. Camarillo convincingly demonstrates that once these elites had lost their political and economic power to the upstart Anglo Americans, they began emphasizing their similarities to them. In desperate attempts to cling to the remnants of their diminishing clout and status, these *californios* distanced themselves from Mexican laborers and touted their Spanish heritage to prove to themselves and to Anglo Americans their legitimate status as Europeans, as white people, as Americans, and hence their right to all the benefits associated with such a standing.¹³

Drawing on the works of Almaguer and Camarillo, Neil Foley uses whiteness theory to demonstrate how people of Mexican descent fit into the “ethnoracial borderlands between whiteness and blackness” in East Texas.¹⁴ There, landowners replaced white tenants with sharecroppers of Mexican descent in the 1910s and 1920s. Rather than arguing against this practice in narrow economic terms, displaced white tenants appealed to a wider audience, claiming that such decisions jeopardized the future of the “white civilization” in the nation. Middle-class people of Mexican descent also viewed the situation in racial terms. They feared that an influx of Mexican immigrants

¹²Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 72 and chap. 2 generally.

¹³Although Camarillo wrote before historians developed overt theories about racialization and whiteness, he recognized the significance of the *californios*’ emphasis of their Spanish heritage. See Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1979).

¹⁴Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 211.

would overwhelm them, causing Anglos to see all Mexicans as workers at the bottom of the economic ladder and, as such, closer to “blackness” than “whiteness.” Aware of the perils of blackness, as well as the benefits that whiteness conferred, middle-class people of Mexican descent encouraged one another to identify with the white race, to learn English, and to avoid associating with blacks.¹⁵

All of these works improve historians’ understanding of where and how people of Mexican descent fit within the nation. Gordon and Haney-López reveal the state’s power in defining the status of people of Mexican descent; Huginnie and Almaguer show how class standing affected their chances for being American; and Camarillo and Foley demonstrate how Mexicans made use of existing racial categories to improve or maintain their class rank. This dissertation will make use of the ideas these authors raise—about the role of the state in making racial categories, about how class contributed to such categorization, and about how and why people claimed ‘whiteness’ and with what success—and apply them to the national debates concerning statehood, temporary worker policies, immigration restriction, and repatriation in the early twentieth century.

Statehood Historiography

While some historians have researched each of the nation-defining events examined within this dissertation, none of the topics has been studied very extensively nor has there been any monograph looking at all these events together, assessing how the debates surrounding them affected U.S. national identity. Policies on the admission or expulsion of people through immigration, restriction, or repatriation all clearly concern decisions about who can be American. Likewise, the granting of statehood also involves enlarging the national community in terms of population (and ethnicities) as well as land.

¹⁵Foley, *The White Scourge*, chap. 2 and conclusion.

This dissertation demonstrates how questions of who can be American are as central to the matter of statehood as they are to disputes over immigration. In fact, some of the definitions or strategies for who could be American grew out of the statehood debates and later affected the struggles over immigration.

Although a rich literature on Arizona and New Mexican statehood exists, little of it addresses the residents' suitability for statehood.¹⁶ One study which does consider this is Richard Melzer's investigation of editorial cartoons about New Mexico in the national press. Melzer finds that during the late territorial era, the newspapers depicted the residents there as "unruly Mexicans."¹⁷ Following statehood, Melzer discovers that the sketches changed, reflecting a new understanding of the state and its residents as "a young, attractive, and coveted Anglo woman."¹⁸ Melzer's work provides interesting insight into Americans' views of themselves and of people of Mexican descent, but leaves unanswered questions regarding how people of Mexican descent reacted to or contested such depictions.

Temporary Worker Historiography

The establishment of a temporary worker policy during World War I—or actually exemptions from existing immigration laws—helped to define the nation in terms of who

¹⁶According to Robert Larson, New Mexico's first 50 plus years of territorial status were mired in territorial divisions over the merits of statehood. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, residents largely agreed on becoming a state. While Larson concludes that nativism, particularly with regard to the Mexican population, was the primary reason for the failure of statehood, he spends more time narrating the events leading to statehood rather than analyzing how nativism hindered the movement. See Robert W. Larson, *New Mexico's Quest for Statehood, 1846-1912* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968). In the case of Arizona, Mark Pry argues that many factors contributed to the delay in statehood, including Americans' reservations about the "alien" character of the territorial residents. Even so, Pry writes mostly of the political debates in the U.S. Congress and the territories without looking at Spanish-language sources or considering the role of people of Mexican descent in the debates. See Mark E. Pry, "Arizona and the Politics of Statehood, 1889-1912" (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 1995).

¹⁷Richard Melzer, "New Mexico in Caricature: Images of the Territory on the Eve of Statehood," *New Mexico Historical Review* 62, no. 4 (1987): 335-60. See p. 340 for quotation. Although not studying Arizona, Melzer also finds that cartoonists typically illustrated Arizonans as Indians.

¹⁸Melzer, "New Mexico in Caricature," 358.

could be allowed in permanently as potential members, and who could not. Of course, temporary workers or contract laborers existed long before the First World War. Chinese immigrants came in the mid-nineteenth century on various kinds of agreements, which often stipulated their return. Frequently, they did go back to China, especially since few Chinese women could emigrate after the 1870s due to Americans' fears that they would bear children who would be American via *jus soli* or birthright citizenship. By 1882, however, Chinese immigrants were dramatically restricted from entering the U.S. via any type of contract.¹⁹ Italian and Greek immigrants, although not admitted for only a fixed period, often emigrated as indentured workers to *padrones* or labor contractors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Frequently, they returned home voluntarily at the end of their term, rendering their emigration temporary. But when the U.S. imposed strict restrictions in 1921 upon these and other European immigrants, it effectively ended any tradition of their temporary immigration to the U.S. In fact, until recently, most historians did not know that a large percentage of these Europeans returned home after venturing to America.²⁰

Some Mexican immigrants entered into various short-term contracts with employers as early as the first decade of the twentieth century. But this was not very common and was primarily coordinated by the Mexican and U.S. governments for the purpose of railroad work. During World War I, however, agriculturalists demanded relief from recently established restriction laws (a literacy test plus a tax on entry) against all

¹⁹Zolberg, *A Nation by Design*, 188-92.

²⁰See Donna R. Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere?: Nomads, Nations and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999): 1115-34; Cindy Hahamovitch, "Creating Perfect Immigrants: Guestworkers of the World in Historical Perspective," *Labor History* 44, no. 1 (2003): 69-94; Cindy Hahamovitch, *The Fruits of their Labor: Atlantic Coast Farmworkers and the Making of Migrant Poverty, 1870-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Gunther Peck, *Reinventing Free Labor: Padrones and Immigrants Workers in the North American West, 1880-1930* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

immigrants and requested exemptions from them, especially for Mexican and Canadian workers who easily could be returned. The initial restrictions and exemptions were all decisions defining who could enter the country and potentially become American. Yet few historians even mention this first temporary worker or *bracero* program. Those who do, such as Manuel García y Griego and Mark Reisler, do so primarily from the standpoint of describing the policy and how it affected immigrants, rather than in discussing how it impinged upon meanings of being American.²¹ Only in the last few years have historians really begun to explore the second *bracero* program during and after the Second World War.²² None of these historians address how this earlier program helped to fuel an image of Mexicans as only temporarily in the nation, never to become American citizens.

Immigration Restriction Historiography

Immigration restriction laws also defined the nation. That is, in deciding who could enter the country and become a naturalized citizen and who could not, Americans shaped their nation and themselves. Until recently, few historians have examined the immigration restriction debates pertaining to Mexicans.²³ Robert Divine explains the demise of Mexican restriction in his 1957 study of U.S. immigration policy and argues

²¹See Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976) and Manuel García y Griego, "The Importation of Mexican Contract Laborers to the United States, 1942-1964: Antecedents, Operation, and Legacy" in Peter G. Brown and Henry Shue, ed. *The Border That Joins: Mexican Migrants and U.S. Responsibility* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1983).

²²See Kitty Calavita, *Inside the State: The Bracero Program, Immigration, and the I.N.S.* (New York: Routledge, 1992) and Barbara A. Driscoll, *The Tracks North: The Railroad Bracero Program of World War II* (Austin: University of Texas, 1999) for examples of the second *bracero* program.

²³Robert Lipshultz did provide a detailed analysis of the debates in the 1960s and argued that Mexican restriction failed because Americans chose to concentrate first on expelling or decreasing European and Asian immigrants. After achieving success with the National Origins Act in 1924, the restrictionists influence waned in the face of employers' organized opposition. See Robert J. Lipshultz, "American Attitudes Toward Mexican Immigration, 1924-1952" (master's thesis, University of Chicago, 1962).

that restriction was unsuccessful due to Americans' concerns about angering Mexico and other countries of the western hemisphere.²⁴

Within the last twenty-five years, other historians have expanded on Divine's work. Foremost among these scholars is David Gutiérrez. Gutiérrez concentrates on dissension among people of Mexican descent and explains that the story of restriction was never a simple one of Anglos versus Mexicans. He finds that some Mexican Americans (whether naturalized or native-born) actively promoted their status as Americans and supported the restriction (and later repatriation) of new immigrants. Having attained or been born into citizenship, they feared that the influx of new immigrants would threaten their own claims to an American status. Other Mexican Americans, however, embraced their Mexican heritage and defended the civil rights of the new immigrants.²⁵

In just the past few years, historians of immigration restriction have gone in new and interesting directions, exploring the racialization of Mexicans and their construction as aliens. Mae Ngai explains how these processes developed in the 1920s and affected Mexican Americans and immigrants alike. As European immigration subsided and Mexican immigrants became more visible and associated with migrant and unskilled labor, Mexicans came to be seen as alien in ways that they had not been before. Various

²⁴Robert Divine, *American Immigration Policy, 1924-1952* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957). See also Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980) for an account of both Mexico's and the United States' perspective on immigration restriction. Cardoso concurs with Divine but expands on his work, showing that the U.S. wanted to keep Mexico stable and thought that by keeping the 'safety valve' of immigration open, it would reduce the likelihood of more revolutions in Mexico. He also adds that missionaries argued against immigration restriction since they thought that Americanization would improve the immigrants. Even if they returned home (as they suspected they would) the immigrants would take a favorable impression of the U.S. back to Mexico, helping to build and maintain good relations between the U.S. and Mexico.

²⁵David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity in the American Southwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

policies and laws contributed to this development: increased enforcement of existing laws that rarely had been applied to Mexicans before (e.g., the exclusion of those “likely to become a public charge” and collection of a head tax); demeaning inspection procedures; the creation of the Border Patrol; and deportation of illegal immigrants. These policies contributed to the construction of Mexicans as not white, foreign, and thus unassimilable, making them seem different from the dominant Anglo population and stripping them of membership in the nation. (Housing and labor segregation further compounded this problem and emphasized Mexicans’ difference.) The newly enforced policies reduced Mexican immigration by 76% from 1925 to 1930, offsetting the failure of the restriction bills.²⁶

These works on immigration restriction all point to a clear pattern of increased racialization and alien-ness of Mexicans in the 1920s, and a hardening of border controls and related restrictions. They also provide us with a variety of reasons for why official

²⁶Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). Ngai’s assertion that Americans did not view Mexicans as alien before the 1920s may be true on a grand scale, but there was certainly some concern about the Mexicans’ “American” characteristics prior to this period as evidenced by the statehood debates. See also another recent work by Alexandra Stern who looks at restrictionism in a new way, taking issue with Higham’s contention that crusades against immigrants declined in the 1920s. Stern argues that the eugenics movement extended its influence in the 1920s and 1930s, especially with regard to Mexicans in the West. Eugenecists believed that the environment had no impact or effect on an individual and thus did not believe in assimilationist theories. They saw Mexicans as dirty, degraded and less intelligent than Anglos, with no ability to become American. Other Americans shared the eugenecists’ ideas, interpreting the Mexicans’ lack of cleanliness as inherent and as a reason to de-louse and inspect them more thoroughly than most other immigrants. Concurring with Ngai’s work, Stern uses this evidence as proof of the racialization process that affected Mexicans after World War I. See Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). See also the work of two recent scholars who have examined new aspects of the Mexican immigration restriction debates. Clare Sheridan argues that these involve competing ideas of citizenship and that concerns about the immigrants’ peon or class status increased fears that they would damage the American standard of living and undermine democracy. Kathleen Mapes, who limits her study to the Midwest, argues that neither the capitalists nor restrictionists were very interested in assimilating the newcomers. Instead the debate was over the immigrants’ labor. See Clare Sheridan, “Contested Citizenship: National Identity and the Mexican Immigration Debates of the 1920s,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 21, no. 3 (Spring 2002): 3-35 and Kathleen Mapes, “ ‘A Special Class of Labor’: Mexican (Im)migrants, Immigration Debate, and Industrial Agriculture in the Rural Midwest,” *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 1, no. 2 (2004): 65-88.

Mexican restriction failed to take hold—fear of Mexico’s retribution, other effective forms of restriction, the waning of movements, and the strength of the employers’ lobby—yet they do not include many of the voices of people of Mexican descent or an analysis of the role of the Mexican government. Nor do most discuss the significance of the growing discussions of Mexicans as outside of (i.e., never to be considered for citizenship in) the American polity. This promotion of Mexicans as only temporarily in the U.S. would shape the meaning of an American. Americans, then, would not identify themselves as people who would do the lowliest of jobs for poor wages. Increasingly, they believed that only Mexicans should do such work.

Repatriation Historiography

The repatriation of over 500,000 Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans in the 1930s was another nation-defining project in which Anglos (and some Mexican Americans) demonstrated their understanding of their national community as one which did not include Mexican immigrants. It differs from the other such events in that the federal government did not play the predominant role. Instead, local governments initiated and organized most of the repatriation activity, although they had some support from the U.S. and Mexican governments as well. Such campaigns occurred nationwide with drives taking place all over the Southwest as well as in the Midwest, Seattle, New Orleans, and New York.

Although the repatriation campaigns of the 1930s were the largest ever in the U.S., it was not the first time such pressure had been directed against Mexicans; similar activity had occurred in the early 1920s on a smaller scale. Remembering this practice, Americans implemented this policy on a large scale in the 1930s when the economy

declined even further. According to the movement's first historian, Abraham Hoffman, repatriation, which included the massive round-up and deportation of Mexicans as well as tactics designed to encourage them to leave, occurred as a result of the Great Depression and restrictionist activity. Anti-Mexican attitudes and calls for strict limits on their immigration had intensified throughout the 1920s, making Mexicans prime targets once the economy soured.²⁷

The large-scale expulsion of the Mexicans did not last much beyond 1934, however, because the proclaimed cost savings to other Americans never materialized and because various business owners and bankers recognized that a significant portion of their customer base had disappeared. Pressure against repatriation also came from voices inside Mexico, various community organizations, and the Spanish-language press, all of which decried the action as racist since only Mexicans faced expulsion.²⁸ Despite the significant number of Mexicans affected, few monographs have been written on this subject—none have addressed how this movement affected U.S national identity.

Argument and Section Descriptions

At the end of the nineteenth century, most Anglo Americans dealt with people that they considered to be foreign in accordance with one of two strategies—exclusion or assimilation. Part I of this dissertation examines these two strategies as well as the rise of two new ones—pluralism and marginalization—to address the newcomers of Mexican descent who were attempting to become full members of the nation through statehood.

²⁷Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974).

²⁸Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). For another recent work on repatriation, see Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers, American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

Exclusionists posited a very narrow view of American identity, asserting that only people from northwestern Europe with an Anglo-Saxon heritage would be welcome in the nation. They advocated that all others should be excluded or drastically restricted from entry to ensure American unity. These exclusionists viewed the immigrants' class status as entwined with their background. If immigrants did *not* have a northern European heritage, they were automatically seen as less than American due to their race and class.

Assimilationists envisioned a slightly more inclusive version of American-ness, although one still rooted in an European heritage. They believed that people with an European ancestry, regardless of where their families descended from in Europe, could enter the U.S. without harming national identity, providing that they assimilated completely by rejecting their first language and culture in favor of the English language and Anglo American customs. Assimilationists had concerns about the class standing of some of the newcomers, but generally did not think that a low status precluded their inclusion. They believed that immigrants could learn, work, and improve their economic standing in society as long as they had the requisite European heritage.

Exclusionists and assimilationists dominated national debates over whether to incorporate or exclude foreigners from southern and eastern Europe and from various parts of Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. People of Mexican descent, however, posed a new challenge. So when organized appeals for New Mexican and Arizona statehood intensified at the turn of the century, muddying the existing debate over the inclusion or exclusion of newcomers, exclusionists and assimilationists had to reevaluate their existing strategies to see which, if either, applied to people of Mexican descent within these territories.

This dissertation explains that while many Anglo Americans outside of Arizona and New Mexico continued to adhere to the strategies of assimilation or exclusion, the territorial inhabitants increasingly found these stark poles unacceptable. Consequently, during the first decade of the twentieth century, some of the territorial inhabitants and their allies grouped around two new strategies—pluralism and marginalization. Pluralists promoted a broader version of incorporation than the assimilationists. Like the assimilationists, they believed that anyone of European descent could become American. They differed from their counterparts, however, in insisting that these descendants could retain their original language and cultural practices without jeopardizing national homogeneity and unity. Unity, they argued, was rooted in a middle-class status, European background, and a common history, not in a specific language or culture. In this way, a substantial number of people of Mexican descent could be incorporated into the nation via statehood since they shared an European heritage, history, and middle-class aspirations with Anglo Americans. There was no need for them to change at all.

Marginalizationists advocated a strategy with both inclusionary and exclusionary elements. The inclusive component allowed people of Mexican descent, regardless of their class status, racial background, or the language they spoke to be admitted into the nation via statehood (and later by immigration) since the country would benefit from their labor. The exclusionary aspect involved the idea that these newcomers would not threaten national unity because they would remain in lower-class positions or be in the U.S. for only a limited period as temporary workers.

Pluralists evolved and flourished in New Mexico, which had a sizeable community of middle-class people of Mexican descent. There, people of both Anglo and

Mexican descent spoke in terms of a broader kind of assimilation—pluralism—predating Horace Kallen who promoted a variant of this strategy for incorporation and national unity in 1915.²⁹ These pluralists rooted their ideas in a Spanish or European background, allowing those willing and able to claim such a heritage to enter the nation as full American citizens with the same social and political rights as Anglo Americans while retaining many aspects of their ancestral culture. Like other Anglo Americans, pluralists believed that people with this kind of heritage embraced modernity, pledged their allegiance to American institutions, and shared a middle-class rank or aspiration, education, and history with other European Americans. While not all of the people who met this criteria knew English, the pluralists argued that it did not matter, for they were American despite the language that they spoke and could unite with others on the basis of their shared history of European colonization.

Marginalizationists arose in Arizona and proliferated rapidly. Like the pluralists, they promoted admitting people of Mexican descent into the nation via statehood and immigration. Unlike them, they did not believe that the newcomers could become American nor assimilate easily due to their “primitive” living standards, mixed or indigenous racial heritage, lack of education, and alien language and cultural practices. Adherents of this strategy conflated class and race, and regarded people of Mexican descent as non-white and as permanent members of the working-class; in short, as non-American. But they also thought that people of Mexican descent could be useful in the nation’s expanding economy as quiescent laborers. Ideally, these workers would remain safely under their employers’ control and not threaten the status quo by organizing strikes or attempting to transform the Anglo-dominated national culture. Instead, they would be

²⁹Horace Kallen, “Democracy vs. the Melting Pot,” *Nation* 100 (1915).

expected to accept their low-wage jobs, segregated schools, and English as the dominant language. People of Mexican descent would be recognized as good, second-tier Americans or as temporary workers who would return to Mexico. In other words, the marginalizationists allowed for the physical entry of people of Mexican descent, but excluded them from full rights and belonging in the nation. In this way the marginalizationists exemplified America's long history of inclusionary and exclusionary impulses.

By 1912, the year in which both territories attained statehood, these two competing strategies—pluralism and marginalization—had become the primary ways for understanding how people of Mexican descent could fit within the nation without harming national unity. But the strategies created during the statehood years were designed to maintain national homogeneity in the presence of people of Mexican descent who were long-term residents within U.S. territories. The dramatic rise in Mexican immigration during and after the First World War forced a re-evaluation of these strategies.

Part II of this dissertation focuses on how the strategies created during the struggle over statehood were applied and altered in this new environment. Demography was central to the changes. Because the recent immigrants came from the lowest classes in Mexico and moved into areas where Anglo Americans already dominated the political and economic landscape, it was easy for the latter to marginalize the new arrivals. Consequently, more Americans began to back the marginalization strategy as an effective way of dealing with the influx of Mexican immigrants. In the view of most Anglo and Mexican Americans, these lower-class and racially suspect newcomers (due to their class

status, it was presumed that they were not Spanish) seemed good candidates for marginalization as second-class Americans or temporary workers. By 1922, only ten years after statehood, marginalization had overtaken pluralism and assimilation as the dominant strategy for dealing with Mexican newcomers and maintaining national unity.

Despite their strategy's growing appeal, the marginalizationists faced serious challenges from Americans' heightened fears of radicalism and immigration. Consequently, marginalizationists shifted from their original emphasis in admitting the new arrivals as second-class Americans to highlighting their temporary status and lack of belonging.

In Part III, the Immigration Restriction debates, this dissertation discusses how the popularity of the pluralist and assimilationist strategies waned as the marginalizationists gained adherents. Americans lost faith in Americanization and increasingly viewed the arriving low class immigrants as unlikely to have any European heritage, and thus incapable of becoming either Anglo or Spanish American. As these strategies faded, the number of exclusionists and marginalizationists increased. The marginalizationists were particularly successful due to the socioeconomic clout of the agriculturalists and other businesspeople who favored a steady inflow of immigrant labor so that they could continue to maximize profits. The marginalizationists' revised strategy, emphasizing Mexicans' temporary status, spread rapidly in the 1920s. The Mexican government and the immigrants themselves did much to bolster this image of Mexicans as temporary workers who would return to Mexico. This change enabled the marginalizationists to balance their own interests in retaining immigrant labor against the exclusionists' concerns about how the immigrants might subvert the nation. In doing so,

they resolved the recurring struggle between capitalists who wanted to expand the economy through the constant infusion of new workers and those Americans who wanted to exclude newcomers so as to preserve their class and cultural dominance.³⁰

Yet as Part IV, Repatriation, demonstrates, the marginalization strategy proved to be enormously elastic. For while the transnational creation of a temporary worker made it easier for Americans to admit Mexicans when they desired their labor, it also made it easier to send them back when they did not. This unofficial policy of entry and eviction not only affected the Mexican immigrant experience, but also changed what it meant to be an American. For when Americans defined Mexicans as temporary and called for their removal during the Great Depression, they redefined themselves as well. Whereas they had previously viewed themselves as being of European heritage, middle-class, and permanently settled, the expulsion of temporary workers meant that Americans were then willing to re-consider themselves as a people who came from all class backgrounds and performed all types of jobs, including migratory ones.

Over the years, the marginalizationists perfected their strategy. They persuaded enough Americans during an economic boom that their policy of admitting allegedly temporary workers was sound. Then, when bad times came, they had the political might to push those labeled as temporary back through the swinging door to Mexico. This strategy, created by people from many different backgrounds and interests, would prove difficult to contest and would result in devastating consequences for people of Mexican descent.

³⁰See Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

Part I

The Statehood Years

1900 to 1912

Chapter Two

The Door is Shut: Exclusion Reigns Over Assimilation

Miguel Antonio Otero, Jr. always considered himself an American. He was one. Born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1859 to a father and mother of Mexican and Anglo descent, respectively, Otero moved with his parents to the New Mexican territory when he was two years old. Well-educated, bilingual, and raised in a political family, Otero was bound to do well and he did. Like his father before him, Otero eventually chose business and then politics for a career. Soon, he befriended no lesser known figure than that of President McKinley who appointed him as governor of the New Mexican territory in 1897. In this position, Otero ardently fought for statehood and recognition that his territorial constituents were full Americans entitled to self-rule.¹

Like Otero, Carlos Corella Jácome believed he was an American. Born in Ures in Sonora, Mexico in 1870, Jácome emigrated to Arizona as a young boy and later became a U.S. citizen. After working in various low-end jobs—including one hauling mud for adobe bricks—Jácome eventually met and worked under the tutelage of a local businessman, Emilio Carrillo. Sponsored by Carrillo, Jácome set up a shop and turned into one of Tucson's most successful businessmen. In 1894, he became a founding member of the *Alianza Hispano-Americana*, an organization devoted to improving

¹In 1885, Otero had not supported statehood as he initially believed, like many other businessmen of the territory, that New Mexico did not have sufficient resources to support a government. By the time he became governor, the expansion of railroads in the area, along with the establishment of a public school system, led him to change his mind. See Marion Dargan, "New Mexico's Fight for Statehood, 1895-1912," *New Mexico Historical Review* 14 (January 1939): 17-18, 24-29.

conditions for people of Mexican descent, and immersed himself in local and territorial affairs, supporting the cause of statehood.²

This matter of statehood once again brought up the awkward question of just who could be American. For the debate over the territories' status was in large part a discussion of whether or not people of Mexican descent could fit within the nation without threatening national homogeneity and unity. In the early years of the twentieth century, Americans re-evaluated the existing strategies for including or excluding newcomers—exclusion and assimilation—and if and how they pertained to people of Mexican descent.

* * *

The final years of the nineteenth century were a time of much uncertainty due to high levels of immigration, territorial expansion, and continued problems between capital and labor. The United States had accepted an enormous number of people from Europe and the stream of immigrants showed no signs of slowing. This ongoing influx caused many Americans to wonder how long they could continue to absorb and assimilate such a diverse group of people without jeopardizing national cohesion. These same Americans had similar questions and concerns with regards to the people residing in the territories acquired through the Spanish American War. In addition, labor unrest in the 1890s brought more attention to the unresolved problems between the upper- and working-classes. Consequently, many Americans feared that working-class newcomers would exacerbate class conflict and undermine the nation. As scholars William V. Flores and

²Thomas E. Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1854-1941* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), 52, 96, 111, 212; John S. Goff, *Arizona Biographical Dictionary* (Cave Creek, AZ: Black Mountain Press, 1983), 54; Alex G. Jácome, "Letter to the Editor," *Arizona Star*, April 29, 1970 in Biofile-Carlos Jácome, Special Collections, University of Arizona Library.

Rina Benmayor have argued, “homogeneity is assumed to be the basis for political stability and growth,” and Americans at the time saw anything but uniformity in their nation.³ It was during this period of great consternation that Arizonans and New Mexicans decided to press for statehood and full inclusion in the nation.

Before statehood became a prominent national issue, most Americans had already aligned themselves with one of two extant strategies for dealing with newcomers and ensuring national unity: exclusion or assimilation. Facing increased immigration and territorial expansion, nativists or exclusionists had pursued closing the borders and preventing the extension of the U.S. Constitution to areas outside of the continental United States. In 1882, they succeeded in limiting some new arrivals with the passage of the first major restriction law, the Chinese Exclusion Act, which drastically reduced Chinese immigration, particularly those immigrants who held a lower-class rank in society.

A few years later, more exclusionists organized themselves into various anti-immigration groups and strove to lessen the tide of Europeans, especially those coming from southern and eastern Europe. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (Republican, MA) actively worked with these nativists in an attempt to exclude Europeans through the imposition of a literacy requirement. Although he and his allies failed in this venture (later succeeding in 1917), it was clear that the exclusionists had a strong and growing cadre of supporters. Their rationale for exclusion was closely tied to the perceived race and class of the newcomers. As with the Chinese, exclusionists were skeptical about the racial background of the southern and eastern Europeans, categorizing them as either not

³William V. Flores and Rina Benmayor, eds., *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 46.

white or as a kind of “inbetween peoples,” neither white nor black.⁴ The immigrants’ status also mattered as the exclusionists tended to view the southern and eastern Europeans as mostly peasants, forever locked into a feudal mindset, who were incapable of improving their economic situation.

Late nineteenth-century assimilationists, whose ranks included reformers and businesspeople who desired a continuous supply of workers, argued that newcomers could become American through education. Unlike the exclusionists, they believed that anyone who claimed a European heritage—regardless of where their descendants had come from in Europe—could assimilate. While class status was an important element of American identity for these assimilationists, they thought that people of European descent had the capability to improve their economic position. By the close of the nineteenth century, these assimilationists had staved off the first challenges to reducing European immigration and retained open borders.⁵ Yet, this assimilation also contained exclusionary elements. For like the exclusionists, few assimilationists believed that people who were neither European nor white could integrate successfully into the nation.

In 1900, neither exclusionists nor assimilationists thought much about people of Mexican descent and whether or not the existing strategies of exclusion or assimilation would be appropriate in their case. Mexican immigration was not a topic of discussion since so few Mexicans emigrated that most government agents did not report their

⁴See James R. Barrett and David Roediger, “Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality, and the ‘New Immigrant’ Working Class,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 16, no. 3 (1997): 3-44.

⁵Besides Chinese immigrants, a few others were excluded if they were prostitutes or criminals (1875) or “idiots,” “lunatics,” or “likely to become a public charge” (1882). See table in Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 3.

crossing.⁶ The last time Americans had debated what to do with Mexicans was at the close of the Mexican War. Then, some Americans had proposed expanding the nation's boundaries to include all of Mexico. But as the usual trajectory for new territories had involved a quick transition to statehood and equality with the existing states, many Americans worried that the infusion of eight million Mexicans—whom they regarded as primitive peoples of mixed race or Indian heritage—would impair the nation. Consequently, the U.S. government instead decided to wrest a smaller area with only 80,000 Mexicans widely dispersed throughout the region. Government officials believed that this seizure would pose less of a threat to American identity and unity.⁷ In the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the signers agreed that all Mexican citizens who remained within the ceded territory would be granted U.S. citizenship within one year, unless they chose otherwise. Only a few thousand opted to remain Mexican nationals.⁸ The treaty further stated that the U.S. Congress would incorporate the territories into the nation as states “at the proper time.”⁹ In the mid-nineteenth century, few legislators made any serious attempts to grant statehood to the New Mexican territory, especially with civil war looming. Even after Arizona separated from New Mexico in 1863, the residents of

⁶Erika Lee explains how Chinese immigrants would dress as Mexicans and learn a few words of Spanish so that they could cross, unobserved, into the U.S. See Erika Lee, *At America's Gate: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003), 172.

⁷Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), chaps. 5 and 7 and 256-57. Also see John M. Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2004), 52-58.

⁸The residents in the territories would be granted citizenship, automatically, one year after the treaty went into effect, unless they opted to retain Mexican citizenship and made this declaration formally (or moved to Mexico). Pueblo Indians, who had been able to vote since they were considered Mexican citizens during the period of Mexican rule, had this right removed after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The U.S. viewed the Pueblos as wards of the state who therefore could not vote. *Nativos* were considered white for the purpose of suffrage. See Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood*, 37-40, 47, 54.

⁹From Articles VIII and IX of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 189-90.

both territories remained divided on whether or not they wanted statehood, making it easy for the U.S. Congress to reject all such petitions.¹⁰ But by the turn-of-the-century the bickering had stopped, with the Republican and Democratic party leadership of the Arizonan and New Mexican territories, and the major Spanish- and English-language papers within them, all united in support of more self-government.¹¹ Their demands for statehood once again brought the question of what to do about people of Mexican descent to the forefront.

Although most New Mexicans and Arizonans in 1900 were already U.S. citizens, their rights as territorial inhabitants were circumscribed. The territorial residents had no direct representation at the national level, save for one non-voting delegate in the House of Representatives, and they could not vote for president nor select their own governor. Furthermore, they faced the threat of a congressional veto on any of their territorial legislation.¹² As the Supreme Court reviewed the status of the islands acquired during the Spanish American War, Arizonans and New Mexicans increasingly worried that they might become associated with the overseas territorial population and lose their own access to statehood. Some legislators had already declared that the U.S. Constitution did not necessarily follow the flag; therefore, the rights it bestowed might not apply to

¹⁰President Lincoln signed the Organic Act establishing the Territory of Arizona in February, 1863 to stem various secessionist movements and to have more control over the territory's rich minerals. There were few serious attempts at statehood until the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries. See Robert W. Larson, *New Mexico's Quest for Statehood, 1846-1912* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968), 89, 302. Also, see Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood*, 76.

¹¹See Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood*, 79-80; Larson, *New Mexico's Quest for Statehood*, 195, 202; Mark E. Pry, "Arizona and the Politics of Statehood, 1889-1912" (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 1995), 56; Karen Underhill Mangelsdorf, "The Beveridge Visit to Arizona in 1902," *Journal of Arizona History* (Fall, 1987): 243-60, especially see 248.

¹²See Pry, "Arizona and the Politics of Statehood," 5-7.

new or existing territories.¹³ But if the territories did become states, then the residents within them would have their rights secured. Also, their votes would influence national politics, a possibility that worried many Americans outside of the territories, especially given the significant number of *nativos*, or people of Mexican descent, who resided within the disputed region.

Once Arizonans and New Mexicans succeeded in getting their territories included within a 1902 statehood bill in Congress, many Americans outside of the area supported one of the strategies they had established previously to deal with Asian and European immigration: exclusion or assimilation.¹⁴ Exclusionists opposed statehood since they viewed the territorial residents as being peons of mixed blood (Spanish and Indian) and thus not fit to incorporate into what they hoped would be a pure, white nation.¹⁵ Assimilationists favored statehood since they thought that people of Mexican descent could assimilate and become like Anglo Americans.

Not all territorial residents agreed that assimilation was the best strategy for maintaining national homogeneity and unity. Some residents, generally people of

¹³The Supreme Court ruled on the Insular Cases in 1904 and declared that the Philippines would be considered an “unincorporated territory,” rather than incorporated like New Mexico and Arizona. This distinction presumed that the incorporated territories were on the path to statehood and would eventually be admitted. See Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History*, 256-58.

¹⁴The omnibus bill included proposals for the statehood of Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. The battles over Oklahoma revolved around the presence of American Indians, rather than people of Mexican descent, and took a different path from Arizona and New Mexico. In 1907, the territory attained statehood. For a full discussion of this debate, see David Anthony Y.O. Chang, “From Indian Territory to White Man’s Country: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Land Ownership in Eastern Oklahoma, 1889-1940” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2002).

¹⁵The term “peon” has been used in many ways. The historian Friedrich Katz notes that during much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Mexico, people used the word for agricultural workers and sometime laborers in the mines. I believe that the exclusionists in the U.S. are using this term in a general way, or even more broadly, for any worker of Mexican descent. Katz, himself, applies a narrower definition, using it only for permanent laborers on an hacienda who were indebted to the owner or *hacendado*. See Friedrich Katz, “Labor Conditions on Haciendas in Porfirian Mexico: Some Trends and Tendencies,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 54, no. 1 (Feb., 1974): 1-47, specifically see p. 2, note 3.

Mexican descent and their Anglo American allies, believed that the people within the territories did not need to change as they were already American. These residents were pluralists who believed that people of Mexican descent should be allowed to maintain their language and cultural practices, and that these differences would not harm the nation. Other territorial inhabitants—the marginalizationists—believed that the people of Mexican descent among them would not threaten the country for they had little political clout and remained under the control of their Anglo American employers. The marginalizationists included many Anglo Americans in both territories, although their voices were strongest in Arizona where they dominated the local government. While the pluralists and marginalizationists participated in the debates over statehood, initially their views were not widespread either inside or outside of the territories. From 1902 to 1904, it was the exclusionists and assimilationists who controlled the debate, with the exclusionists succeeding in staving off statehood and the inclusion of people of Mexican descent for ten more years.

Background on Statehood

One challenge in creating states from territories was that there were no fixed regulations as to what a territory had to do for statehood other than to obtain congressional approval. Traditionally, as stipulated in the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, territories merely had to attain a population of at least 60,000 people and the support of the majority of its inhabitants to secure statehood.¹⁶ Later, legislators also looked for assurance that the territory had sufficient taxable wealth to support a government. By

¹⁶The Northwest Ordinance of 1787, one of the few documents that prescribed the criteria for statehood, stipulated that a territory have a population of at least 60,000 persons. See Peter S. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 67.

1900, Arizona and New Mexico both had met these tests easily as Arizona had over 122,000 residents and New Mexico, 195,000.¹⁷ Other states had been admitted with far fewer people, with Idaho and Wyoming entering the polity in 1890 with approximately 84,000 and 60,000 residents respectively. Yet, despite the territories satisfying the requisite population test and the residents' overwhelming support for statehood, many U.S. legislators lacked an equivalent amount of enthusiasm for the idea.

Exclusionists believed that the racial and class background of the newcomers in the territories made them less than desirable Americans.¹⁸ The 1900 U.S. Census classified 180,207 of the approximately 195,000 New Mexicans as white, while also noting that nearly half (90,000) of the whites were persons of Mexican descent. This statistic worried the exclusionists, despite the fact that over ninety percent of the people of Mexican descent had been born in the New Mexican territory and were native American citizens. The remainder of the population included just over 13,000 American Indians, 1,610 "Negros," and 349 persons classified as "Mongolian." Because many people of Mexican descent had voting rights and owned land as well, they retained substantial political power in the territory and had a significant voice in the statehood debates. This socioeconomic status would contribute greatly to the assimilationists', and later the pluralists', strength in New Mexico.

The Arizona territory also included a great number of people of Mexican descent. In 1900, over 28,000 or more than twenty percent of Arizona's population were of Mexican descent. Approximately one-half of them, or 14,172, had been born outside of

¹⁷US Bureau of the Census, *Abstract of the Twelfth Census, 1900*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1904).

¹⁸Larson argues that nativism was the major reason for the long delay in statehood. Larson, *New Mexico's Quest for Statehood*, 303-4.

the U.S.; the rest were native-born Americans. The territory also included 26,480 American Indians, most of whom lived on reservations with scant political clout, and a small number of African Americans and Asians.¹⁹ Unlike in New Mexico, the number of middle-class people of Mexican descent had dwindled relative to the rest of the population.²⁰ This occurred both as more Anglo Americans continued to migrate there from other states in the late nineteenth century and as poorer Mexicans emigrated to Arizona for mining jobs. Subsequently, intermarriage between people of Anglo and Mexican descent dropped from 22.8 percent in the 1870s to 9.1 percent in the decade of the 1890s, further reducing one way in which the native population had retained their wealth (for intermarriage had meant that the property remained in the family versus seeing it taken in the courts).²¹ Due to their reduced numbers, middle-class Arizonans of Mexican descent did not have as much influence in the statehood debates as did their counterparts in New Mexico. This lesser status would have great import as it would make it easier for the marginalizationists to dominate in the territory.

The Exclusionists

Exclusionists did not want to incorporate anyone whom they believed would threaten national unity or their own class standing in society. Consequently, they sought to prevent statehood for Arizona and New Mexico and thereby exclude people of Mexican descent—whom they regarded as of mixed heritage and belonging to the peon class—from becoming equal members of the nation. These exclusionists included the

¹⁹US Bureau of the Census, *Abstract of the Twelfth Census, 1900*. Also, see Senate Committee on the Territories, *New Statehood Bill*, Rpt. 2206, 57th Cong., 2d sess., (1902), 14 (hereafter cited as *New Statehood Bill Report*) and Karen Jean Underhill, “Albert J. Beveridge’s Congressional Report on Arizona Territory in 1902” (master’s thesis, University of Arizona, 1990), 45.

²⁰Eric Vaughn Meeks, “Border Citizens: Race, Labor, and Identity in South-Central Arizona, 1910-1965” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 52-53.

²¹Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses*, 149.

nativists from the earlier debates and hailed from both major political parties and all regions of the country. In addition, they were joined by some eastern politicians who feared statehood would enhance the western states' strength in the legislature. Because it was not exactly clear which way the territories would vote (although most suspected Arizona would be Democratic and New Mexico Republican), support along partisan lines was less apparent with major Republican legislators on both sides of the debate.²²

One Republican exclusionist, Senator Albert J. Beveridge (IN), had substantial control over the fate of New Mexico and Arizona in his position as chairman of the Committee on Territories. While the members of the House of Representatives had approved statehood for the territories in May 1902, the bill then stalled in Beveridge's Senate committee. Beveridge, an imperialist who had supported the acquisition of territories after the Spanish American War and called for further expansion into Mexico and Central America, narrowly defined who could become an American. He did not favor granting statehood to any of the new possessions, much less those previously acquired during the Mexican War. Pressured to address the issue or see it removed from his committee, Beveridge decided that he and his colleagues would make a better decision if they investigated the territorial conditions first-hand.²³

Beveridge's congressional committee quickly became notorious in the territories as it charged through them in only two weeks, touring the most dilapidated areas of the towns, and meeting primarily with people selected by Beveridge to confirm the committee members' pre-existing views against statehood. One newspaper alleged that

²²Karen Underhill Mangelsdorf, "The Beveridge Visit to Arizona in 1902," 244 and John Braeman, "Albert J. Beveridge and Statehood for the Southwest, 1902-1912," *Arizona and the West* 10 (Winter 1968): 313-42, especially see 340.

²³Braeman, "Albert J. Beveridge and Statehood for the Southwest," 313-17.

the committee's characterization of the territories had done much to firm up residents' support for statehood and convince the few remaining doubters that it was essential.²⁴ Another critic vividly described the event, writing that Beveridge "tore through New Mexico with his eyes under his coat" in order to avoid seeing anything that he might like.²⁵ Not surprisingly, the committee members drafted a report which recommended against statehood for Arizona and New Mexico, concluding that only at some undetermined point in the future, when the "Mexican" population had "become identical in language and customs with the great body of the American people," and when English-speaking people from the other states had emigrated there to do their "modifying work with the 'Mexican' element," would the territorial populations "finally come to form a creditable portion of American citizenship" and be entitled to statehood. It was clear from the report that the authors believed it unlikely that this would happen any time soon.²⁶

Beveridge and his fellow exclusionists saw race as central to their definition of what it meant to be an American and believed that only those of the proper background could assimilate fully. They argued that most Americans had an Anglo-Saxon heritage and northwestern European background (and thus were white) and that only those with a similar history should be added to the nation. Otherwise, Americans would be in danger

²⁴Article, "Against a Minority," retyped from *Citizen*, February 4, 1903, Marion Dargan Papers, MSS 120 BC, box 10, file 11, Center for Southwest Research, General Library, The University of New Mexico (hereafter these archives will be identified as CSWR).

²⁵See Jesse de la Cruz, "Rejection Because of Race: Albert J. Beveridge and Nuevo México's Struggle for Statehood, 1902-1903" *Aztlán* 7, no. 1 (1977): 81-82 for information on Beveridge's propensity to arrange for speakers who would help to prove his case against statehood. For the quotation, see handcopied editorial, *El Paso Herald*, January 16, 1909, box 2, file 10, Dargan Papers, CSWR. Also see Mangelsdorf, "The Beveridge Visit," 249.

²⁶The authors of this report were referring, in this case, specifically to New Mexico. But they recommended against the admission of Arizona as well due to the presence of people of Mexican descent in that territory. They expressed concern about the large numbers of Mexicans they believed to be immigrating to Arizona. Senate Committee on the Territories, *New Statehood Bill Report*, 5-9 (quote from page 9), 14-20.

of losing their racial homogeneity and thus national unity. When Senator Beveridge was asked whether people of Mexican descent were white, he baldly asserted that there was “no ground for such an assumption.”²⁷ Senator John Kean (Republican, NJ) thought that people of Mexican descent would not make desirable Americans because they had a pliant trait—causing them to vote as they were told—which he believed was biologically inherent and associated with their mixed racial background.²⁸

A few exclusionists briefly resurrected the “black legend” to disparage anyone who claimed a pure Spanish heritage. Created by Northern Europeans shortly after Spain’s settlement in the Americas, the black legend portrayed Spaniards as particularly cruel, lazy, and despotic because of their aggressive Catholicism and success in the Americas over the Indians. While this myth had spread among many Anglo Americans since the beginning of colonial settlement in the Americas, its explanatory power faded in the late nineteenth century as Spain ceased to be a significant threat to the United States, especially after the Spanish American War.²⁹ Senator Joseph Quarles (Republican, WI) relied upon this dying concept and suggested that Spain, corrupted by its decadence, had lost its colonies, become inferior, and passed its “racial infirmity” on to its descendants in New Mexico.³⁰ But Quarles was an anomaly since he was one of very few who raised this point. Most exclusionists concentrated on the notion that people of Mexican descent were not white because they had a mixed racial heritage.

²⁷57th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (Jan., 1903), 568.

²⁸Appendix to 57th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (Feb. 4, 1903), 182.

²⁹Although exclusionists would continue to express alarm at the number of southern and eastern Europeans (including Spaniards) who made their way to America’s shores, Spaniards were primarily feared as representative of yet another among the “hordes” coming to the U.S. rather than specific fears about the Spaniards themselves who emigrated in small numbers relative to other southern and eastern Europeans.

³⁰57th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (Feb., 1903), 1642.

The exclusionists also entwined class with race, seeing that people with the proper racial make-up had the potential to rise to a higher class status. The converse of this argument was that those who were not white did not have the capacity to improve their class standing beyond the level of a peon. Senator Kean disparaged people of Mexican descent for their willingness to live on very little, almost as little “as a Chinaman” eating “a few mesquite beans and a little bacon fat” to sustain themselves.³¹ The implication was that no white person would tolerate such circumstances.³² The members of the New England Shoe and Leather Association felt so strongly about the lower-class composition of the people in the territories that it submitted a resolution against statehood because “the population of New Mexico and Arizona is largely composed of miners and persons whose occupation is not conducive to permanent residence.” They further added that census statistics showed that the territories had a racially diverse population and a significant number of illiterates, which proved the territories “so much below the standard” that they could not “be considered as states for many years.”³³

Because of the residents’ race and class, exclusionists concluded that people of Mexican descent were incapable of assimilating for they lacked the biological wherewithal to transform themselves or to progress, characteristics which both

³¹Appendix to 57th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (Feb. 4, 1903), 182-84.

³²As historian Lawrence Glickman explains, Anglo American workers since the end of the nineteenth century have argued that greater needs and demands (consumption rather than production) defined the American worker in contrast to those who subsisted on much lower wages. See Lawrence B. Glickman, *A Living Wage: American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997). Another scholar, Yvette Huggins, adds to our understanding of this by demonstrating how living conditions could define racial categories. In late nineteenth century Arizona, Huggins finds that some Anglo Americans believed that people who willingly ate beans or lived in slum-like conditions could not be “white” as white people would not accept such an environment. See A. Yvette Huggins, “ ‘Mexican Labour’ in a ‘White Man’s Town’: Racism, Imperialism, and Industrialization in the Making of Arizona, 1840-1905,” in *Racializing Class, Classifying Race: Labour and Difference in Britain, the USA, and Africa*, ed. Peter Alexander and Rick Halpern (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2000).

³³Letter from New England Shoe and Leather Association, June 2, 1902, Records of the House of Representatives, Record Group (RG) 233, file HR 57A-H26.4, National Archives, Washington, DC.

assimilationists and exclusionists considered to be essential components of being American. Senator Knute Nelson (Republican, MN) alleged that New Mexico was more backward than any other territory between the two oceans.³⁴ The Beveridge committee condemned the adobe buildings in which many people of Mexican descent resided and compared them to the “common and usual homes of the Chinese people,” by which they meant that they were primitive and un-American.³⁵ Senator Quarles believed that people of Mexican descent were so detrimental to the nation that they inhibited civilization—preventing ongoing progress and modernization—because “they think the same thoughts and sing the same songs as their fathers had for centuries before.”³⁶ Morris Watson, a journalist for *Outlook* magazine, observed that “the spirit of progress do[es] not appeal to them” after observing the “common food” eaten by people of Mexican descent and their lack of silverware and practical furnishings.³⁷

Mostly, however, exclusionists stressed language differences to convince other Americans that people of Mexican descent could not assimilate. They believed that Americans had to speak English and perceived territorial residents’ lack of use or knowledge of the English language as evidence of their inassimilability and a threat to national cohesion. Senator Nelson argued that, “homogeneousness in language and in fitness for self-government is one of the fundamental elements and essentials for the American Union.”³⁸ In fact, Senator Beveridge and his entourage were so concerned

³⁴57th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (Jan., 1903), 525.

³⁵Senate Committee on the Territories, *New Statehood Bill Report*, 9. See Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971) for Anglo American views on people from China.

³⁶57th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (Feb., 1903), 1641-2.

³⁷Morris P. Watson, “The People of New Mexico,” *Outlook*, Feb. 7, 1903.

³⁸Quote from Senator Nelson is in 57th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (Jan.-Feb., 1903), 574. For more on language and national unity, see Senator Lodge discussing his views on the importance

about language that most of their questions revolved around this subject as they quizzed almost everyone interviewed about how many people spoke Spanish, which languages were taught in the schools, whether the courts used Spanish to maintain their records, and to what extent interpreters used this language to translate opening statements, cross-examinations, and jury instructions.³⁹

Upon discovering that the New Mexican courts permitted the use of the Spanish-language in a variety of ways, the exclusionists presented this as additional proof that the people of New Mexico had not, and actually could not, Americanize. A California senator argued that if people of Mexican descent did not “care enough about our institutions to learn the language of the country, if the business of the courts must be carried through an interpreter” then the territory was not worthy of statehood.⁴⁰ Senator Nelson, himself an immigrant from Norway, vociferously attacked the New Mexican territory for its reliance upon interpreters. He added that he knew of no place where such a policy was followed except in the newer territories such as the Philippines and Puerto Rico.⁴¹ In making this reference, Nelson unmistakably connected New Mexico—a territory he saw as failing to meet the essential language requirement for being part of America—with those entities unquestionably (at that time) deemed as un-American. The territorial papers enjoyed lampooning Nelson with their characterization of his thick

of having a shared language for national unity, 57th Cong., 2d. sess., *Congressional Record*, (Jan.-Feb., 1903), 1412.

³⁹Senate Committee on the Territories, *New Statehood Bill: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Territories*, 57 Cong., 2d sess., (1902), passim (hereafter cited as *New Statehood Bill Subcommittee Hearings*).

⁴⁰57th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (Jan.-Feb., 1903), 1891.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 530-31, 570, 1941.

Norwegian accent, “ ‘Ay tank does fellairs en Arizona not beene enofe Amaracaines. To bay goot seetyzain, a fellair moost bay Amaracaine.’ ”⁴²

Other exclusionists were not impressed by information suggesting that people of Mexican descent were learning English and becoming American. When touring the territories, they seemed more interested in knowing which language children spoke at home and on the playground. Georgia Murray, formerly from Wisconsin, reported that the children she taught in New Mexico did not speak “perfect English” and admitted when asked that they “drop the English” after school.⁴³ When the interrogators asked if the children “relapse” into Spanish, a justice in New Mexico affirmed that the kids switched “right back to the Mexican.”⁴⁴ Maggie Bucher, a superintendent of schools and a statehood supporter, valiantly tried to answer the same question with an assimilationist perspective, emphasizing that the children seemed “very anxious not to give up their English,” and that the Spanish-speaking kids mingled with other students and spoke a mixture of languages when they played.⁴⁵ Despite Bucher’s best attempts, Beveridge’s committee remained fixated on the fact that the children of Mexican descent continued to speak Spanish. In its official report to Congress, the majority of the committee members recommended against statehood, concluding that the residents of the territories, especially those in New Mexico, needed more time (if it was even possible) to become American.⁴⁶ It would prove to be a very damaging report for the assimilationists.

⁴²Quoted in Jay J. Wagoner, *Arizona Territory, 1863-1912: A Political History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1970), 411.

⁴³Senate Committee on the Territories, *New Statehood Bill Subcommittee Hearings*, 8.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 23-24. Bernard Rodey, New Mexico’s delegate to Congress and an avid assimilationist, had asked that this statehood supporter be interviewed.

⁴⁶57th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (Dec., 1902), 188-89.

The Assimilationists

Notwithstanding the exclusionists' success in delaying statehood for a decade, their efforts did not go unchallenged. Many statehood supporters—within and outside of the territories and of both Anglo and Mexican descent—argued that people of Mexican descent had a pure Spanish and European heritage and thus could become American. These assimilationists belonged to both major political parties and all sections of the country, although those in the West were more likely to advocate for statehood and assimilation since the new status would result in greater political clout for their region. Assimilationists did not limit American-ness to only those with a northern or western European heritage, but extended it to anyone who claimed an ancestry from any part of Europe. A few assimilationists noted that some of the territorial residents had a slightly mixed heritage, but justified this lack of European purity by asserting that they were overwhelmingly of European descent. Since assimilationists considered people of Mexican descent as mostly European and white, they also thought that they had the potential to rise to a higher class standing. Assimilationists further believed that because of this background, people of Mexican descent *could* learn, change, and merge with the dominant culture, just as European immigrants had done before them.⁴⁷ Consequently, assimilationists emphasized the territorial residents' white heritage (by contrasting them against people deemed not white), pointed to the many people of Mexican descent who had attained a higher class standing, and provided a barrage of evidence that the newcomers had already assimilated or were adopting Anglo American ways rapidly.

⁴⁷While some assimilationists genuinely believed their statements about people of Mexican descent, others may have used such language primarily to achieve their goal of statehood. Some like Marcus Smith later became marginalizationists.

One of the foremost assimilationists, Governor Otero, considered himself Spanish, white, and American. Otero did his utmost to convince others that most *nativos* or *nuevomexicanos* were of the same pure European heritage as himself. He avoided using the label “Mexican,” since this then signified someone who had a mixed racial background and was inferior to white people.⁴⁸ When an interviewer persisted in pressing him with questions about “Mexicans,” Otero usually replied with “Spanish,” or made it clear that the label was not one of his own choosing by stating that “the ‘Mexican’ as you call him is a first class citizen.”⁴⁹ Mostly, however, Otero downplayed his ethnicity. Instead, he emphasized his American status and the fact that he and other *nuevomexicanos* already had become, or always had been, like Anglo Americans.⁵⁰ Early in his career, Otero had arranged to greet his guests in the new territorial capitol at Santa Fe by positioning himself directly under the folds of an American flag. His implicit message was that he, the territorial governor, a *nuevomexicano*, was an American. By association, all other *nuevomexicanos* were as well. Otero congratulated his fellow New Mexicans in a border town for their ardent celebration of the Fourth of July and wished that people from outside the territories had been there to witness their impressive display of patriotism.⁵¹

⁴⁸*Nuevomexicanos* means New Mexicans of Mexican descent and was a term commonly used at the turn-of-the-century. *Nativos* was also a term used at the time and refers to people of Mexican descent. See Anthony P. Mora, “Mesilleros and Gringo Mexicans: The Changing Meanings of Race, Nation, and Space in Southern New Mexico, 1848-1912” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2002) for background on what being “Mexican” signified in this era as well as notions about people viewed as having a mixed racial heritage.

⁴⁹Interview of Miguel A. Otero by William E. Curtis, El Trovar, Grand Cañon, AZ on July 1, 1905, 10, box 4, file 3, Otero Collection, MSS 21 BC, CSWR.

⁵⁰For more on Otero’s assimilationist views as compared to those of others of Mexican descent, see Doris Meyers, *Speaking for Themselves: Neomexicano Cultural Identity and the Spanish-Language Press, 1880-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 200.

⁵¹Otero speech, July 4, 1902, box 4, file 12, Otero Collection, CSWR. Despite this commendation, some *nuevomexicanos* alleged that Otero was dismissive of others of his racial background since he did not appoint *nuevomexicanos* to positions of authority nor select any of them as delegates to a

Politically savvy, Otero recognized the dangers in being associated with people deemed as not white. Instead of working with such groups to improve the standing of people of Mexican descent, Otero wanted to make it clear to Anglo Americans that New Mexicans were *not* like the racially questionable residents of the recently acquired territories. When the Spanish American War erupted and the loyalty of Spanish speakers became a concern, Otero quickly recruited New Mexicans to fight against Spain and then the Philippines. Once the wars ended, Otero arranged to send Spanish-speaking teachers and officials to the overseas territories to assist with daily government and the Americanization of the islands. Otero's actions highlighted the very American-ness of New Mexicans as compared to the racially mixed Puerto Ricans and Filipinos who needed American tutelage.⁵²

Not content with this strategy alone, Otero adroitly manipulated symbols at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis to emphasize just how American the New Mexicans were. At the fair, Otero displayed the coat that the leader of the Filipino resistance movement, Emilio Aguinaldo, had worn when he was captured. In doing so, Otero not only reminded viewers that New Mexicans had helped the U.S. to fight in the Philippines, but again emphasized that *nuevomexicanos* were not like the troublesome Filipinos. Otero made sure that the only association New Mexicans had with Filipinos—who were a focal

national Republican meeting in Chicago. They alleged that he saw them as only good enough for manual labor, not people to have dinner with or be treated as equals. For this, see "Otero y los Hispano-Americanos," *La Voz del Pueblo* (Las Vegas, NM), March 26, 1904.

⁵²Letter from W. Atkinson, General Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Philippine Islands to Miguel Otero, Sept. 18, 1901; Letter from Gustave L. Solignac of law firm of Hartigan, Marple, and Solignac, Attorneys in Manila, Philippines to Miguel Otero, Nov. 23, 1901, box 1, file 12, Otero Collection, CSWR.

point of the St Louis exposition as curiosities and people near the bottom of the racial hierarchy—was as conquerors over them.⁵³

Otero and other assimilationists also made it clear that when they spoke of *nuevomexicanos*, they did not mean Indians who held a seriously circumscribed place in American society and were not considered white. In one of Governor Otero's reports to the Secretary of the Interior he included a section entitled "Indians," in which he highlighted them as different from the general population. He did not make such a distinction for any other group.⁵⁴ Otero later explained in an interview that Pueblo Indians' transition to "civilization" had been slow and difficult because they were not very bright. He added, however, that they would not harm New Mexico or the nation since their population was declining and they were docile.⁵⁵ The New Mexican delegate to the U.S. Congress, Bernard Shandon Rodey, a naturalized American from Ireland, followed Otero's lead in distinguishing *nuevomexicanos* from Indians.⁵⁶ A New Mexican attorney clarified for congress members that he did not consider Pueblo Indians to be the same as "Mexicans" (people of Mexican descent).⁵⁷ Another assimilationist, Senator Joseph Foraker (Republican, OH), also demonstrated that he did not see Indians as the same as people of Mexican descent when he remarked that the territorial residents deserved statehood because it was in the country's best interest to "subdue the forest, to

⁵³"New Mexico Shows Much of Antique," c. 1903/1904, box 6, scrapbook, Otero Collection, CSWR. The coat had been given to Governor Otero's wife as a gift from one of the officers who had been present at the surrender. World's Fairs visually displayed who was included and excluded in a nation as well as established hierarchies of peoples. See Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

⁵⁴Governor's Report to the Secretary of Interior, 1904, New Mexico Territorial Records, New Mexico State Records Center and Archives (hereafter cited as NMSRCA).

⁵⁵Interview of Miguel A. Otero by William E. Curtis, El Trovar, Grand Cañon, AZ, July 1, 1905, box 4, file 3, Otero Collection, CSWR.

⁵⁶Delegate Bernard Shandon Rodey was often referred to as Bernard "Statehood" Rodey. 57th Cong., 2d. sess., *Congressional Record*, (March 1903), 2884.

⁵⁷House Committee on the Territories, *Statehood Bill*, Hearings, (1903), 2.

drive out wild beasts, and to drive away the redman.” Foraker welcomed people of Mexican descent who had political influence in both of the territories and argued on behalf of statehood. It was only Indians whom he sought to ostracize.⁵⁸

With a fairly small African American population in the territories, assimilationists did not have to expend much energy contrasting people of Mexican descent against African Americans. The few references to African Americans, however, indicated that the assimilationists wanted no affiliation with them. Governor Otero mocked the anti-imperialists who professed concern over the Filipino leader Aguinaldo and “his dusky minions” because they had not consented to the U.S control of their government, while pointing out that these same voices had denied the “dusky citizen” of the American South any say in government.⁵⁹ Otero did not take a public position on Jim Crow in the South, but his willingness to support and associate U.S. control over the Filipinos with white rule over blacks in the South suggests his low opinion of African Americans’ capacity for full citizenship. When he later criticized a movement to combine the New Mexican territory into one state with Arizona, Otero disparaged those who liked the idea as so desperate for statehood that they “would willingly accept jointure with the Jungles of Africa,” implying that any affiliation with such a place and the people therein would be negative.⁶⁰ Bernabé Brichta, a Mexican-born Arizonan of Mexican and French descent, argued that a local labor union should not put people of Mexican descent in the same low

⁵⁸57th Cong., 2d. sess., *Congressional Record*, (Jan. 1903), 956.

⁵⁹Article re: Otero’s speech to Republican Territorial Convention, October 5, 1900, box 6, scrapbook, Otero Collection, CSWR.

⁶⁰Letter from Miguel A. Otero to Senator Henry M. Teller (CO), August 1, 1906, box 2, file 2, Otero Collection, CSWR.

category as Asians or black Americans. He only criticized the union's exclusionary policy when it affected people of Mexican descent.⁶¹

Assimilationists believed that people of Mexican descent could rise to a higher class standing due to their European heritage and thus pointed to many examples of them having done so. Harry Pierce, a letter writer to the *Washington Post*, touted the fine citizenry in New Mexico and specifically cited those with a middle-class standing including Mariano Otero, the president of the Commercial National Bank in Albuquerque; Antonio Joseph, a merchant; Tranquilino Luna, a businessman whose son died fighting in the Philippines and lay buried in an unmarked grave; and J. Francisco Chavez who fought in the Civil War for the Union before becoming an attorney.⁶² Judge A. B. Fall provided an equally long list of prominent *nuevomexicanos*, "the Lunas, the Chavezes, the Armijos, Oteros, Pereas, Romeroes, and others" who had the resources to educate their children in the state of Missouri.⁶³

When assimilationists did acknowledge that some people of Mexican descent had a lower-class standing, they argued that this group possessed the wherewithal to improve their economic position and status. The former mayor of Albuquerque, asserted that he had seen "a wonderful improvement in the Mexicans" since 1889, adding later that they

⁶¹Brichta was born in Mexico circa 1860 and shortly thereafter immigrated to Arizona. Brichta's mother was Mexican and father French. When his father died, his mother later remarried a Scottish man, Augustus Brichta, who adopted her son. Brichta identified himself with the community of people of Mexican descent and was a founding member of *Alianza Hispano-Americana* along with Carlos Jácome. See Thomas Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses*, 111, 179; "Bernabé Brichta." (HB HAY BIO BRI BER). Arizona Collection. Department of Archives and Manuscripts. University Libraries. Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

⁶²Harry H. Pierce, "Defends New Mexico," Letter to Editor, *Washington Post*, n.d., box 14019, file 58, L. Bradford Prince Papers, NMSRCA.

⁶³House Committee on the Territories, *House Joint Resolution No. 14: Approving the Constitutions Formed by the Constitutional Conventions of the Territories of New Mexico and Arizona*, Hearings, 62d Cong., 1st sess., (1911), RG 233, file HR62A-D23, 49 (hereafter cited as *House Joint Resolution Hearings*.)

liked “the American methods” and were “very rapidly adopting” them.⁶⁴ A few years later, Judge Fall reported that many of the sheepherders whom Americans viewed as the “lowest classes of Mexicans” were literate, read newspapers, and kept informed on political issues.⁶⁵ In short, they acted like middle-class Anglo Americans, and had the potential with the right kind of tutelage to become so.

Although assimilationists thought that people of Mexican descent could become American since they had the requisite racial background, they also agreed with exclusionists that *nativos* needed to conform to the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture. They argued, however, that people of Mexican descent either already had “Anglo-Saxonized” or were doing so at a fast rate. By this they meant that they were becoming literate, learning English, and rejecting former customs and lifestyles in favor of Anglo American ways.

Governor Otero touted the substantial improvement in New Mexico’s literacy rate as proof of *nuevomexicanos*’ increasing American-ness. He noted that while illiteracy had been as high as 44 percent in 1890—the year before a public school system was implemented—by 1898 it had fallen to 21 percent.⁶⁶ Otero further argued that if the federal government had provided the territory with the necessary resources to provide free education, as it had done to support “the Indians in indolence,” then literacy would not be a problem in New Mexico.⁶⁷ Under the circumstances, he believed that the

⁶⁴Senate Committee on the Territories, *New Statehood Bill Subcommittee Hearings*, 63, 320-21.

⁶⁵House Committee on the Territories, *House Joint Resolution Hearings*, 58.

⁶⁶Miguel Otero speech, “Mr. Toastmaster and Gentlemen,” 1-2, n.d., c. 1899/1900, box 4, file 13, Otero Collection, CSWR. According to Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood*, 80, there were 342 public schools in 1890; 143 taught lessons in English, 106 in Spanish, and 93 in both languages.

⁶⁷In Puerto Rico, the federal government permitted the territory to use its revenue to educate the schoolchildren, but New Mexico had to send its revenue to the federal government. This is from the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, June 29, 1901, Dargan Papers, CSWR. For Otero’s comments, see Otero speech, “Mr. Toastmaster and Gentlemen,” 1-2, CSWR.

territory had performed admirably with the residents themselves raising the additional funds necessary to establish public schools. Delegate Rodey charged that the government had not assisted New Mexico since 1846 and complained that while it was sending revenue and teachers to Puerto Rico and the Philippines, it had never done so for his territory.⁶⁸ Clearly, the assimilationists asserted, people of Mexican descent were making progress and becoming like Anglo Americans. Only a lack of federal support and statehood continued to hinder them.

Assimilationists also emphasized how many people of Mexican descent already knew or were learning English. A Boston scholar informed the nation that while “ten years ago English was an unknown tongue over most of the area of new Mexico...today it is taught to the children of every county.”⁶⁹ A New Mexican poet, J.W. Knaebel, agreed and drafted a witty poem on the subject, including a stanza with the demand that Beveridge and his ilk acknowledge “that the children you talked with were quite bright. And with few exceptions spoke English right.”⁷⁰ Another assimilationist testified to the congressmen that if the Spanish speakers did not already know English, there had been so much progress toward achieving that aim that soon it would be only the elderly, and perhaps women (who had begun to attend school only recently), who would lag behind.⁷¹ Delegate Rodey argued that most *nuevomexicanos* already spoke “English as well as Spanish” and that one could travel through New Mexico for hundreds of miles and “probably not hear a word of Spanish.” Furthermore, he noted how the Spanish-language

⁶⁸“New Mexico’s Brave Fight for Statehood,” *Houston Daily Post*, September 20, 1903, scrapbook, box 1, Bernard Rodey Papers, MSS 175 BC, CSWR.

⁶⁹Senate Committee on the Territories, *Statehood for the Territories: Papers Relating to the Question of Statehood for the Territories*, 57th Cong., doc. 153 (Jan.-Feb. 1903), 13.

⁷⁰J. W. Knaebel, poem, box 14019, file 58, Prince Papers, NMSRCA.

⁷¹Senate Committee on the Territories, *New Statehood Bill Subcommittee Hearings*, 96, passim; Thomas B. Catron Papers, New Mexico Political Papers, series 404, reel no. 2, CSWR.

newspapers regularly informed their readers that “it is the duty of every father to see that his children learn the language of the country, and that is English.”⁷² Senator Porter J. McCumber (Republican, ND) alleged that the residents would have learned English even faster if they had not been isolated from the rest of the nation in their territorial status. He believed that statehood would enhance their facility with the language.⁷³

To convince others that the people of the territories were becoming more American, assimilationists pointed to how modern and progressive the territorial residents were becoming: establishing institutions of higher learning, adopting the latest technology, and embracing civilized culture. Assimilationists from Arizona submitted petitions to Congress asserting that their territory was “as much civilized as Indiana,” the state of the despised Senator Beveridge.⁷⁴ In New Mexico, the former New Mexican Governor, L. Bradford Prince, noted how many institutions had been built in recent years: the capitol, a military institute, and various asylums for the blind, the deaf, and the insane.⁷⁵ Delegate Rodey informed congressional representatives that the cities and towns of New Mexico exhibited the most recent technology and signs of modernity including “street cars, electric lights, waterworks, gas works, telephones, clubs, postal city delivery, etc.”⁷⁶ Governor Otero complained incessantly about visiting easterners like Senator Beveridge who remarked upon every adobe building while remaining

⁷²Senate Committee on the Territories, *New Statehood Bill Subcommittee Hearings*, 332. Interestingly, despite Delegate Rodey’s assertions, he seemed reluctant to leave the learning of English up to the leaders of the Spanish-speaking community. Several years later, after he had been appointed by President Roosevelt to serve as Puerto Rico’s liaison, he continued to submit articles to the Spanish-language press in New Mexico, encouraging Spanish speakers to learn English. See Arturo Fernández-Gibert, “*La Voz del Pueblo*: Texto, Identidad y Lengua en la Prensa Neomexicana, 1890-1911” (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2001), 389-98. Gibert defines Rodey as being an assimilationist.

⁷³57th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (Jan.-Feb., 1903), 775, 1942.

⁷⁴Petitions, Statehood Bill (January 13-14, 1903), Records of the Senate, Record Group (RG) 46, file SEN 57A-K16, National Archives.

⁷⁵“New Mexico’s Claims,” *New York Daily Tribune*, January, 19 1903, box 14019, file 58, Prince Papers, NMSRCA.

⁷⁶58th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (April 1904), 5148.

oblivious to the region's modernization. He expressed irritation that camera-toting tourists noticed only what differed from the East as they "press[ed] the button upon every burro that they meet. They are delighted to catch the features of a worthless old Indian. They photograph the oldest adobe building erected over three hundred years ago."⁷⁷ Otero's grumbling about the East's fascination with "difference" is apt. Many magazine articles of the day visually depicted Arizona and New Mexico with pictures of adobe structures in need of repair, creating an image of the territories' backwardness and inferiority.⁷⁸

Assimilationists also attempted to convince other Americans that some people of Mexican descent already were like Anglo Americans and had proven themselves to be so through military service. Governors Otero and Prince and Delegate Rodey all cited the soldiers who had died in the Civil War battle at Glorieta, the number who had volunteered for the Spanish American War, and the personal sacrifices that New Mexicans had made on the distant battlefields of "El Caney," "Santiago," "San Juan Hill," and more. They reminded other Americans that a greater percentage of New Mexicans had volunteered for service during the Spanish American War than had done so from any other state or territory. Furthermore, Theodore Roosevelt's famed Rough Riders owed much to people of Mexican descent for its acclaimed feats as over half of the group came from New Mexico and Arizona.⁷⁹ Otero alone had energetically recruited

⁷⁷Miguel Antonio Otero, *Otero: An Autobiographical Trilogy* (New York: Arno Press, 1974), 392-93.

⁷⁸For an example of this, see Watson, "The People of New Mexico," 340-44.

⁷⁹Draft of Otero's autobiography, 283-84, box 5, file 1, Dargan Papers, CSWR.

an impressive number of soldiers for the conflict with Spain, later winning a medal for helping to organize Roosevelt's regiment.⁸⁰

Finally, assimilationists argued that not only were the territorial residents capable of becoming like Anglo Americans—due to their pure European heritage—but that they already were American because of their birth on U.S. soil or via agreements written into the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Delegate Rodey reminded Congress that most of the territorial residents of Mexican descent who were 56 or younger had been born “under the American flag” in the New Mexican territory.⁸¹ Judge Fall of New Mexico informed the U.S. congressmen that former Mexican officials had taken an oath of allegiance to the United States in 1846. He stressed that “these people are not in any sense Mexicans.”⁸² He continued by noting that they “appreciate our Government, and not one of them would go down into old Mexico if he were offered in exchange for his American citizenship one of the princely cattle ranches of that Republic.”⁸³ The *Denver Republican* opined that the nation should fulfill the promises it made under the treaty with Mexico and asserted that people of “American or Mexican” descent made good Americans.⁸⁴ Despite the assimilationists' arguments, many Americans remained skeptical about the heritage of people of Mexican descent and their ability to improve their economic situation and assimilate as Anglo Americans.

⁸⁰Otero, *An Autobiographical Trilogy*, 64.

⁸¹Senate Committee on the Territories, *New Statehood Bill Subcommittee Hearings*, 331-32.

⁸²House Committee on the Territories, *House Joint Resolution Hearings*, 50.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 52.

⁸⁴“Governor Otero and New Mexico,” repr. from the *Denver Republican*, n.d., c. June, 1901, box 6, scrapbook, Otero Collection, CSWR.

Exclusion Reigns

New Mexico and Arizona did not become states in 1903. Although the assimilationists had succeeded in getting the omnibus statehood bill through the House of Representatives, the bill remained mired in the Senate (and under the control of Senator Beveridge's committee) until it eventually died without ever coming to a vote. By the end of 1902, Beveridge and his committee further helped their exclusionist objectives when they published their committee report, recommending against statehood.

Initially, Theodore Roosevelt had expressed the utmost confidence in his diverse band of Rough Riders from the territories and other parts of the nation. He considered them ideal Americans because of their valorous deeds in the Spanish American War and because they were representative of America's success in fusing and assimilating different peoples into a new American mold.⁸⁵ In 1899 he was so enthusiastic that he came out in favor of statehood.⁸⁶ But a few years later, after reading Senator Beveridge's negative report on the territories, then President Roosevelt began to worry about how people of Mexican descent might damage the nation. Consequently, he approved of Senator Beveridge's covert tactics to prevent statehood from coming to a vote and avoided mentioning statehood in his 1903 annual message to Congress.⁸⁷

Other Anglo Americans shared Roosevelt's nascent reservations. One reporter, while initially accepting some of Delegate Rodey's arguments about the wonders of New Mexico, opined at the end of his article that perhaps the territory was not as ready for statehood as Rodey had implied for one may "see many things which sort of weaken his

⁸⁵Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001): 27, 41-42

⁸⁶Dargan, "New Mexico's Fight for Statehood, 1895-1912," 13.

⁸⁷Braeman, "Albert J. Beveridge and Statehood for the Southwest," 320. In Wagoner, *Arizona Territory*, 412.

[one's] belief in the advisability of making New Mexico a full-fledged State.”⁸⁸ Morris Watson from *Outlook* doubted that people of Mexican descent in either of the territories could be good Americans because he believed that their Spanish blood had “so degenerated and mingled with the Indian tribes” that they did “little credit to their intrepid ancestors.”⁸⁹ The *Philadelphia Daily Evening Telegraph* opined under the title, “Not Fit for Citizenship,” that “less than either Indians or negroes do these mongrel Mexicans afford the material of which citizens are made.”⁹⁰ These views suggested that many Americans were not accepting the assimilationists’ claims that people of Mexican descent were predominantly European and thus became skeptical about their potential for becoming American.

The 1903 strike against the owners of the copper mines in Clifton and Morenci (AZ) further hindered the assimilationists’ cause. A total of 3,500 miners, most of whom were of Mexican or Italian descent, walked off their jobs to protest a change in working hours and pay. As historian Linda Gordon has shown, the strike eventually led to a hardening of racial lines in Arizona as both sides began to emphasize the participation of people of Mexican descent. The owners did so to divide the workers whereas the strikers emphasized their ethnicity for solidarity and continued support for their cause. After the strike, there were clearer delineations between who could be white and accepted into the dominant community and who could not: Italians were white Americans, people of Mexican descent were not. In the following year, when a group of Irish orphans arrived from New York to move in with their adopted families of Mexican descent, the newly

⁸⁸“New Mexico’s Good Points Overlooked,” *Pittsburgh Times*, May 26, 1903, box 1, scrapbook, Rodey Papers, CSWR.

⁸⁹Watson, “The People of New Mexico.”

⁹⁰Article, retyped, “Not Fit for Citizenship,” *Daily Evening Telegraph* (Philadelphia), December 13, 1902, box 10, file 6, Dargan Papers, CSWR.

expanded white community (based on the Italian additions) decided that Irish (or white) children should not live with people of Mexican descent because they were not white. The event made national headlines. This story, plus the strike, likely led many Americans to wonder about the wisdom of bringing more people of Mexican descent, especially those in Arizona, into the nation. Like Anglo Arizonans, Anglo Americans questioned the whiteness of people of Mexican descent and their potential to assimilate. In addition, the strikers' class position and perceived radicalism made them seem all the more dangerous and less American.⁹¹

The exclusionists' success in raising concerns about people of Mexican descent—specifically with regards to their race and class—led to new proposals to merge the territories into one Anglo-dominated state. The theory was that the larger group of Anglo Americans would be able to minimize the influence of people of Mexican descent. The proposals to unite the territories came with various suggestions to re-name the new territory as well, including Montezuma after the Aztec emperor or Lincoln, an indisputably American name, or simply “Arizona” to appease the Arizonans while placing the new state government in Santa Fe, the former New Mexican capitol.⁹² This merger or “jointure” as it was then called resulted in a shifting of alliances as Delegate Rodey joined Senator Beveridge (who had given up on excluding both the territories) and

⁹¹See Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁹²In the early 1880s, William Gillette Ritch, the head of New Mexico's new Bureau of Immigration—whose role was to encourage people from other parts of the nation to settle there—was partially responsible for the idea of naming the territory Montezuma since he created the myth that the Aztec emperor Montezuma had initially resided in Santa Fe before following an eagle in 1325 A.D. to Tenochtitlán, the site of present day Mexico City. See Nieto-Phillips, *In the Language of Blood*, 122-23. For more on naming the state Montezuma, see “New Mexico's Claims,” *New York Daily Tribune*, January 19, 1903 and “Letters to Constitutional Convention” New Mexico Territorial Records, reel 38, NMSRCA. Also see reprinted article in the *New York Evening Post* from Albert E. Pillsbury in the *Boston Post*, November 19, 1908 in Dargan Papers, CSWR.

President Roosevelt in calling for one new state. But it also allowed other voices in the territories to become more audible. These pluralists and marginalizationists, whom, although they had not been mute during internal discussions over statehood, now had a wider stage upon which to promote their understanding of what it meant to be American. The nation would become aware of their strategies for dealing with people of Mexican descent when the movement for jointure erupted in 1904.

Chapter Three

The Door Swings Open?: Pluralism and Marginalization

Octaviano A. Larrazolo, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Allende, Mexico, was educated in the U.S. and lived in Arizona and Texas before settling in New Mexico during the 1890s. There, the teacher then lawyer ran for office, unsuccessfully, several times. He blamed his defeats on the new and growing population of eastern Democrats whom he believed were not willing to support a *nativo* or person of Mexican descent. Eventually this frustration caused him to change parties and become a Republican. Despite Larrazolo's initial failures in seeking office (he would later become a Republican governor and then senator for the state of New Mexico), he was a well-liked and gifted orator who impressed crowds with his fluency in the Spanish and English languages. Larrazolo took great pride in his ethnicity and did much to argue for and protect the rights of people of Mexican descent. But he did not often embrace the label of "Mexican" or even "Mexican American." The local terms that he and other people of Mexican descent used were *nativos* (natives), *nuevomexicanos* (New Mexicans), and increasingly, *hispanos* (Spanish) or *hispano-americanos* (Spanish Americans).¹

Larrazolo and his allies did more than just assert a Spanish American identity; they also advocated a new strategy, distinct from exclusion or assimilation, for

¹Octaviano Larrazolo Papers, MSS BC 614; Larrazolo Papers, 1-2, box 14, Edna Fergusson Papers, MSS 45; *El Independiente* (Las Vegas, NM) August 31, 1911, Larrazolo Papers, Center for Southwest Research, General Library, The University of New Mexico (hereafter these archives will be identified as CSWR).

incorporating people of Mexican descent into the U.S. without threatening national unity. This pluralist strategy would be rooted in a Spanish American identity and call for the full integration of people of Mexican descent into the U.S. via statehood. As most Americans at the time believed that there had to be homogeneity for national unity—generally meaning that this unity would be based upon a homogenous race, class, and culture—pluralists argued that no conflict would result from including people of Mexican descent for they shared the same race (whiteness based on a European heritage), aspirations for a middle-class status, and a common history with other Americans of European descent. They did not see sharing a language or traditions as prerequisites for unifying a nation.

Background on Spanish American Identity

By the turn of the century, most people of Mexican descent in New Mexico had established a clear preference for a Spanish American or *hispano-americano* identity over a “Mexican” one.² The principal historians in this field all point to increased negative encounters with Anglo Americans, the growing popularity of scientific ideologies

²Historian Anthony Mora traces the history of this transition. He finds that with the coming of Mexican independence in 1821, the new government granted all persons who performed a Mexican identity (by speaking Spanish, dressing in a certain way, and living a more settled lifestyle as opposed to Apaches who moved frequently) status as Mexicans. In New Mexico (under the Mexican government), such an identity did not confer a new racial category but only a national one. The existing multitude of *castas* or races remained although most New Mexicans began to use primarily two categories: *indio* and *español*. With the coming of the Mexican-American War and annexation to the U.S., persons of Mexican descent encountered American ideas about race. Anglo Americans conceived of the newly annexed “Mexicans” as more of a racial group than a nationality, separating Indians into a distinct racial category and viewing non-Indians as persons of mixed race whom they called “Mexicans,” without conferring either a Mexican or American nationality. While New Mexicans initially contested these definitions of race and nationality, Mora finds that by the 1880s most non-Indians had come to accept “Mexican” as connoting race rather than a national affiliation and considered themselves racially “Mexican” (as opposed to Anglo or “white” Americans), even as they saw themselves as part of the United States. They did not concede, however, that “Mexican” meant “mixed race.” But by 1900, even this label has diminished as the residents began to favor *hispano* due to increased conflict with Anglos. See Anthony P. Mora, “Mesillaros and Gringo Mexicans: The Changing Meanings of Race, Nation, and Space in Southern New Mexico, 1848-1912” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2002).

denigrating Mexicans as persons of “mixed blood,” and the concomitant rise of the Spanish-language press as factors in encouraging the embrace of a Spanish identity over a Mexican one. Consequently, people of Mexican descent began to use the labels *nativo* and *hispano* or *hispano-americano* far more than *mexicano* and insisted upon this identity, correcting those Anglo Americans who referred to them as Mexicans.³

This greater insistence upon a Spanish American identity occurred alongside the intensified statehood debate.⁴ As the exclusionists attacked the racial, class, and cultural background of *nativos* who were attempting to come into the nation via statehood, people of Mexican descent became more intent upon asserting and proving their white racial status and ability to be full members of the nation. Likewise, various assimilationists willingly adopted the term “Spanish American” as an effective way to encourage other Americans to accept New Mexico as a state. The territory’s new Bureau of Immigration began to tout the Spanish history of *nuevomexicanos* in the late 1890s and into the next century as a way to boost Anglo immigration and improve the chances for statehood.⁵

³See works by Mora, “Mesillars and Gringo Mexicans,” and Charles Montgomery, *The Spanish Redemption: Heritage, Power, and Loss on New Mexico’s Upper Rio Grande* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). Also, see John M. Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s-1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2004), 2, 80-92. On pp. 84-85 Nieto-Phillips further explains that while there are few extant sources from non-literate *nuevomexicanos*, the oral history which exists confirms that they also proclaimed and supported the idea of a Spanish American identity. See also John-Michael Rivera, *The Emergence of Mexican America: Recovering Stories of Mexican Peoplehood in U.S. Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 51. Particularly, note Rivera’s chapter, “Constituting Terra Incognita: The “Mexican Question” in U.S. Print Culture,” 51-81 for more examples of articles about people of Mexican descent as people of mixed race in the late nineteenth century.

⁴Arturo Fernández-Gibert, in his analysis of the newspaper *La Voz del Pueblo* (Las Vegas, NM), finds the paper consistently using *hispano americano* (Spanish American) after 1903. See Arturo Fernández-Gibert, “*La Voz del Pueblo*: Texto, Identidad y Lengua en la Prensa Neomexicana, 1890-1911” (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2001), 331-32.

⁵Both Mora, “Mesillars and Gringo Mexicans,” and Montgomery, *The Spanish Redemption*, note the acceptance of a Spanish American identity among some Anglo Americans around 1900. Mora further notes the creation of a New Mexican identity around the same time as a way to defuse the “race” issue by providing a more neutral label that could be used in promoting statehood to outsiders. This is an interesting view but I found that *nativo*, *hispano-americano*, and their equivalents in English were used more in the Spanish- and English-language press and that there was more overt discussion about the racial heritage of

The popularity of this new identity depended, in part, on the decline of the “black legend,” which had depicted Spaniards as especially avaricious and cruel towards Indians. Helen Hunt Jackson’s popular novel *Ramona* (1884) had begun to weaken the legend by romanticizing the Spaniards of the missionary period.⁶ The U.S. victory over Spain in 1898 helped to spur its decline as the Spaniards demonstrated that they were no longer a threat to the increasingly powerful American nation. Always the savvy publicist, Governor Otero had capitalized upon and encouraged this changing attitude by arranging for silver objects and other items representative of Spanish colonial art to be displayed at the 1904 World’s Fair, thereby linking his territory with then favorable attitudes toward Spain.⁷

The racial component to this Spanish identity was not new. The significance of purity of blood claims or *limpieza de sangre* had a long history extending back to medieval Spain before spreading to colonial Latin America. Spaniards brought this idea to Mexico and helped to create a suspicion of people of mixed heritage. The infamous eighteenth-century *castas* (caste or race) paintings, especially popular in Mexico, later made these views abundantly clear. This artwork depicted an elaborate array of *castas*, from *indios* [Indians] to *españoles* [Spaniards], which categorized people into rigid groups and a hierarchical structure according to the racial heritage of their parents. Yet intermarriage, wealth, and other factors made the system more fluid than it appeared,

the population in the territories than Mora concedes. For evidence of Anglo Americans using the label “Spanish Americans” to promote the territory, see Nieto-Phillips, *In the Language of Blood*, 118-42 where he notes how the editor of the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, Max Frost actively encouraged this identity to add supporters to the cause of statehood and describes the actions of the Bureau of Immigration. The bureau’s publications, which had previously focused on Indians, portraying them as recently civilized and docile, began after 1894 to concentrate more on the positive role of Spanish *conquistadores*.

⁶Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood*, 151 reports that Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona* was a bestselling book, like that of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in the nineteenth century.

⁷“New Mexico Shows Much of Antique,” n.d., c. 1903/1904, in box 6, scrapbook, Otero Collection, MSS 21 BC, CSWR.

allowing people to alter their caste, identity, and status in society. Certain jobs bestowed a higher status regardless of one's heritage, with all military men identified as "españoles" in the census. Those who had power appropriated the label of *español*, making this the identity sought after by those eager to advance in society.⁸ Historian Eric Meeks found that in the late nineteenth century, wealthy Mexican ranchers near the U.S. border emphasized their European heritage and displayed it by marrying women of European descent and purchasing European goods.⁹ In the early twentieth century, people of Mexican descent vigorously denied any attempt to categorize them as *mestizo* or of mixed heritage and asserted their purity of blood and Spanish ancestry. In 1901, 600 people in Las Vegas (NM) rose up in the streets to protest allegations in a local newspaper that they were inferior and of "mixed blood." A local attorney informed the then assembled crowd that he was " 'Spanish American[,] as are those who hear me' " and that he had no other heritage except " 'that which was brought by Don Juan de Oñate,' " the Spaniard who had claimed New Mexico for Spain in 1598.¹⁰

Nativos in the territories saw themselves as Spanish, European, and white, and capable of rising to the highest class like that of Don Oñate. Therefore, they saw no contradiction in becoming part of a nation in which many of its dominant members considered themselves white and middle-class; they did not believe that they needed to change or learn any new ways as they already saw themselves as sufficiently American in the ways that mattered, in terms of their agreement with the nation's political and

⁸Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood*, 9, 17-22, 25-37; Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 271-97.

⁹Eric Vaughn Meeks, "Border Citizens: Race, Labor, and Identity in South-Central Arizona, 1910-1965" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 46.

¹⁰Quoted in Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood*, 13-14.

economic system. In their view, sharing the same language and culture was irrelevant to national identity.

The Pluralists

Pluralism evolved from a confluence of factors: the growth and increasing use of a Spanish American label among people of Anglo and Mexican descent, the exclusionists' recent challenge of the *nativos* during the statehood debate, and the recognition among some people of Mexican descent that the assimilationists had failed to convince others that *nativos* were sufficiently American. Most pluralists were people of Mexican descent who were well educated, bilingual, and the political and economic leaders of their communities. They were merchants, teachers, lawyers, politicians, and the editors and journalists of the Spanish-language press. Most of them lived in the Arizonan and New Mexican territories. The pluralists would gain more Anglo allies as their message spread outside of the territories.

Pluralists and assimilationists agreed on two key issues: both groups called for the incorporation of people of Mexican descent based upon their Spanish heritage and both believed that the *nativos* who were not yet of the proper class standing could change to become so. But on other issues they disagreed. While assimilationists argued for the *nativos'* eventual sameness and unity with Anglo Americans on the basis of race, class, and Anglo-Saxon culture, pluralists believed that their membership in the white race, their middle-class status, and their Hispanic European origin should suffice. While the pluralists explained that most *nativos* wanted to and were learning the English language, they did not think it was a necessary criterion of American identity. Furthermore, they promoted their right to continue to speak Spanish, encouraged others to learn and

maintain it, and worked hard to ensure that once integrated into the U.S., they would not be marginalized.

Most historians have credited philosopher Horace Kallen with coining the concept of pluralism or “cultural pluralism,” in an article published by the *Nation* in 1915. Yet, Kallen acknowledged that his idea built upon what he had already observed. The *nativos* in the Arizonan and New Mexican territories did not identify their strategy as pluralism, but coalesced around ideas promoting their belonging in the nation, emphasizing their Spanish American identity, and stressing their right to continue using their native language and cultural traditions. In other words, they argued that they belonged in the nation and could become good Americans just like any other person of European descent. This pluralism, however, included an exclusionary component, for these pluralists did not recognize or acknowledge pluralism for everyone. Instead, they argued that they would unify with Anglo Americans on the basis of their shared European history. They did not promote a common history with people of Indian descent, and patently avoided discussing or adamantly denied any mixed heritage.¹¹

Some of the clearest examples of a pluralist strategy emerging among *nativos* first become apparent during Senator Beveridge’s 1902 whirlwind tour of the territories. In these hearings, Senator William P. Dillingham (Republican, VT) closely questioned a probate clerk, Isidor Armijo, about his ancestry. Armijo replied that he was “of Spanish extraction but I was born in the United States and I am an American.” He saw no conflict in being both Spanish *and* American. When Chairman Beveridge responded that

¹¹Kallen’s pluralism may have included similar exclusionary elements. For while he did not think cultural differences threatened national unity, he mostly concentrated on people of European descent and did not extend his argument to people descended from other parts of the world. See Horace Kallen, “Democracy vs. the Melting Pot,” *Nation* 100 (1915).

the committee was “just getting at the racial blood; that is all”¹² and pressed him on his Mexican heritage, Armijo retorted, “Yes [his parents were Mexican],...and yours were German, but that doesn’t make you Dutch.”¹³ Armijo did not see heritage as dictating national affiliation and made sure that Beveridge understood this.

Armijo’s views were shared by others from New Mexico. Pablo Jaramillo, a census enumerator, identified himself to the Beveridge committee as a “Spaniard,” explaining that he had been born in and always lived in New Mexico. The Beveridge committee interviewed another census taker, Clementa Ortíz, about whom she had visited for the census, asking, “And to what race did those inhabitants mainly belong, Mexican or American?” Like Armijo, Ortíz replied using her own terms, “Spanish; that is not any Indians.” According to Ortíz’s response, there were very few Mexicans in New Mexico since she understood Mexican to mean either a Mexican immigrant or someone of a mixed racial background, people whom she did not see as present in New Mexico.¹⁴

Another interviewee interspersed his own terms with those of his interviewers, but demonstrated that he had no intention of concealing his heritage. Thus, when the Beveridge Committee grilled a New Mexican justice of peace about the language used for recordkeeping, José Maria Garcia answered that they were generally kept “in Spanish, because the people here are Spanish ...and of course I like my own language better than any other, the same as I like the United States better than any other country in the world.” Garcia’s clever response made it abundantly clear that he considered himself a member

¹²Senate Committee on the Territories, *New Statehood Bill Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Territories*, 57th Cong., 2d sess., (1902), 100-101 (hereafter cited as *New Statehood Bill Subcommittee Hearings*.)

¹³Quoted in M.G. Cunniff, “The Last of the Territories” *World’s Work* 11 (Jan., 1906), 7115 in Ephemera files (EPH-HAIV-14), Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

¹⁴Senate Committee on the Territories, *New Statehood Bill Subcommittee Hearings*, 20, 35.

of the U.S., but that did not mean that he felt he needed to speak or maintain records in English in order to belong.¹⁵

In reporting on the statehood hearings and subsequent debates, the Spanish-language press emerged as one of the foremost proponents of pluralism. After hearing of Beveridge's trip, *La Voz del Pueblo* (Las Vegas, NM) speculated that if statehood was denied, it would be solely because of the number of Spanish-speakers in the territories. The editors wondered openly what this had to do with whether or not New Mexico was sufficiently prepared for statehood and denied the validity of any argument requiring a single language for national unity.¹⁶ *El Labrador* (Las Cruces, NM) mocked Beveridge's observation that he had heard schoolchildren speaking Spanish and ironically remarked, “*Tremendo descubrimiento!* [Tremendous discovery!]” They reminded their readers that speaking Spanish was not a crime and did not threaten the republic.¹⁷ On a more serious note, *La Voz del Pueblo* sadly lamented the problems existing between English and Spanish speakers, stating that there should not be such differences between “*miembros de una misma nación* [members of a same nation].” Its editors saw no difficulty with two languages in one country and argued that speaking Spanish did not imply any lack of loyalty.¹⁸

Slowly, the *nativo* pluralists began to receive some support from outside the territories. In 1903, for example, the *Omaha World-Herald* questioned why New Mexico

¹⁵Ibid., 41.

¹⁶“El Estado in Dudo,” *La Voz del Pueblo* (Las Vegas, NM), November 22, 1902.

¹⁷Although these newspapers had a vested interest in maintaining the Spanish-language, they would not continue to print the voluminous number of articles on the subject if their readers disagreed. “La Admision de Nuevo Mexico,” *El Labrador* (Las Cruces, NM), December 5, 1902, my trans.

¹⁸Repr. From *La Voz del Pueblo*, August 5, 1911 in Gibert, “*La Voz del Pueblo*,” 382, my trans.

was being denied admission because of its Spanish-speaking residents when people in the states of Louisiana and Missouri continued to converse in French.¹⁹

Amongst themselves, the *nativo* pluralists, and the Spanish-language press in particular, continued to do much to encourage Spanish-speakers to maintain their language skills and instruct their children. *La Revista de Taos* (Taos, NM) chided New Mexican schools for promoting Latin over Spanish.²⁰ *La Voz del Pueblo* criticized the people of Mexican descent who discouraged their children from speaking “‘mejicano” and taught their kids to pronounce Spanish words like non-Spanish speakers by eliminating the rolling sound of the letter “rr” used in Spanish. They admonished those readers who did this and reminded them of the beauty of their language—a “ ‘jewel’ ” from the ancestors that they should respect and admire.²¹ *El Independiente* (Las Vegas, NM) cajoled its readers not to be ashamed of their language or the rate at which they learned English, and noted how many foreigners to the country did not speak English despite the vast resources provided to them.²² Journalists for *La Voz del Pueblo* proclaimed the superiority of those who knew more than one language and noted how Spanish would aid business transactions, particularly with other countries.²³ A clever poem in the same newspaper, reacting to the pressure being brought on the peoples of the territories to learn English, declared that statehood would not occur until “frogs grow hair, mules have children, and donkeys learn to read” at which time no one would speak

¹⁹“Admit the Territories,” *Omaha* (NE) *World-Herald*, January 23, 1903.

²⁰“De la Capital de Nuevo Mexico,” *La Revista de Taos* (NM), August 19, 1910.

²¹“El Idioma Castellano,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, December 24, 1904, my trans.

²²“El Idioma Castellano,” *El Independiente*, repr. in *El Labrador*, December 30, 1904.

²³“Defensa de Nuestra Idioma,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, February 25, 1911.

Castilian any longer, it having been abolished. Instead “all the neighboring donkeys” would “bray in English.”²⁴

Many in the Spanish-language press supported learning English since they recognized the opportunities that such a skill would bring in the United States. These pluralists adopted what the Spanish scholar, Arturo Fernández-Gibert, identifies as a “dual discourse.” They encouraged *nativos* to learn English while they simultaneously promoted the use of Spanish as a community language, one tied to the collective memory of their ancestors.²⁵ Usually the periodicals affirmed the need to learn English first, and then concentrated on explaining to their readers why they should maintain Spanish and have pride in their native tongue. *La Voz del Pueblo* included an article which sums up this view: “we need to learn the language of our country, and that we are doing; but we don’t need to, with such motive, deny our origin, our race, our language...”²⁶

In addition to promoting both the English and Spanish languages, pluralists sought to change the minds of those who believed that a common language was central to national identity and unity. They criticized Arizonans for passing a 1909 law (literacy law) which required its residents to read and understand a section of the U.S. Constitution in English in order to vote.²⁷ But they did not dismiss the idea of having something in common to keep a diverse set of Americans unified. They replaced the idea of a

²⁴“Cuando Será Estado Nuevo México?” *La Voz del Pueblo*, February 16, 1908, my trans.

²⁵See Fernández-Gibert, “*La Voz del Pueblo*,” chap. 7. Erlinda Gonzales-Berry discusses these language issues in her article, “Which Language Will Our Children Speak,” in *The Contested Homeland: A Chicano History of New Mexico*, ed. Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and David R. Maciel (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000) and argues that *nuevomexicanos* used arguments about the practicality of learning Spanish and using Spanish to help native speakers learn English, rather than making arguments about native-language rights because they feared these arguments would not help their case for statehood.

²⁶Repr. from *La Voz Del Pueblo*, February 25, 1911 in Fernández-Gibert, “*La Voz del Pueblo*,” 415-16, my trans.

²⁷“La Villania Arizoniana,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, March 13, 1909.

universal language with that of a common heritage, one rooted in a shared European ethnicity and a history of conquering the Americas together. Unlike the Beveridge committee, which had seemed to delight in the fact that one school superintendent did not know who Christopher Columbus was, the pluralists—led by the talented Larrazolo—spun a tale of a common history which began long before the Pilgrims looked upon the revered Plymouth Rock.²⁸

Octaviano Larrazolo spoke eloquently and frequently on behalf of his European past. In 1907, Larrazolo reminded the assembled crowd at the Coronado Commemorative Convention that intrepid Spaniards had crossed the mysterious seas to the New World, willingly burnt their ships to aid in their conquest over the powerful Aztec empire, and then christianized the Indians in New Mexico and other places long before the English had even thought about settling at Jamestown. Their bold actions had resulted in future conquests in the Americas. As a result, their descendants did not need any special tutelage on how to become American. Moreover, they deserved credit for making the U.S. possible.²⁹ Through these speeches, Larrazolo worked to build a shared memory and history among persons of Mexican descent by connecting them to the Spanish *conquistadores*. At the same time he linked them to other Europeans by pointing out how the Spaniards were the first among many Europeans to venture to the New

²⁸Miguel Antonio Otero, *Otero: An Autobiographical Trilogy* (New York: Arno Press, 1974), 214; Newspaper clipping, no source, n.d., box 1, scrapbook, Bernard Rodey Papers, MSS 175 BC, CSWR.

²⁹Larrazolo speech, Coronado Commemorative Convention, Albuquerque (NM), October 9, 1907, box 1, file 11, Larrazolo Papers, CSWR. Larrazolo's mention of ship-burning refers to the conquest story in which the Spaniards voluntarily burned their ships to force themselves to fight harder, knowing they would have no easy method of escape.

World, so that he and other people of Mexican descent would feel a sense of belonging and community with the dominant Anglo Americans in the nation.³⁰

Benjamin Maurice Read, a prominent attorney, territorial legislator, and a native-born New Mexican of Anglo and Mexican descent, also promoted pluralism. Raised primarily by his *nativo* mother, after his father had died when he was still a boy, he preferred Spanish to English. Troubled by the lack of New Mexican history written in the Spanish-language and the Anglos' growing control over territorial affairs, Read researched the territory's history from the perspective of people of Mexican descent. He worried that if he did not do so, the Anglo view and narrative of events would prevail, consigning *nuevomexicanos* and their culture to a secondary place in society. In his first book on the history of the U.S.-Mexican War (1910), Read emphasized the early roots of American expansionism. In his second book on the history of New Mexico, he sought to treat the Spanish conquerors more objectively than he believed that Anglo historians had done.³¹

Some Anglo Americans accepted these pluralists' arguments and promoted a connection between the history of *nuevomexicanos* and other Americans. In 1909, journalist John Cowan informed his readers that a Spaniard, Juan de Oñate, had established "European civilization at Santa Fe" before "a Saxon had set foot in New England."³² At times, even President Theodore Roosevelt supported the idea of a common history, as he did when he noted that "some [Spaniards] had come to New

³⁰This concept of building collective memories is from George Lipsitz and is discussed in William V. Flores and Rina Benmayor, eds., *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 266-68.

³¹Doris Meyer, *Speaking for Themselves: Neomexicano Cultural Identity and the Spanish-Language Press, 1880-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), 193-205.

³²John L. Cowan, "Two More Stars for Old Glory," *Pacific Monthly* 22, no. 3 (Sept. 1909): 232.

Mexico, as did your ancestors, Governor [Otero], at a time when not one English speaking community existed on the Atlantic seaboard,” and praised them for their spirit of adventure.³³

Like Anglo Americans who admired their English forebears more than they necessarily identified with modern England, pluralists associated themselves more with their ancestors and Spain’s former glory than to current relatives in that nation or to modern-day Spain. Such connections meant that they could be proud of (and convince others to acknowledge and respect) their Spanish past without conflicting with Anglo Americans’ negative ideas about impoverished southern Europeans (including Spaniards) who continued to emigrate to the states. For the most part, however, there was very little, if any, discussion about the relationship between people of Mexican descent and recent Spanish immigrants.³⁴

Pluralists continued to emphasize their European and *conquistador* tradition through a variety of celebrations and speeches. When exclusionists tried to smear them for not knowing American history, pluralists countered by suggesting that perhaps Anglo Americans did not know the history of their country and the role that Spanish conquerors had played in dominating and settling it. Pluralists believed that people of Mexican descent were just as American as those with Anglo ancestry, and thus felt there was no need for them to change or assimilate. In 1911, Benjamin Read lauded Don Diego de Vargas’s 1693 conquest over the Pueblo Indians as one of the most important events in

³³Otero, *Otero: An Autobiographical Trilogy*, 323.

³⁴In fact, the Twelfth Census of the U.S. shows that there were only 27 Spanish immigrants in New Mexico in 1900 and 51 in Arizona. There were no attempts in the Spanish-language press to establish any connection with this small group of newcomers.

New Mexican history.³⁵ Other prominent men agreed as George Armijo—a famed Rough Rider—dressed as Vargas at the Santa Fe Fiesta in 1911, visually highlighting his and other festivalgoers’ Spanish heritage and role in helping to civilize the territory.³⁶

But as these accounts attest, there was also an exclusionary element to the pluralists’ strategy. Like the assimilationists, they believed it was best to associate themselves with the groups deemed most American, rather than allying with those outside the corridors of power. In particular, the pluralists enhanced their standing by stressing their *conquistador* history while remaining silent about the place of Indians in their narrative of the past. Although many people of Mexican descent in the territories were likely the progeny of people of a variety of backgrounds (Europeans had extensively intermarried with Indians and Africans or others of diverse backgrounds in the region), pluralists did not mention Aztec or Pueblo leaders, except when they were conquered, and effectively erased them from their histories.³⁷ While prominent pluralists such as Read, Armijo, and Larrazolo chose to remember Vargas’s conquest in New Mexico, they ignored the bold story of the Pueblo Indian, Popé, who led the successful 1680 Rebellion, in which the Indians expelled the Spaniards from their communities and prevented their return for thirteen years.

Although the pluralists did not explicitly discuss the class status of people of Mexican descent, it was clear that the most active proponents of pluralism were those of eminent stature who considered themselves equal to those of Anglo descent. While they

³⁵“Triunfo de la Justicia,” *La Revista de Taos*, January 27, 1911. For more on Read, see Meyer, *Speaking for Themselves*, 183-206.

³⁶“George Washington Armijo,” in Rose Díaz and Jan Dodson Barnhart, eds., *Hispanic Heroes: Portraits of New Mexicans Who Have Made a Difference* (Albuquerque: Starlight Publishing, 1992).

³⁷See Gutierrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away*, 271-97 regarding the intimate relations among people of varied backgrounds in New Mexico.

spoke in terms embracing all *nativos*, it seemed that those with a higher class standing could more easily sell this heritage within and beyond the territories. Historically, class status had helped to determine racial status in Mexico and much of Latin America as those who had achieved a high economic standing often attained whiteness as well. Even some exclusionists and marginalizationists like the Harvard-educated editor of *World's Work*, Michael Glen Cunniff, seemed inclined to concede that people of Mexican descent with the highest stature had a pure Spanish heritage.³⁸ He would not grant this same racial status to an ordinary worker of Mexican descent. As the statehood debates raged on, the pluralists would continue to promote and disseminate their strategy of formally including people of Mexican ancestry into the nation, primarily on the basis of their shared European heritage and history with Anglo Americans. But theirs was not the only new strategy to arise from the dispute over the territories.

The Marginalizationists

Marcus Aurelius Smith, known as the “octopus” by his enemies for his formidable campaigning techniques, moved to Arizona from Kentucky in 1881. He became Arizona’s delegate to Congress in 1902 and later one of the state’s first senators. In the first years of the twentieth century, Arizona leaders such as the influential Smith worked closely with New Mexico in their joint aim to attain separate statehood. As an avid supporter of this cause, Smith seemed more like an assimilationist when he argued that people of Mexican descent in the Arizonan and New Mexican territories could learn new ways and become like Anglo Americans.³⁹ But when the members of Congress

³⁸Cunniff, “The Last of the Territories,” 7115.

³⁹Jay J. Wagoner, *Arizona Territory, 1863-1912: A Political History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1970), 97, 457, 485; Howard Lamar, *The Far Southwest: A Territorial History, 1846-1912*, rev. ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 412.

began to rally around the idea of bringing in a new mega-state, combining the territories of Arizona and New Mexico into one, Smith began to speak differently about New Mexico and its denizens of Mexican descent. He argued then that Arizona was more American than New Mexico since people of Anglo descent dominated the territorial government. Smith further noted that the *nativos* within his territory were diminishing in number relative to Anglo Americans, and that the few who remained were safely under the control of their employers. In making this argument, Smith and his allies created a new strategy for dealing with newcomers: marginalization.

The first marginalizationists were political and economic leaders, mostly of Anglo descent, within the Arizona and New Mexican territories. While some of the men originally had aligned themselves with the assimilationists because they favored statehood for their territories, many of them did not believe that people of Mexican descent could or should be entitled to be full Americans like themselves. Like exclusionists, they considered *nativos* inferior due to their status as lowly workers in the mines, ranches, and agricultural sectors of the territorial economies. Because of the jobs the *nativos* held, marginalizationists did not believe that these workers were of pure Spanish descent and therefore did not consider them white. They differed from the exclusionists, however, in that they favored statehood and believed that *nativos* within the territories would not threaten an Anglo American model of national unity nor overturn the existing class structure. Thus, they allied initially with the assimilationists in arguing that people of Mexican descent could fit within the nation and become full Americans, even as they were skeptical about it. But when the debate over combining the two

territories erupted in 1904, the marginalizationists staked out a position distinct from that of the assimilationists.

Before that happened, a few statehood supporters offered a glimpse of the marginalizationists' nascent strategy. In 1902, the Arizona delegate to Congress, Marcus Smith explained that there was no need to fear that *nativos* would challenge the dominant classes because "we never have had any strikes down there, practically speaking....they [people of Mexican descent] never bother about that kind of thing."⁴⁰ Colonel Ira M. Bond backed him up, testifying that "we have no strikes out there."⁴¹ Smith noted that while there were some "low and ordinary common laborers" from Mexico, there were only a few and they "had no appreciable effect whatsoever on an election or on the public spirit of the country."⁴² The following year, the new Arizona delegate to Congress, John Wilson, explained to congress members that while his territory included some Mexican immigrants, only 719 of the territory's registered voters were originally from Mexico. He added, "if they come they go back," a statement that presaged future arguments concerning the immigrants' transience in the country.⁴³ Agreeing with these territorial representatives, Senator Stephen B. Elkins (Republican, WVA) jumped into the fray with his version of historical facts, arguing that "Mexicans" were becoming outnumbered as "no race can withstand the Anglo-Saxon. The Latin races and the mixed Latin races give way before it. That was the case in California; it was the case in Colorado, and it is the

⁴⁰Senate Committee on the Territories, *New Statehood Bill Subcommittee Hearings*, 337.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 372.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 320-21.

⁴³House Committee on the Territories, *Further Hearings on Statehood Bill*, (Dec. 1903-Jan. 1904), 12-13, 16-24; House Committee on the Territories, *Statehood Bill*, Hearings, 57th Cong., 2d sess. (1903), 15.

case in New Mexico.”⁴⁴ Senator Charles Reid (Democrat, AR) later agreed, describing how the “Mexicans” and “Indians” had disappeared from California and would soon do so in Arizona and New Mexico as well.⁴⁵ As these examples demonstrate, the marginalizationists were beginning to stress that people of Mexican descent could be brought into the nation via statehood in ways that would not pose any threat to other Americans. They argued that *nativos* were docile and marginal members of American society who would not threaten the status quo and would either return soon to Mexico or eventually die out as they became overrun by superior Anglo Americans.

Once joint statehood became an official bill in 1904, Arizona marginalizationists promoted their nascent strategy more forcefully. Fearing that joint statehood would cause them to lose their economic and political authority to the more populous New Mexican territory, many Anglo Arizonans began to distinguish themselves from New Mexicans. They abandoned their assimilationist rhetoric in their efforts to convince other Americans that the Anglo population was the dominant group in Arizona, ran the territorial government, and controlled the few people of Mexican descent within it.

Just as assimilationists like Otero had contrasted themselves against Indians, blacks, and islanders to persuade others that *nativos* were American, so too did the marginalizationists in Arizona demonstrate how they differed from the neighboring territory by stressing their Anglo population and culture. R.E. Morrison, an attorney from Arizona, testified that “we conduct everything in the English language in our schools and in the courts of Arizona. In New Mexico, where they have a large Spanish

⁴⁴Interestingly, Senator Elkins was New Mexico’s territorial delegate to Congress in the 1870s, before moving to West Virginia and becoming a senator there. Appendix to 57th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (Feb. 9, 1903), 166.

⁴⁵58th Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (April, 1904), 5139.

and Mexican population, an interpreter is present practically all the time in the courts and frequently in the schoolroom.”⁴⁶ Morrison’s language implied that Arizona was more English-speaking and Anglo, and thus more American. In case there was any doubt about his meaning, he later added that white men had fought and taken Arizona from the Apaches and asked that “it be left to the white men...we say that we are entitled to that.”⁴⁷ An editorial cartoon in the *Arizona Republican* portrayed the Arizona territory as a white woman in a flowing dress and about to be married—against her will as she is in handcuffs—to a mustachioed man representing New Mexico and wearing cowboy regalia and a sombrero. The sketch reveals that the cartoonist thought that the elegantly coiffed Arizona would fit in well with the rest of the nation; New Mexico would not.⁴⁸ Although there were some marginalizationists in New Mexico who used arguments similar to those in Arizona, there was a greater percentage of people of Mexican descent in New Mexico—and more with higher class standing—making it harder for Anglo marginalizationists there to say that they controlled the *nativos* or dominated the political scene.

Arizonan marginalizationists stressed that the “American white population” in their territory was larger than the census had shown, was growing relative to the people of Mexican descent, and that this group controlled territorial politics. These

⁴⁶House Committee on the Territories, *Statehood for Arizona and New Mexico*, Hearings, 59th Cong., 1st sess., (1906), 18-19.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 24-25.

⁴⁸“Is this a Square Deal?” *Arizona* (Phoenix) *Republican*, December 3, 1905. For more analysis on statehood cartoons, see historian Richard Melzer’s work. Melzer examines editorial cartoons concerning territorial New Mexico in the national press and finds the newspapers depicting the residents as “unruly Mexicans.” Following statehood, Melzer discovers that the sketches changed, reflecting a new understanding of the state and its residents as “a young, attractive, and coveted Anglo woman.” Melzer’s work provides interesting insight into Americans’ views of themselves, and of people of Mexican descent, but leaves unanswered questions about how people of Mexican descent reacted to or contested such depictions. Richard Melzer, “New Mexico in Caricature: Images of the Territory on the Eve of Statehood,” *New Mexico Historical Review* 62, no. 4 (1987): 335-60. See pp. 340 and 358 for quotes.

marginalizationists denied the territory's racially diverse population by asserting that Arizona was more homogeneous than its opponents believed, and that the few non-whites who lived there had negligible influence on politics. Thus, they argued that making Arizona a state would not threaten the nation's homogeneity.⁴⁹ Governor Joseph H. Kibbey of Arizona explained that most of the *nativos* in the territory did not vote and therefore would not affect the government of the potential state or the country.⁵⁰ His successor, Governor Richard E. Sloan, reiterated that *nativos* would have little influence over government affairs. "The Mexican population," he declared, "is not more than fifteen per cent, mostly itinerants, and likewise no important factor in politics, for the American population is increasing while the Spanish-American stands still."⁵¹

Some people of Mexican descent indirectly aided the marginalizationists' efforts. Carlos Velasco, an intellectual from the elite class of Sonora, Mexico immigrated to Arizona for political reasons and ultimately decided to stay. In Tucson, he published one of the first Spanish-language newspapers in Arizona, *El Fronterizo*, and helped to found the conservative *Alianza Hispano-Americana* (AHA) organization in 1894. While the organization sought to help all people of Mexican descent in the U.S., its leaders concentrated on improving the workers' moral character by admonishing them to eschew vagrancy, respect work, and remain in their lowly positions as the marginalizationists would want them to do. The AHA's modest agenda reflected the upper-class status of its members as well as the shaky political climate in which it found itself. If AHA leaders worked too hard to contest the dominant Anglo American majority on behalf of the

⁴⁹House Committee on the Territories, *Further Hearings on Statehood Bill*, 19, 70-71, 73.

⁵⁰House Committee on the Territories, *Statehood for Arizona and New Mexico*, Hearings, (Jan.-Feb., 1909), 60th Cong., 2d sess., 36-42.

⁵¹Quoted in Charles Moreau Harger, "Our Two New States," *Outlook*, January 28, 1911, 165-76; quote from p. 171.

workers, they might threaten their own tenuous political and economic ties with the Anglo community.⁵²

Velasco's other mission was to encourage the repatriation of Mexicans to Mexico. This endeavor aided the arguments of the fledgling marginalizationists as they were beginning to argue that Mexicans would leave when the work was done. Velasco printed numerous articles promoting repatriation as he hoped to make the immigrants as temporary as Governor Sloan had implied. He also recommended that U.S. employers hire and repatriate Mexican labor rather than contracting for expensive Chinese "coolies" who were difficult to return.⁵³ Some Mexicans agreed. *La Voz del Estado* (Magdalena, Mexico) called upon its Mexican compatriots to return to Mexico where they would be treated better. The newspaper noted that only those who were "totally Americanized or given to adulation," would be accepted in the U.S.⁵⁴ Other Arizonans of Mexican descent did little to help the recent immigrants from Mexico. Although they shared an ethnicity with the new arrivals, the Arizonan *nativos* believed that they had nothing in common with them. Whereas the immigrants before the 1890s had been skilled workers from the mines of Mexico, many of the newcomers emigrated from farms and did not possess any special skills. In general, the small Spanish-language press in Arizona did

⁵²Thomas E. Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1854-1941* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), 102-12, 120-22; David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity in the American Southwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 56-65.

⁵³See Miguel Tinker Salas, *In the Shadow of the Eagles: Sonora and the Transformation of the Border during the Porfiriato* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses*, 102-8. For examples of articles in Velasco's newspaper, see "Repatriación de Mexicanos," *El Fronterizo* (Tucson, AZ), May 12, 1904 and "Los Peones Mexicanos," *El Fronterizo*, March 7, 1908, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

⁵⁴Quoted in Tinker Salas, *In the Shadow of the Eagles*, 248.

not reach out to support them and frowned upon any type of class uprising, which might jeopardize their own standing in society.⁵⁵

The growing number of marginalizationists joined the pluralists and assimilationists in quashing the movement for joint statehood.⁵⁶ In doing so, they helped to spread their views about Arizona's American qualities as well as in how they would deal with people of Mexican descent. Influenced by the marginalizationists, a Republican representative from Wisconsin, J.W. Babcock agreed that the people of Arizona represented "sturdy Americanism in its best form" and regarded New Mexicans with great suspicion.⁵⁷ Michael Glen Cunniff, the *World's Work* editor concurred, viewing Arizona as better and more American than New Mexico. With regards to New Mexico, he noted that "the chief problem lies in the people of the territory." He portrayed one of its cities as having "unlighted streets flanked by squat lines of adobe dwellings....the scene is all Spanish or all Mexican, as you will. It is not American."⁵⁸ Cunniff later decided to move to Arizona (to improve his failing health from tuberculosis) one year after he published this article. He soon became one of the territory's key delegates to the state constitutional convention, serving as convention

⁵⁵See Meeks, "Border Citizens," chap. 1; Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses*, 110-12 and 120-23.

⁵⁶The marginalizationists—along with the assimilationists and pluralists—had some impact in quashing joint statehood. Although joint statehood initially passed in 1906, Senator Foraker had attached an amendment requiring that a majority of each territory's residents approve jointure. Arizona residents overwhelmingly rejected it in that same year with 16,265 opposed to 3,141 in favor. While a majority of New Mexicans supported it with 26,195 in favor and 14,735 opposed (many of the largely *nativo* districts opposed it), other historians have shown that those who voted for jointure did so primarily to enhance their chances for single statehood. They knew Arizonans would reject the idea and calculated that if they demonstrated their willingness to work with Congress, its members might be more receptive to granting statehood to New Mexico. After the end of the jointure movement, historians have shown that more congress members became receptive to the idea of separate statehood. See Mark E. Pry, "Arizona and the Politics of Statehood, 1889-1912" (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 1995), 191 and Wagoner, *Arizona Territory*, 439.

⁵⁷J.W. Babcock, "Statehood Rights of Arizona and New Mexico," *Independent*, March 1, 1906, 505-8.

⁵⁸M. G. Cunniff, "The Last of the Territories," 7115.

secretary as well as a member on many key committees. In these positions, he helped to create the state's governing document, which did little to protect *nativos*' rights.⁵⁹

Charles Moreau Harger of *Outlook* repeated much of the marginalizationists' arguments and helped to disseminate them nation-wide. He noted how people of Mexican descent were decreasing in numbers and influence in the territories because while "some go back to their native country, others scatter as laborers," adding that "American [Anglo] immigration" had changed the territories such that "to-day, the 'native' occupies a secondary place." He further explained that people of Mexican descent would not threaten the nation since they did not conduct strikes or stay long enough to have any effect on the country. Harger finally observed that they could be grouped into two classes—a laboring class and a business one—and quoted a manager of a large ranch as saying that, " 'they [people of Mexican descent] do not strike, and, treated well, they remain with you We must have laborers and this class furnishes them.' "⁶⁰ In other words, the marginalizationists wanted a limited or marginal incorporation for people of Mexican descent. They wanted them to provide their labor without threatening the status quo.

Like the exclusionists, marginalizationists did not think that *nativos* had the requisite racial or class background to become full Americans. But in contrast to the exclusionists and assimilationists, they did not worry much about whether or not they learned English or adapted to Anglo American ways since they perceived the *nativos* as permanently working-class or transient, and thus unlikely to affect territorial or national politics. The marginalizationists also thought that Arizona increasingly would be

⁵⁹Wagoner, *Arizona Territory*, 432-33, 470-71 and Goff, *Arizona Biographical Dictionary*, 26.

⁶⁰Charles Moreau Harger, "Our Two New States," quote on 169.

dominated by Anglos as more such Americans—including Delegate Smith from Kentucky and the editor Cunniff among others—arrived in the territory every year. But the marginalizationists were also not just talkers, for while they *argued* that people of Mexican descent posed no threat to national unity, they did their utmost to ensure that this remained the case by passing and attempting to enact laws that would restrict *nativos* to marginal positions in territorial society. In 1909, the Arizona territorial legislature succeeded in passing the literacy law for voter eligibility. Although this was not directed solely at people of Mexican descent (many in Arizona were concerned about the expanding European immigrant population as well), it removed the vote from many who had held that right since 1848. It would be difficult for *nativos* to have much political power as long as this law remained in force.⁶¹

The Pluralists and Marginalizationists Succeed

Eventually, both the pluralists and the marginalizationists succeeded in acquainting and persuading enough Americans of the validity of their strategies for incorporating or excluding people of Mexican descent. In 1908, shortly after the jointure bill had failed, President Roosevelt and his successor William Taft decided to abandon their efforts to sustain it. They understood that the territories, and Arizona in particular, would not alter their stance against joint statehood. The recent election of a Republican, Ralph Cameron, as the Arizona delegate to Congress—and the fact that New Mexico's new governor, George Curry, was a close friend of Teddy Roosevelt's—may have been factors in their acquiescence as the Republicans worried less about the new states boosting the strength of the Democratic Party. By 1910, U.S. congress members, including the indefatigable Beveridge, had reconciled themselves to the fact that the

⁶¹Thomas E. Sheridan, *Arizona: A History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995): 178-79.

territories would never accept being merged as one state. Thus, they approved enabling acts, placing the territories on paths to individual statehood after they drafted state constitutions.⁶²

The stipulations in these enabling acts demonstrated the effectiveness of each of the strategies for dealing with newcomers. Exclusionists such as Senators Dillingham and Beveridge succeeded in adding requirements that both the U.S. Congress *and* the U.S. President approve the draft constitutions. This specification had not been imposed upon any preceding state (generally only one or the other had to approve the document) and represented the exclusionists' last attempt to prevent the territories and their diverse populations from entering into the nation. The assimilationists also had some success as they inserted language mandating public schools to teach their primary coursework in English. Before this bill passed, Senator Beveridge tried to include a ban on teaching Spanish in the schools. The pluralists' influence helped to overturn this amendment.⁶³ Pluralists also succeeded in overriding Arizona's 1909 literacy law for the purpose of electing delegates to the constitutional convention and the new states' first elections.⁶⁴ Finally, the marginalizationists contributed to the enabling acts as the final language directed that the new constitutions require that all state officeholders speak, write, read, and understand English effectively. This specification would limit the opportunities of Spanish-only speakers in both of the new states.

Despite this setback, pluralists worked hard in New Mexico to maintain *nativos'* existing rights in their new constitution. They had a strong incentive to do so as they well

⁶²Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 431.

⁶³Governor George Curry (NM) and Delegate William Andrews (NM) lobbied hard to strip this amendment from the bill as they knew they would have to answer to the *nuevomexicanos* in their territory if they did not succeed. See Lamar, *The Far Southwest*, 431.

⁶⁴Pry, "Arizona and the Politics of Statehood," 219.

knew how *nuevomexicanos* had been attacked during the statehood debates and observed how *nativos*' rights had been diminished in Arizona. They succeeded because of their class standing, their ties across racial lines, and also because they had sufficient numbers and political clout to elect 32 people of Mexican descent (out of 100 delegates) to the territory's constitutional convention. In addition, Solomon Luna, a wealthy rancher and one of the most respected men of Mexican descent in the territory, was chosen to be the chair of the Committee on Committees, giving a *nativo* a substantial say in the composition of the committees that would draft various portions of the constitution.⁶⁵

Pluralists at the New Mexican constitutional convention pressed forward with establishing a number of protections for people of Mexican descent. The constitution ultimately specified that no person could be disfranchised due to "religion, race, language or color" or be prohibited from serving on juries or holding offices (other than state-wide ones that were restricted to English speakers per the enabling acts) because of not knowing how to read, write or speak either English *or* Spanish. They added language that gave people facing criminal prosecution the right to have charges and testimony interpreted to them in a language that they knew. Furthermore, the pluralists made sure that the proceedings of the convention, ballots, and all public documents would be made available in Spanish as well as English. They also made sure that the constitution stipulated that there would be no prohibition on the use of wine in any religious service and that "children of Spanish descent" would not be prohibited from attending public schools nor required to attend separate ones, and "shall forever enjoy perfect equality with other children in all public schools and education institutions of the State." The

⁶⁵New Mexico Constitutional Convention, *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the Proposed State of New Mexico*, (October 3, 1910-November 21, 1910).

constitution further declared that funding should be provided to train all teachers in Spanish as well as English so that they could teach Spanish-speaking students more effectively. Within the state's bill of rights, pluralists succeeded in maintaining all the rights originally extended to the New Mexican people in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Finally, the convention members approved a constitution that was extremely difficult to amend in regards to certain provisions for people of Mexican descent. For the sections on the franchise and education, the constitution required that three-fourths of each branch of the legislature approve the change as well as two-thirds of the population of each county. This provision would make it less likely that *nativos* would see their rights evaporate.⁶⁶

Despite these inclusionary and protective measures, the pluralists also incorporated exclusionary elements in the state constitution. Few provisions protected New Mexicans of African or Indian descent. An early version of the document allowed school districts to establish separate schools for people of African descent when two-thirds of the voters desired it. Such a policy would have replicated the discrimination and segregation of the Jim Crow South. Only three of the five *nativos* on the Education Subcommittee (and none of the six Anglos) opposed this provision. Although this language was not included in the final constitution, there was no distinct wording protecting people of African descent from being placed in separate schools as had been spelled out for *nativos*.⁶⁷ In addition to their complicity with African Americans'

⁶⁶Ibid., 9-10, 25-26, 35-36, 40-43; and Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, "Which Language Will Our Children Speak?" 173-74.

⁶⁷New Mexico Constitutional Convention, *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the Proposed State of New Mexico*, 115-17.

exclusion, pluralists kept silent about Pueblo Indians, creating no special provisions to allow Pueblo Indians to vote, as they had been able to do formerly under Mexican rule.⁶⁸

In general, pluralists expressed satisfaction with the final document, believing that it would help to protect their rights to speak and use Spanish and to continue following specific customs. At the close of the convention, Nestor Montoya, a delegate and the editor of *La Bandera Americana* (Las Cruces, NM), presented a gold cane to H.R. Whiting, the Sergeant-at-Arms for the convention, in gratitude for all the delegates' work in protecting the rights of *nativos*. Montoya explained that "in the name of the Spanish-American members of the Convention, I wish to say, that all delegates here have, as one man, helped to safeguard the rights of the two hundred thousand people of that blood in this Territory."⁶⁹ Benjamin Read was equally enthusiastic about the new constitution and its protection of the Spanish-language.⁷⁰ The Spanish-language newspaper *El Tiempo* (Las Cruces, NM) agreed and lauded the convention results.⁷¹ Even former governor Otero adopted more of a pluralist stance and stumped around the territory on behalf of the proposed governing document. He called upon "fellow citizens of Spanish-American blood, the same as I am and my ancestors were" to vote for the constitution. While he acknowledged the limits of the document, specifically its ban against non-English speakers holding state office, he pointed out that New Mexicans did not need to speak English for county- and precinct-level positions and that the current, territory-wide officials all knew English anyway.⁷² When it was time for the territorial residents to

⁶⁸Regarding the suffrage of Pueblo Indians under Mexican rule and after 1848, see Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood*, 37-40, 47, 54.

⁶⁹New Mexico Constitutional Convention, *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the Proposed State of New Mexico*, 289.

⁷⁰Meyer, *Speaking for Themselves*, 202.

⁷¹"Viva Nuevo Mexico!" *El Tiempo* (Las Cruces, NM), January 7, 1911.

⁷²Otero Speech, Taos County (NM), Jan., 1911, p. 3, box 4, file 12, Otero Collection, CSWR.

vote, “in English or in Spanish,” for or against the constitution, the residents overwhelmingly approved it. Eventually both the U.S. Congress and President Taft did so as well with New Mexico becoming a state in 1912.⁷³ As an additional symbol of the pluralists’ success, Octaviano Larrazolo became one of the state’s first governors in 1916.

The pluralists did not do so well in Arizona. Following the heated debates over joint statehood, the Arizona marginalizationists had persuaded many Americans that their territory was quite different from New Mexico, and more like the rest of the nation, since the Anglos controlled Arizona’s territorial politics. In part, this had been achieved by a series of territorial laws or acts limiting *nativos*’ opportunities, including the 1909 literacy law.⁷⁴ Anglos had also worked to exclude people of Mexican descent from key elected positions. Even in Tucson, where the *nativos* or *los tucsonenses*—as they called themselves there—held the majority, the Anglos dominated city politics.⁷⁵

A clear sign of Anglo control was the lack of *nativo* representation at the state constitutional convention. Only one out of the territory’s 52 delegates to the convention was *nativo*—the assimilationist Carlos Jácome—despite the fact that people of Mexican descent comprised about 20 percent of Arizona’s population. Furthermore, Jácome had a minimal role at the convention. Although there were 21 subcommittees created to draft portions of the constitution, Jácome, a long term Arizona resident, served on only one. The upstart delegate Cunniff, who had arrived only three years earlier, served on four major committees and as convention secretary. Another delegate, E.A. Tovrea, came

⁷³New Mexicans approved the constitution in January 1911 with 31,742 in favor and 13,399 opposed. See Senate, *New Mexico Constitution*, 61st Cong., 3d sess., (Washington, DC: GPO, 1911), 6. While the U.S. Congress had some issues with the difficulty of the amendment process, it eventually passed and New Mexico became a state in January 1912.

⁷⁴“An Act Enabling the People of New Mexico and Arizona to Form a Constitution and State Government,” 4-6.

⁷⁵ Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses*, 121-22.

from Illinois and was of Italian descent, yet he served on three committees. Furthermore, Jácome initiated none of the 150 or so propositions that delegates presented for inclusion in the constitution. He was not recorded as saying anything substantial in the official minutes and journals of the convention. Despite his exile to the minor subcommittee, “Schedule, Mode of Amending, and Miscellaneous,” Jácome and his fellow committee members grappled with one issue that sparked some debate amongst the other convention members. Their five-person committee approved language prohibiting interracial marriage—which they defined as being between whites and “negroes” or whites and people of Chinese descent—for the state constitution. But their fellow delegates thought differently, believing that the subcommittee members had shirked their duties by defining interracial marriage too narrowly. One convention member called for the prohibitions to extend at least to Indians and Japanese as well while another thought it should cover all of the “obnoxious races.” Ultimately, the delegates voted to cast the issue aside and leave it out of the constitution.⁷⁶

In their state constitution, the marginalizationists instituted a number of provisions to limit the opportunities of people of Mexican descent. First, they restricted public works jobs to U.S. citizens, thereby excluding all Mexican immigrants and Indians (who were not citizens) from this line of work. There was also an effort to restrict hazardous but desirable jobs, such as mining, to only English speakers. Marginalizationists argued that those speaking languages other than English would put their fellow workers in danger. Some exclusionists (now present in the territory since statehood was virtually assured) called for an even stricter ban that would prohibit

⁷⁶Arizona Constitutional Convention. *Minutes of the Constitutional Convention of the Territory of Arizona* (Phoenix: Phoenix Printing Co., 1910), 22-24 and John S. Goff, ed., *The Records of the Arizona Constitutional Convention of 1910* (Phoenix: Supreme Court of Arizona, 1991), Proposition 145, p. 732.

employers from hiring *any* alien labor.⁷⁷ A representative of the Immigration Restriction League wrote to the chair (and future state governor) of the convention, George P. Hunt, warning that if such a prohibition was not put into place, “it will be New Mexico all over again only a good deal worse.”⁷⁸ Both of these measures were rejected, but primarily because of a fear that such bans would result in an insufficient supply of workers, causing the major mines of Metcalf and Morenci to shut down and hurt the new state’s economy. Some marginalizationists also made an effort to codify the 1909 literacy law into the state constitution. They failed in this, however, as some Democratic convention members feared that would be held responsible for disfranchising Arizonans and reap the negative consequences (by seeing Republicans elected) since the enabling acts mandated that no person be prevented from voting due to their lack of English-language proficiency for constitutional delegates and in the first state elections.⁷⁹

Initially, some marginalizationists also supported language providing for separate schools for whites and “coloreds,” whom they defined as people of African descent. All other children would be deemed “white” for the purposes of education. But like their New Mexican cohorts, Arizonans eventually avoided including this language and decided to retain their existing territorial laws on segregation.⁸⁰ Despite the fact that the state constitution did not prohibit *nativos* from attending white schools, people of Mexican descent often did attend separate ones and frequently lived in segregated towns as well.⁸¹ Although many of the proposed measures to limit *nativos* did not become part of the new

⁷⁷Goff, ed., *The Records of the Arizona Constitutional Convention of 1910*, Proposition 91, pp. 826-27, 1374.

⁷⁸Quoted in Pry, “The Politics of Arizona Statehood,” 273.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 272-74.

⁸⁰Pry, “The Politics of Arizona Statehood,” 272; Goff, ed., *Records of the Arizona Constitutional Convention*, Propositions 15 and 73, pp. 1065, 1181.

⁸¹Pry, “The Politics of Arizona Statehood,” 272 and Meeks, “Border Citizens,” 85-91.

constitution, the marginalizationists succeeded in keeping people of Mexican descent on edge and prevented them from having much power. They would continue to propose similarly restrictive legislation in the years following statehood.

Perhaps most damaging to the pluralists' and assimilationists' agendas in Arizona were the silences in the state's governing document. For unlike New Mexico's constitution, which specified a variety of protections for *nativos* so that they could integrate themselves fully into the nation as either Spanish or Anglo Americans, there were no such provisions in the Arizona Constitution. It made no allowance for public documents or ballots to be translated into the Spanish-language and offered no protections for monolingual Spanish speakers regarding education, voting or sitting on juries. These silences were due to the much smaller middle-class population of people of Mexican descent in Arizona, most of whom were concentrated in and around Tucson and Pima County. All five of the Republican representatives from Pima County, including Jácome, eventually voted against the constitution, but they were greatly outnumbered. The constitution passed with 40 in favor (mostly Democrats) and 12 (most Republicans) opposed.⁸² It was eventually approved by the U.S. Congress and President Taft and became the 48th state—the Valentine State—on February 14, 1912. Marcus Smith, the marginalizationist, became one of the state's first U.S. senators; Carl Hayden, who would soon become one of the more active marginalizationists of the 1920s, was elected as one of Arizona's first U.S. representatives. Their voices would resonate beyond their state as

⁸²Article, "Constitution Signers," Arizona Statehood, 1911-1912 (HAV-22), Arizona Collection, Department of Archives and Manuscripts, University Libraries, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

they explained how their residents fit within the nation without altering dominant understandings of what it meant to be an American.

Part II

Transformations in the World War I Era

1917 to 1922

Chapter Four

Changing Strategies for a New World

Born in Mexico in 1866, Pedro Garcia de la Lama later immigrated to New Mexico and became a U.S. citizen in 1894. Two years later, he moved to Arizona and worked as the editor of a Spanish-language newspaper, *El Progreso*. In 1902, he was called before the notorious Beveridge committee to provide testimony about the circulation of his periodical (1,500 subscribers) and whether or not he was born in Arizona. The committee members asked him no other questions and Garcia likely knew it was futile to interject anything more to defend the merits of his adopted territory to the rest of the country. After Arizona became a state, Garcia formed the *Liga Protectora Latina*, a mutual aid organization designed to help people of Mexican descent to cover the cost of illnesses and funerals, and to protect their rights. Garcia was a pluralist. Unlike most other Mexican mutual aid organizations in Arizona, Garcia's *Liga Protectora* worked as an advocate for recent immigrants, calling for bilingual education programs, fighting against discrimination in the criminal justice system, and advocating for people of Mexican descents' right to vote and work, regardless of the language(s) they spoke. While the *Liga Protectora* was hardly a revolutionary organization—it shied away from some strikes and unionization—most other local Mexican mutual aid groups operated even more conservatively, planning social functions and encouraging conformity rather than political activism.

Initially, the *Liga Protectora* had supported workers. But in the wake of fierce Americanization campaigns during and after the First World War, the *Liga* succumbed to the increasingly conservative environment, urging its members not to create problems

between capital and labor during wartime. It increased membership dues to make it more difficult for working-class people, those most likely to pursue union membership or to organize strikes, to belong. Within a few years, membership plummeted and the organization virtually disappeared. *Liga Protectora's* then withered state reflected the pluralists' declining capacity to persuade Americans of the viability of their strategy for incorporating newcomers.¹

The achievement of separate statehood in 1912 had represented a triumph for pluralism in New Mexico and marginalization in Arizona. But no sooner had statehood been attained, than a surge in Mexican immigration and demands for conformity during World War I once again made the place of Mexicans in America unclear. The more inclusionary strategies, however limited, declined under these pressures.

Historical Background on Mexican Immigration and U.S. Immigration Policies

Prior to the First World War, few Americans paid attention to Mexican immigrants as their numbers were insignificant compared to those coming from other countries. So few people were concerned about their presence that Mexicans emigrated with virtually no restrictions since the head taxes for immigrant entry did not pertain to them.²

¹See Thomas E. Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1854-1941* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), 169-78; James D. McBride, "The Liga Protectora Latina: A Mexican American Benevolent Society in Arizona," *Journal of the West* 14 (4) (1975): 82-90; Eric Vaughn Meeks, "Border Citizens: Race, Labor, and Identity in South-Central Arizona, 1910-1965" (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 89-93, 102-116; Karen Jean Underhill, "Albert J. Beveridge's Congressional Report on Arizona Territory in 1902" (master's thesis, University of Arizona, 1990), 143-44, 260.

²Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 12. Reisler further notes that these exemptions also did not apply for people from Canada, Cuba, or Newfoundland. Technically, as early as 1891, Mexicans could be denied entry for being "likely to become a public charge" if they did not have sufficient funds when they crossed the border. New York officials exercised this regulation vigorously in their crowded ports, weeding out potential burdens, but in the developing Southwest few inspectors enforced this provision as they anticipated that the newcomers would secure employment quickly. In addition, while labor laws

During the first 50 years after the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexican emigration continued to be minimal and unmonitored as the immigrants traveled back and forth across the newly created border for seasonal work on farms and ranches. While more Mexicans began to cross the border to work in the mines, railroads, and agriculture in the late nineteenth century, southwestern inspectors made no effort to track the small movement and instead concentrated on documenting and prohibiting Asians and Europeans from entry.³ Mexican immigration was such a minor issue that the Commissioner-General of Immigration did not broach the subject in any of his reports until 1906. Even in this annual summary, he merely observed that railroad companies in violation of contract labor laws had been actively recruiting laborers from Mexico, and vowed to watch the situation more closely.⁴

When Americans did notice the increasing Mexican population, they directed less animosity toward them than other immigrants. Organized labor, not generally supportive of open borders, supported the marginalizationists' position and considered a Mexican worker to be "something of an American," provided that he performed only the lowest wage jobs and did not compete directly with white laborers for skilled work. In the

prohibited contracting with potential employees before they emigrated, railroads and other corporations frequently worked around this law and recruited workers directly from Mexico. At times, the United States and Mexican governments negotiated formal agreements to permit contract arrangements in specific industries; presidents William Taft and Porfirio Díaz did just this in 1909, allowing for 1,000 Mexicans to pick sugar beets in the fields of Colorado and Nebraska. This information may be found in Manuel García y Griego, "The Importation of Contract Laborers to the United States, 1942-1964: Antecedents, Operation, and Legacy," in *The Border That Joins: Mexican Migrants and U.S. Responsibility*, ed. Peter G. Brown and Henry Shue (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1983), 55.

³Samuel Bryan, "Mexican Immigrants in the United States," *Survey*, September 7, 1912, 726-30.

⁴US Department of Commerce and Labor, *Annual Report*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1906), 67.

words of one pro-union editor, these Mexican immigrants had “ ‘more right to be here than these Japanese and Italians and Greeks.’ ”⁵

Mexican immigration began to grow steadily after 1905 due to capitalist expansion in Mexico and the American Southwest. After the Mexican president, Porfirio Díaz, intensified his efforts to modernize his country by repossessing communal land and selling it to foreign investors, many Mexicans who had been pushed off their land left their villages in search of opportunities in urban areas or the nascent mining communities of northern Mexico.⁶ This movement, combined with escalating population growth due to lower mortality rates, meant even more people vying for scarce jobs in the crowded mines and towns. Some of these workers began crossing the border into the United States where prospects in agriculture, grazing, or mining appeared more promising.⁷ The

⁵Victor S. Clark, “Mexican Labor in the United States,” *Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor* 78 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1908): 466-522, see 511 for quotations.

⁶President Díaz achieved his objective by improving transportation networks and repossessing much of the land formerly held in common by indigenous communities and the Catholic Church. These acquisitions permitted him to re-sell the land to investors interested in pursuing cash crops for higher profits than that possible by growing food staples for subsistence living. The improved transit and land repossession destabilized rural communities such that people there could not compete with more affordable products coming from distant markets. See Gilbert G. González, *Culture of Empire: American Writers, Mexico, and Mexican Immigrants, 1880-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 107.

⁷The southwestern United States became an increasingly attractive option for these laborers. Jobs proliferated in this part of the United States due to the recent implementation of the Newlands Reclamation Act in 1902, which spurred irrigation projects and large-scale farming enterprises in this formerly arid region. The newly arable land combined with advanced refrigeration techniques in railcars transformed the U.S. Southwest into a major producer and supplier of fruits and vegetables for the nation. Wages were also much higher in the United States and remained a significant factor in emigration as most of the emigrants in this early period came from the central states of Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guanajuato. On average, a worker in Jalisco earned about 12½ cents per day plus a handful of maize, and had no hope of saving any money. In 1910, 90% of all Mexicans earned between 20 and 25 cents per day when they could earn \$1.25 per day in fewer hours in the United States, a differential that more than compensated for the higher cost of living. See Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 136 for more information on the Newlands Reclamation Act and its effects. See Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 3-5, 14-15 for a comparison of U.S and Mexican wages.

Mexican Revolution (1911) also spurred more immigration to the United States as Mexicans fled before the various armed factions.⁸

Although the exclusionists initially ignored this escalating Mexican immigration and instead concentrated their efforts on limiting Europeans and Asians, they succeeded in passing the Burnett-Johnson Immigration Act (literacy act) in 1917, which affected all entrants.⁹ The new legislation stipulated that all immigrants over the age of 16 be required to read in English or some other language/dialect.¹⁰ Furthermore, the law increased the head tax for entry to \$8.00 and for the first time applied it to all immigrants,

⁸Historian Gilbert González has minimized the role of the Revolution in fostering immigration, arguing that Mexico's expanding market economy and interrelationship with the United States had more to do with encouraging the movement to *el norte*. This is likely correct, but the Revolution did spur some migration as a result of erratic farm production and violence, which forced people off haciendas. See González, *Culture of Empire*, chap. 4 and Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 111. Another reason Mexicans moved to the U.S. between 1910 to 1918, was because the production of corn and beans in Mexico declined dramatically due to the expansion of cash crops and the unstable farm production of the Revolution years, which resulted in soaring food prices, far beyond the reach of workers' stagnant wages. Consequently, few could resist the lure of higher pay ranging from \$1 to \$3 per day for farming jobs and approximately \$5 daily in the copper mines of the United States. See Lawrence A. Cardoso, "Labor Emigration to the Southwest," in *Mexican Workers in the United States: Historical and Political Perspective*, ed. George C. Kiser and Martha Woody Kiser (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979), 16-18.

⁹The origins of the literacy act date to 1887 when the economist Edward Bemis recommended that immigrants read or write in their native language before being accepted into the United States. A few years later, the proposal's popularity grew after Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (Republican, MA) recognized it as a convenient tool for denying entry of southern and eastern European immigrants, whom he considered unassimilable. Joining together with members of the Immigration Restriction League in Boston, Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor, and a growing number of western restrictionists, Senator Lodge worked feverishly to transform the literacy test into law. Although many congressmen, particularly Republicans, favored the measure, they had expanding constituencies of naturalized Americans and feared electoral retribution. Even so, the requirement almost became law several times before being vetoed by presidents Cleveland, Taft, and then Wilson. But with war on the horizon and an intensified nationalism sweeping the country, the forces against immigration eventually proved strong enough to override President Wilson's second veto on February 5, 1917. See Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 138-40.

¹⁰42 Stat. 5; 8 United States Code 229. The test could be administered in a variety of ways but generally U.S. officials showed the immigrants 30 to 40 words in their native language on a note card that they then had to read aloud. An interpreter would then translate for the immigration official. In more remote areas, the inspectors often handed the immigrants cards which required them to follow certain commands such as removing their hat, touching their right hand to their left shoulder, etc. The inspector would have an English-language version and know the order in which the immigrants should perform the actions. These details and more may be found in the US Department of Labor, *Annual Report*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1917), xiv.

including those from Mexico.¹¹ This literacy act drastically reduced Mexican immigration, even though Mexicans had not been the main target of the legislation, because over 50% of the potential immigrants were illiterate. In addition, few Mexicans could afford the new tax.

Shortly after the literacy act, the U.S. Congress passed the Selective Service Act, which had the effect of further decreasing Mexican emigration. This act required all men living in the U.S. to register for military service, even though many of them would not be eligible for the draft due to their foreign status. Many Mexicans opted not to emigrate rather than risk fighting on behalf of the United States. Consequently, southwestern agriculturalists saw one of their major sources of labor dissipate at the same time as their European pool shrank from new literacy requirements, the increased head tax, and perilous wartime seas. In addition, the United States army conscripted over one million Americans for the war effort, further reducing the number of available workers. Still other native-born workers left the rural Southwest to seek higher paying opportunities in the war-related industries of the expanding cities.¹²

At the same time as their sources of labor decreased, growers' need for workers rose exponentially. The world war had created greater demand for food products abroad as well as for raw materials such as long-staple cotton, which could be used for soldiers'

¹¹The literacy act also established an Asiatic Barred Zone that excluded people from India, Polynesia, Afghanistan, Asiatic Russia, Burma, Indochina, Thailand, and Arabia from emigrating. See Bill Ong Hing, *Defining American Through Immigration Policy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 46, 60-61. Also, prior to this act, the head tax did not apply to people from Mexico, Newfoundland, Cuba, and Canada. See Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 12.

¹²Lawrence A. Cardoso, "Labor Emigration to the Southwest," *Mexican Workers in the United States*, ed. George C. Kiser and Martha Woody Kiser, 16-18. See also Otey M. Scruggs, "The First Mexican Farm Labor Program," *Arizona and the West* 2 (Winter 1960): 320. The State Department reassured reticent Mexicans that they would not be drafted for service unless they became U.S. citizens. President Venustiano Carranza of Mexico explained this to his constituents as well. Even so, the fear of being drafted reduced immigration during the war years. See Jaime R. Aguila, "Protecting 'México de Afuera': Mexican Emigration Policy, 1876-1928" (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2000), 108-9.

uniforms, airplanes, tires, and other military supplies. The pesky boll weevil contributed to the gap between supply and demand by eating the cotton crops in the Sea Islands off South Carolina and Georgia at the same time as the pink boll worm and the weevil were inflicting great damage on the Egyptian cotton supply.¹³ Anticipating a labor shortfall, farmers pressured U.S. Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson for waivers from the literacy act. They requested that he use the hastily inserted language within it, which gave him the authority to admit “otherwise inadmissible aliens” when the situation warranted it.

Concurring with the farmers’ assessment of a wartime emergency, Secretary Wilson permitted agricultural workers from Mexico to enter the United States for a short-term period. This edict exempted these agricultural laborers from the literacy test, the head tax, and applicable contract labor laws.¹⁴ It did not, however, mean open access for all Mexican immigrants but instead required potential employers to follow elaborate procedures. These entailed requesting permission to bring in a specific number of laborers and spelling out the workers’ duties, rate of pay, housing conditions, and duration of their stay (not to exceed six months). They further had to sign a contract stipulating their agreement to report if their temporary employees chose to work for someone else (necessitating the transfer of that contract to the new employer) or if their new hire deserted or disappeared. The importing employer also agreed to arrange for the

¹³House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Temporary Admission of Illiterate Mexican Laborers*, Hearings, 66th Cong., 2d sess., (1920), 200, 262. Hereafter cited as *Temporary Admission Hearings*.

¹⁴US Department of Labor, *Annual Report*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1920), 7-8. Wilson amended this circular a few days later to include Canadians willing to work in Maine, to relieve a labor shortage there. This exemption was rescinded in 1918. See Commissioner-General, Immigration to all Commissioners of Immigration, December 21, 1918, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group (RG) 85, Entry 9, file 54261/202, National Archives, Washington, DC.

workers' transportation to the workplace and for their return at the expiration of their contracts. In addition, contracts required extensive documentation including multiple photographs accompanied by physical descriptions of all immigrant laborers to ensure that the workers could be tracked if they fled from their original employment. These restrictions were meant to guarantee that Mexican immigrants would work *only* in the agricultural sector and remain *only* for the duration of their contracts. Ideally, this would prevent them from competing with American workers or threatening the country's presumed national unity. The Department of Labor further noted that if the immigrants deserted, they would be deported when found.¹⁵ While the initial provisions provided only for six month terms, this soon was extended—first, for the duration of the war, then until January 1920, and eventually until March 1921 when the emergency rules finally expired.¹⁶

By 1920, the number of Mexicans in the U.S. had increased significantly. Despite a high return rate to Mexico, estimates indicate that roughly 500,000 Mexicans lived in the U.S. by that time, up from approximately 100,000 in 1900.¹⁷ As a result of Mexicans' greater numbers and visibility, Anglos and Mexican Americans would have to re-assess how the new arrivals would fit within the nation and determine if they could

¹⁵Commissioner General, Immigration to all Commissioners of Immigration, Inspectors in Charge, etc., May 23, 1917, RG 85, Entry 9, file 54261/202, National Archives.

¹⁶The ongoing war needs combined with growers' and other executives' intense lobbying initially convinced Secretary Wilson to expand and extend the departmental waivers beyond their original confines. He briefly approved exemptions for Mexican workers to work in lignite mines or do maintenance-of-way jobs on railroads in June 1918, only to then later exclude them from these same industries. Secretary Wilson later extended the existing policies and order while awaiting a decision from Congress. The last extension ended on March 2, 1921, although it took some time to send the workers home. See US Department of Labor, *Annual Report*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1920), 7-8.

¹⁷Figures from González, *Culture of Empire*, 112-13 and Lawrence A. Cardoso, "Labor Emigration to the Southwest," *Mexican Workers in the United States*, ed. George C. Kiser and Martha Woody Kiser, 19. See also Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver, *Revolution on the Border: The United States and Mexico 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 127, 133.

use the former strategies to admit them as potential Spanish Americans through pluralism, Anglo Americans via assimilation, second-class Americans via marginalization, or if they should attempt to exclude them from the country entirely.

Challenges to Pluralism

Pluralism had always been tenuous, especially outside of its power base in New Mexico where people of Mexican descent retained some economic and political authority during the First World War. But by 1922, pluralism would be seriously weakened as a viable strategy for dealing with immigrants as few people (not even the pluralists themselves) believed that the recent Mexican immigrants had the requisite traits to become Spanish American.

Pluralism was at its peak in the immediate years after statehood, particularly in New Mexico. The pluralists had succeeded in persuading many Americans that Spanish Americans could fit within the nation and speak Spanish without threatening national unity. Signs of their success appeared in various articles in which Anglo Americans approvingly noted the admirable qualities of people of Spanish descent, seeing them as capable of being or already equal to Anglo Americans. There were few objections to Spanish culture and traditions. If anything, such customs had become more revered since Spain no longer presented a threat to the United States. Americans could afford to reflect nostalgically upon the past, and to imagine noble friars traversing the land to build mission communities and civilize the Indians. Americans began to vacation in New Mexico in the 1910s, hoping to learn about the period of Spanish rule and to examine the intricate silver artifacts from previous centuries. This interest was enhanced through educational institutions. The University of Missouri offered the nation's first course on

Spanish American literature in 1916. Historians such as Hubert Howe Bancroft, Herbert Eugene Bolton, and Ralph Emerson Twitchell became fascinated with the region's history, writing numerous books on Spanish colonization in the Americas. Intrigued by the association between Spaniards and the New World that the pluralists like Benjamin Read and Octaviano Larrazolo had worked so hard to advance, Bolton wrote a book celebrating this connection between Spain and all of North America.¹⁸ In 1918, the *Hispanic American Historical Review* published its first issue to satisfy growing interest in the subject. Enrollment in Spanish-language classes also increased dramatically, from 5,000 students in 1910 to over 250,000 by 1922.¹⁹

Yet Mexican immigrants presented a new challenge to the pluralists. Pluralism had flourished when its advocates professed a Spanish heritage and held a middle- or upper-class standing in society. Most new immigrants from Mexico, however, could not claim a similar status. Approximately ninety percent of the immigrants were unskilled workers coming from the lowest levels of Mexican society, making it very difficult for them to assert a pure Spanish heritage since class and race were often conflated.²⁰

The geographical destination of the immigrants also contributed to the decline of pluralism as most of the new arrivals emigrated from Mexico to Arizona and other parts of the nation, rather than to New Mexico where there were more middle-class people of

¹⁸Charles Gibson and Benjamin Keen, "Trends of United States Studies in Latin American History," *American Historical Review* 62 (July 1957): 855-77, particularly, see 859.

¹⁹Helen Delpar, *Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992), 8.

²⁰Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 128-31, 135-36. Note that these authors find that 90% of the immigrants entering the U.S. between 1910 and 1920 had no skill or profession. See also Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 131-33, and statistics suggesting the greater poverty of later arrivals in, "The Mexican 'Invaders' of El Paso," *Survey*, July 8, 1916, 380-82.

Mexican descent with socioeconomic clout to help define what being American meant.²¹ During the First World War, Arizona employers alone imported 15,576 workers from Mexico or 31% of all Mexicans brought into the U.S. via Wilson's wartime immigration policies. New Mexican farmers contracted for only 411 laborers in the same period.²² By 1920, only three percent of all Mexican immigrants in the nation lived in New Mexico; 14 percent lived in Arizona, a less populous state.²³

During the World War I era, Anglo Americans who previously had supported pluralism were not enthusiastic about the new Mexican immigrants. They did not believe that the lower-class Mexicans could fit within the nation like the upper-class Spanish who had led the fight for statehood in New Mexico. A journalist for *Harper's Weekly*, a popular magazine of the day, commented on how the Spaniards in New Mexico differed from the newcomers of mixed heritage in Arizona and Texas.²⁴ Edith Shatto King, a California reformer, remarked: "I remember them [the De Soto kids, whom she described as having an extensive lineage in California] quick and proud, lighter complexioned, with long Spanish faces, in sharp contrast to Carmelita's [described as a recently arrived

²¹A Spanish American identity had been prevalent in California and some parts of Texas as well, but many of those claimants had since lost much economic and political power through the loss of their property. Other people of Mexican descent then referred to these former ranch owners as "*los tuvos*" or has-beens. From David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 113-15. See also Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 41-46 for information on the decline of the *californios'* political power. The statistics on where the immigrants moved to are from Hall and Coerver, *Revolution on the Border*, 135-36.

²²US Department of Labor, *Annual Report*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1920), 7-8 and 429-30.

²³Jorge Durand, Douglas S. Massey, and Chiara Capoferro, "The New Geography of Mexican Immigration," *New Destinations: Mexican Immigration in the United States*, ed., Victor Zúñiga and Rubén Hernández-León (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005), 5.

²⁴John Chávez, *The Lost Land: The Chicano Image of the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 92.

Mexican girl] round dark face.”²⁵ A Texas banker lamented to a congressional committee hearing in 1920 that no one could determine which of the immigrants were of Spanish or Indian heritage since they were all an amalgam of the two groups.²⁶ Associating these people with a pure Spanish identity and respecting them for their European Spanish culture had become impossible.

Nativos in the Southwest—whether assimilationist or pluralist—also distanced themselves from the new arrivals, making it more difficult for Mexican immigrants to fit within the nation via pluralism or assimilation. While middle-class Mexican Americans empathized with the plight of the recent immigrants and generally supported their presence as the newcomers’ labor yielded lower food prices, they also stressed the class and cultural divergence between themselves and Mexican nationals. They referred to themselves as *hispano-americanos* and the immigrants as *mexicanos*, and kept the latter at arms’ length rather than embracing them as part of their Spanish-speaking community.²⁷

While these reasons alone were sufficient to cause pluralism to decline, few recent Mexican immigrants had much interest in accommodating themselves to a Spanish American identity. Previous immigrants like Larrazolo had been more willing to declare a European heritage since respect for such an ancestry and “whiteness” had been

²⁵Edith Shatto King, “My Mexican Neighbors,” *Survey*, March 3, 1917, 624-26. Quotations on page 624.

²⁶House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Temporary Admission Hearings*, 113 (quotations) and 116-17.

²⁷For example, see Tomás O. Belada, “Los Braceros y El Costo de la Vida,” *El Tucsonense* (Tucson, AZ), February 19, 1920 and F.S. Moreno, ed., *El Tucsonense*, January 1, 1920. For more general information on the conflict between Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants, see Chávez, *Lost Land*, 83-84 and David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 56-65.

widespread in Mexico as well as the United States.²⁸ But following the overthrow of President Díaz and the ensuing Revolution, major cultural changes spread throughout Mexico, causing ordinary Mexicans to question their former president's affiliation and identification with European culture, and to learn more about their country's indigenous heroes and history. Consequently, Mexicans began to valorize the underclass in contrast to the elites who had preferred foreign countries and foreign cultures to their own. All of this contributed to Mexicans' growing sense of pride in their heritage. As there was no concomitant movement in the United States to laud the efforts of the poor or indigenous persons, nor to characterize them as the true Americans, Mexicans saw few reasons to change their nationality and incorporate into the United States via pluralism, assimilation, or marginalization.

Despite these problems, pluralist thought continued in three forms. First, while most Anglo and Mexican Americans would not extend a Spanish American identity to the poorer, new arrivals, they continued to view resident high-class people of Mexican descent as being Spanish or Spanish American. Secondly, pluralism persisted in New Mexico as the *nuevomexicanos* continued to have access to the political arena. Finally, the pluralists had also succeeded in marketing their heritage to the American people such that Mexican and Anglo Americans became enamored with Spanish colonial history in the U.S. But that growing fascination did not apply to the new immigrants.

The Rise and Fall of Assimilation

Initially, the assimilationists had been willing to extend their strategy to Mexican immigrants as they had to *nativos* in the territories. They perceived the newcomers as

²⁸This can be found in many sources. For some recent examples, see Meeks, "Border Citizens," 45-46, 66 and Miguel Tinker Salas, *In the Shadow of the Eagles: Sonora and the Transformation of the Border during the Porfiriato* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 26-27.

Spanish and European, but wanted them to become Americanized in the mold of Anglo Americans. These assimilationists initially gained adherents and attention during the war years, but lost many in the aftermath of World War I.

In the first years after statehood, most middle-class people of Mexican descent in Arizona—with the exception of Pedro Garcia de la Lama and some members of *La Liga Protectora*—advocated assimilation over pluralism. Facing rampant discrimination and diminishing rights in the years after statehood, Mexican-American assimilationists believed it wiser not to call attention to themselves and instead to integrate into the dominant Anglo American community. Middle-class organizations like the *Alianza Hispano-Americana* and the Spanish-language newspaper, *El Tucsonense*, contested labor activism and allied themselves with Anglos of a like class standing who criticized the strikes and walk-outs. These Mexican Americans found labor troubles threatening due to their own middle-class status and because they feared being associated with radicals. Consequently, they advocated conformity whenever possible. Carlos Jácome, the former statehood advocate and merchant, was one of these men. He prided himself on his American identity and urged his sons to volunteer for military service; he avoided radical positions.²⁹ The *Alianza* continued to stress the work ethic and learning English rather than directing resources to help Mexican immigrants improve their economic circumstances. Friendly House, a Phoenix organization with substantial Mexican American support, was designed to help immigrants but mostly emphasized teaching immigrants to become domestic workers, learn English, and improve personal hygiene. It lauded employers' efforts to deport immigrant troublemakers who sought to organize

²⁹Alex G. Jácome [son of Carlos Jácome], Letter to the Editor," *Arizona Star*, April 29, 1970.

strikes. These assimilationists wanted to Americanize the immigrants as a way of ensuring that the latter would conform to Anglo American cultural and class norms.³⁰

Other Americans also advocated assimilation for the immigrants during World War I. In 1918, the residents of Phoenix established an Americanization Committee, which concentrated on teaching immigrants English and civics. A similar group organized in Tucson the same year. The American Legion set up a branch office in Phoenix and intensified its campaigns to teach English to people of Mexican descent, native-born and immigrant alike. One eager Americanizer declared his motto to be “one flag, one language, one country.”³¹ As limited as these assimilationists may have been in their view of what constituted American identity, they offered a more inclusionary strategy for dealing with Mexican immigrants than the marginalizationists or exclusionists. They believed that Mexicans *could* change and become like themselves. When debating Wilson’s wartime immigration policy, Representative Claude B. Hudspeth (Democrat, TX) pointed to evidence of Mexicans’ good citizenship. He noted that they had proved their patriotism by volunteering for military service during World War I and contributing generously to liberty bond drives. Representative Carlos Bee (Democrat, TX) emphasized that he knew of “Mexicans from the peon class [who] graduate[d] at the head of their class in high school” when attending integrated (Anglo and Mexican) schools and believed that they assimilated well, acquiring good occupations as clerks and merchants.³² There was no suggestion, as there had been

³⁰Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses*, 102-12, 166-79; Carlos C. Jácome, Clippings Files, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson; Meeks, “Border Citizens,” 102-16, 267-69.

³¹Bradford Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix: A Profile of Mexican American, Chinese American, and African American Communities, 1860-1992* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994), 28-34 (quotation on 34).

³²House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Temporary Admission Hearings*, quotation from 17-18. See also 14, 41, 82, 87, 113-15, 160.

among the pluralists, that the assertion of any cultural difference would be an asset to the nation.

But this type of Americanization declined in the postwar era as Americans everywhere concluded that the campaigners had not succeeded in teaching immigrants English or Anglo American ways. Consequently, the federal government decreased financial and rhetorical support for such programs, dooming various organizations' efforts. Frustrated reformers began to believe that Mexican immigrants were either incapable of learning or stubbornly resistant.³³

Another factor in the demise of Americanization campaigns was the rise of the eugenics movement, whose adherents argued that Mexicans could not assimilate because they did not belong to the white race and thus were too inferior to become any sort of American. This pseudo-science provided an explanation for why the immigrants were not integrating in the ways in which the Americanizers thought that they should, and gave the reformers a reason for why they should give up their efforts.³⁴

Challenges to Marginalization

During the statehood era, the marginalizationists had done quite well—particularly in Arizona—in limiting the opportunities of people of Mexican descent so that they could not rise from their lowly economic position to compete with Anglo Americans for skilled jobs and political influence. Marginalizationists in Arizona pursued a variety of laws to assure Anglo American control over the immigrant

³³See George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 87-107 and Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 110-21.

³⁴For more on the rise of the eugenics movement, see Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

workforce. In Arizona, they quickly reinstituted (in 1913) an English literacy requirement to determine voter eligibility.³⁵ The marginalizationists also succeeded in asserting control over many people of Mexican descent by establishing segregated schools, pools, parks, movie theaters, and even religious services with Spanish-language masses held in church basements rather than inside the main chapel. Signs warning “No Mexicans Allowed” proliferated throughout many parts of Arizona. Segregated towns continued to exist immediately adjacent to one another and the dual wage system (lower wages for people of Mexican descent compared to Anglos) persisted.³⁶

Despite these victories, the marginalizationists had problems. The Mexican and Russian Revolutions had broken out worrying elites everywhere about their ability to keep workers under their control and in their second-class positions in society. No longer could employers convincingly assert that people of Mexican descent would remain contentedly in their lower class place forever or that labor strikes were isolated rebellions. Americans had read and heard much about those at the bottom rising up to overthrow their leaders in other parts of the world, resulting in violence and warfare.

National events intensified these fears as people of Mexican descent participated in the disputes between labor and capital in Ludlow, Colorado (1913), in Ray (AZ) in 1915, and then again in Bisbee (AZ) in 1917. Such activity caused many Americans to be wary about declarations of Mexicans’ docility and acceptance of a second-class status. In the Bisbee strike, approximately 1,200 copper miners from a variety of backgrounds called for a walk-out against Phelps Dodge Corporation. The company quickly

³⁵This stipulation would remain part of Arizona’s state law until 1972, even after federal law declared such provisions illegal in the 1965 Voting Rights Act. See Bradford Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 48.

³⁶Luckingham, *Minorities in Phoenix*, 28-31; Meeks, “Border Citizens,” 269.

intervened—as it did not want to risk missing any opportunity to earn exceptional profits during the wartime copper boom—by having the local sheriff, Henry F. Wheeler, arrest the participating workers. Over ten percent of these strikers were of Mexican descent. The county official and nearly 2,000 armed men herded all of the participants onto cattle cars and transported them several hundred miles into the midst of the hot New Mexican desert; there they were told never to return. Initially, much of the regional Spanish- and English-language press supported this deportation. While the people in the town of Bisbee and the Phelps-Dodge employers later received substantial criticism from President Woodrow Wilson and the national press, ultimately they faced few consequences. The men responsible for the deportation were brought to trial but soon acquitted. In contrast, none of the men deported ever received any compensation for their suffering.³⁷ What would be remembered from these events was the image of the striking Mexican workers and the resolution of the situation in which Arizonans shipped the laborers out-of-state via train. After these uprisings, the marginalization strategy seemed increasingly implausible.

The outbreak of World War I further contributed to the decline in Americans envisioning Mexican immigrants as docile, second-class Americans. In February 1917, the notorious Zimmermann telegram became public. In this communiqué, Arthur Zimmermann, Germany's foreign secretary, requested Mexico's wartime support in

³⁷Colleen O'Neill, "Domesticity Deployed: Gender, Race, and the Construction of Class Struggle in the Bisbee Deportation," *Labor History* 34 (2-3), (1993), 256-58, 271-72. Also see Meeks, "Border Citizens," 102-3, 269 and Thomas E. Sheridan, *Arizona: A History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 180-86, 215-16. Meeks notes, too, that the strike in Ray involved many Mexicans. The local press (including the Spanish-language periodicals) criticized their efforts at improving their labor conditions by calling them bandits. They tried to discredit them by linking them with the "Plan de San Diego," which apparently called for a joint invasion by Mexicans and Mexican-Americans against the United States. There was little evidence that this plot had any significant following. Nothing ever came of it. See Meeks, "Border Citizens," 91-95.

exchange for his country's assistance in recovering Mexican territory previously lost to the United States. The exposure of this communiqué became one of the key factors for America's entry into the war against Germany. While the Mexican government quickly rejected Germany's overture for an alliance, the very overture itself frightened Americans about their neighbor to the South and reduced the likelihood that they would view Mexicans as benign neighbors and immigrants.

But even as some Americans questioned whether the newcomers could be safely integrated as second-class citizens at the bottom of society, growers and their allies in the World War I era continued to assert that these immigrants could become such Americans—marginal Americans—who would not harm the country. When Representative Hudspeth introduced legislation (Hudspeth Resolution) to continue Wilson's exemptions from immigration laws, growers and their supporters emphasized Mexicans' docility. As during the statehood era, these marginalizationists stressed that the immigrants had little interest in politics and would not foment any uprisings. William H. Knox, the representative of the Arizona Cotton Growers' Association, which had over 2,000 agricultural members and ultimately ended up importing nearly 30,000 Mexican workers through the wartime temporary worker policy, informed the hearing committee that the Mexican immigrant "is quiet, docile, and peaceable, ...does his work and takes his place."³⁸

Most advocates for the extension of Secretary Wilson's temporary worker policy contended that Mexicans came to the United States to sustain themselves and not to disseminate radical ideology. When Representative Hays White (Republican, KS) queried one supporter during a congressional hearing about Mexicans' opinion of

³⁸House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Temporary Admission Hearings*, 192.

bolshevism, the agriculturalist responded, “he does not know the term; he does not know what it means; he does not care. I never heard of any talking bolshevism in my life.”³⁹ Congressman Hayden (Democrat, AZ) explained that most of the Mexican laborers came from farms and small towns in the Sonoran state and were law-abiding people. The only troublemakers were the few coming from mining communities, areas known to be more fractious in terms of capital-labor conflict. Another agriculturalist disputed Representative Box’s (Democrat, TX) charge that Mexicans had been actively involved with the infamous Bisbee labor strikes, asserting that the primary responsibility lay with the Slavic and Irish activists and that few Mexicans had been implicated.⁴⁰

Marginalizationists in the World War I era continued to emphasize that people of Mexican descent would remain second-class citizens under the control of Anglo Americans. They argued that even if some Mexicans, brought in through temporary worker policies, remained in the United States, it would not be a problem for these immigrants knew their place. They did not compete with Anglo Americans and remained in the lowest wage sector. A major grower from Texas, John Davis, informed the committee members that Mexicans were the most desirable people “to occupy the place that [they] can occupy,” and to perform menial labor, work most Americans refused to do.⁴¹ W.D. Mandeville, a labor agent for the rapidly expanding sugar beet industry in the upper Midwest, agreed and admitted a preference for Mexicans over Japanese workers whom he feared as future competitors. Likewise, Knox, the representative for cotton growers in Arizona, viewed Mexicans as more desirable than the Pima Indians who had begun planting their own crops and competing against Anglo Americans in the

³⁹Ibid., 251.

⁴⁰Ibid., 116-17, 269, 275.

⁴¹Ibid., 3-10; quotation on 87-88.

marketplace.⁴² Representative Hudspeth reinforced the image of Mexicans' permanent, second-class status when he noted how such immigrants had lived on his ranch for 15 to 20 years and assimilated or Americanized to the extent that they had painted their cottages, purchased stoves, and played the latest music, "Trip the Light Fantastic," on their victrolas.⁴³ In his view, this was all that they needed to do to become marginal Americans: stay in their place as a steady source of labor and play a little American music. J.A. Happer, spokesperson for the El Paso Chamber of Commerce, clarified for the committee that Mexicans in his area lived and ate separately from Anglos and seldom intermarried with them. He believed, however, that Mexicans could become good citizens although "not as good as the whites."⁴⁴ In other words, Mexicans could become American, but they would be expected to remain second-class citizens and live a segregated existence.

But these statements alone did little to quell Americans' concerns. Many congressmen continued to question the accuracy of Mexicans' docility in the face of worldwide changes. In the 1920 hearing concerning Hudspeth's proposed legislation, Representative William N. Vaile (Republican, CO) expressed concern that the immigrants might eventually become radicalized as had the peasants in Russia and "like the Mexican mustang, might go wrong, might get 'loco.'"⁴⁵ Representative John Raker (Democrat, CA) speculated that the newcomers might be revolutionaries, like the violent Pancho Villa, who were exploring ways to export their ideology to the U.S. The chair of

⁴²House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Temporary Admission Hearings*, 150, 189, 228-36. See also Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 87-88 for information on how the Dingley Tariff of 1897 started the growth of the domestic sugar beet industry and how the first laborers were primarily Belgians, German-Russians, and then Japanese immigrants before the industry turned to Mexican workers.

⁴³House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Temporary Admission Hearings*, 142.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 254-59; quotation on 258.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 33; quotation, 88.

the congressional committee, Albert Johnson (Republican, WA), raised concerns about workers then striking in Mexico in the cotton mills of Veracruz, and the recent news that some of the Mexican labor leaders were settling around San Antonio (TX). He implied that an uprising would be imminent if immigration continued unabated.⁴⁶ Consequently, the marginalizationists had to adjust their rhetoric in order to maintain open borders.

Exclusionists Regroup

Although the exclusionists had failed to prevent people of Mexican descent from entering the nation via statehood, most of them did not immediately work to stem Mexican immigration. Outside of the Southwest, they concentrated on the more pressing concern of European and Asian immigrants, barely pausing to notice the increasing stream of Mexican immigrants.⁴⁷ Within Arizona, however, dormant exclusionists—who had allied previously with marginalizationists and pluralists in their mutual quest for statehood—now began to make their voices heard.

These revived exclusionists decided to make it difficult for immigrants to continue living in Arizona. In 1914, these exclusionists succeeded in codifying legislation, which stipulated that employers with more than five workers had to ensure that eighty percent of their staff were either U.S. citizens or had filed their first declarations to become ones. When the U.S. District Court in San Francisco decided in 1915 that the state had overstepped its bounds, violating the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, exclusionists supplanted that law with the proposed Claypool-Kinney bill mandating that only English speakers be hired for hazardous jobs such as

⁴⁶Ibid., 33, 163.

⁴⁷In 1917, the exclusionists succeeded in reducing European and Asian immigration by passing the literacy act. In that same legislation, they prevailed in excluding more Asians from entry by designating an Asiatic Barred Zone, which stipulated that people who lived within it would be prevented from immigrating to the United States.

mining. The bill failed, however, as some corporations feared the loss of employees and because Pedro Garcia de la Lama's *Liga* actively protested against it.⁴⁸

This setback was only temporary. In 1920, exclusionists—within and outside of Arizona—had begun to regain strength and successfully lobbied to prevent the extension of Secretary Wilson's wartime, temporary worker policy. Their victory had much to do with the fact that their efforts coincided with the beginning of a national recession and because the persuasiveness of the marginalization strategy had lost some of its initial appeal as Americans had become skeptical of Mexicans' willingness to accept a subordinate status.

* * *

The marginalization strategy had been undermined by world events, making it less likely that the majority of the U.S. legislators would accept the marginalizationists' arguments that the new immigrants would become docile, controllable workers who would have no impact on American society. At the same time that the marginalizationists saw the resilience of their arguments decline, exclusionists had become stronger, convincing many Americans of the threat that ongoing Mexican immigration would bring. As a result, marginalizationists needed a new way to persuade Americans that Mexican immigrants could continue to enter the country without threatening American national identity. Facing these difficulties, the marginalizationists began to alter their language. Instead of emphasizing the immigrants' second-class place in American society, they started to describe Mexicans as temporary workers with no permanent status in the nation at all.

⁴⁸Meeks, "Border Citizens," 89-93; Sheridan, *Arizona: A History*, 178-79.

Chapter Five

The Marginalization Strategy Evolves: Origins of the Temporary Worker Image

For much of western history, people have scorned those who migrated frequently. Gypsies traveling around Europe without a fixed home or place were believed to possess evil spirits. In the late nineteenth century, the permanent settlers of Arizona viewed the nomadic Apache Indians as barbarians who lived outside civilized society in part because they lacked a fixed domicile. Prior to statehood, one of the arguments against the Arizona territory was that it was full of itinerant men without families who, as such, were presumed to be wild, without morals, and best left on the fringes of civilization. Words associated with impermanence, such as temporary, rootlessness, and transience, suggested a lack of belonging. People who embodied these terms were repeatedly excluded from civil society.¹

During the statehood debates, the marginalizationists had begun to view Mexican immigrants as people who easily could be marginalized from mainstream American society and characterized the immigrants and *nativos* as under the control of their Anglo employers. But this sort of thinking fell out of favor due to world revolutions in the World War I years and the associated fears of having a permanent and growing

¹Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) argues that after the 1924 restriction acts were imposed upon Europeans, Mexicans became associated with foreign-ness/alien-ness and illegality. I see this as occurring earlier and more in the guise of their temporary status. For general information on transience see James N. Gregory, *American Exodus: Dust Bowl Migration and Okie Culture in California* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 78-81. For the debates about transient men in Arizona statehood, see Mark E. Pry, "Arizona and the Politics of Statehood, 1889-1912" (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 1995). See also primary sources, which demonstrate that legislators in favor of statehood emphasized the *nativos*' stability and settled nature in Senate Committee on the Territories, *Statehood for the Territories: Papers Relating to the Question of Statehood for the Territories*, 57th Cong., doc. 153 (Jan-Feb. 1903), 9-10 and Senate Committee on the Territories, *New Statehood Bill, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Territories*, 57th Cong., 2d sess., (1902), 90.

underclass, which might spark such an uprising at home. Subsequently, many Americans began to agree with the exclusionists that existing restriction laws should remain in place. The marginalizationists, however, desired more fluid borders so that they could maintain low wages and maximize profits with a steady supply of additional workers. When their former arguments emphasizing Mexicans' secondary status no longer proved persuasive, marginalizationists began to stress the immigrants' temporary status and lack of belonging. While they had used this language occasionally during the struggles over statehood, it had not seemed relevant since few Mexicans emigrated during those years. But as Mexican immigration increased, the marginalizationists found highlighting the immigrants' temporary prospects an increasingly effective way to convince other Americans that Mexicans would not change what it meant to be American nor harm national unity.

Origins of the Temporary Worker

This linkage between Mexicans and a temporary status in the U.S. began with the historical pattern of Mexicans' cross-border travel to shear sheep and perform other seasonal tasks in the late nineteenth century. Few people studied or even commented upon the back and forth character of this movement. Some Arizona marginalizationists mentioned circular migration during the statehood debates, but it was not something that anyone else remarked upon or thought important. In 1908, the economist Victor Clark published the first official study on Mexican immigration in which he referred to Mexicans' cyclical pattern of travel. Mostly, however, Clark discussed how Mexican immigrants would fit into the nation in accordance with the marginalizationists', pluralists' and assimilationists' views (although he did not use these terms, he provided

support for each strategy) even though these had been created in the context of the dispute over statehood and were not necessarily applicable to immigration. Viewing the marginalization strategy as the most likely way in which Mexicans would be accepted into the nation—as potentially second-class Americans—Clark depicted the Mexican immigrants as docile. He noted approvingly that the immigrants’ greatest assets were their “willingness to work for a low wage,” to accept a primitive standard of living, and their lack of radical thoughts. In other words, Clark believed that these immigrants could safely enter the nation at the bottom of society, without threatening national homogeneity and unity. To a much lesser degree, Clark also accepted that a few of these immigrants might integrate into the nation via pluralism or assimilation and become like Spanish or Anglo Americans. He identified some traces of European heritage among the new arrivals, observing that although, “these laborers have acquired a certain vivacity of expression and demeanor . . . this Spanish manner varies in degree . . . and with the immigrants as a body is less in evidence.” His writings suggest that while he was willing to acknowledge some European ancestry in the immigrants, he did not view most of them as purely European and thus hesitated to consider many of them as Spanish Americans, or as having the biological wherewithal to change and assimilate into Anglo America. He perceived Mexicans’ class status, and thus their racial background, to be very different from that of the higher class *nativos* in the southwestern territories.²

While Clark was aware of the ongoing debate over whether or not to incorporate people of Mexican descent into the nation via statehood, his writings hinted at a new way of viewing Mexican immigrants, beginning the transformation of the marginalization

²Victor S. Clark, “Mexican Labor in the United States,” *Bulletin of the Bureau of Labor* 78 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1908): 467, 496.

strategy from its emphasis on newcomers becoming second-class Americans to one stressing the immigrants' temporary stay in the United States. Building on Delegate Wilson's casual comments about the immigrants' temporary status during the statehood debates, Clark highlighted the significance of Mexicans' cyclical migration, noting that between 66 and 75 percent of the immigrants returned home. Unlike European immigrants, Clark contended that Mexican immigrants did not become members of the community, and did "not acquire land or establish themselves in little cabin homesteads." Neither, he argued, was their situation "analogous to that of the Negro in the South," which he did not explain but presumably meant something akin to second-class citizenship. Instead, he asserted that Mexicans "remain[ed] ...outside of American civilization," and observed that their willingness to travel from place to place to pick cotton or other crops fit well with their "half-subdued nomadic instinct." Clark's interpretation suggests that he discerned something genetic, natural, and un-American about these itinerant practices. He then concluded that the primary value of Mexican immigrants was in their status as "temporary workers," rather than as a potential Americans.³

Shortly after Clark's article, language regarding Mexicans' temporary status appeared in various other writings. In 1911, Daniel Keefe, Commissioner-General of Immigration, reported that the "Mexican peon laborer" worked in the United States "return[ing] to Mexico for a period of rest, and later reenter[ing], and so on indefinitely." In this way he reiterated and bolstered the pattern first noted by Clark.⁴ Another writer, Wallace Kirkpatrick, concentrated on laborers rather than immigrants, but made

³Ibid., 482, 485.

⁴US Department of Commerce and Labor, *Annual Report*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1911), 120-21.

connections between Mexicans and physical movement, observing that a Mexican peasant was “by instinct, a rover” with “a fever to wander.”⁵ His words suggest that he attributed this behavioral pattern to something inherent in Mexican workers. In the following year, Samuel Bryan of Stanford University extended this theme of peasants and migration to immigrants when he criticized Mexicans in the U.S. for moving around too much.⁶

In 1911, the Dillingham Commission, chartered by Congress to investigate all immigrant groups, published a report using language similar to Clark’s. Overall, this authoritative commission wasted few pages on Mexican immigration as many of its members instead concentrated on securing sufficient evidence to limit or exclude southern and eastern Europeans from the country, much as Congress had done to Asians in previous years.⁷ When the voluminous report mentioned Mexican immigrants, it did so mostly in accordance with the marginalizationists’ former version of their strategy as well as including some of the new perspectives provided by Clark. Highlighting the previously developed notion of people of Mexican descent as harmless and controllable workers, the commission members noted how the immigrants lacked ambition, did not try to acquire their own property or compete with other Americans, and instead worked

⁵Quoted in Gilbert G. González, *Culture of Empire: American Writers, Mexico, and Mexican Immigrants, 1880-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 81.

⁶Samuel Bryan, “Mexican Immigrants in the United States,” *Survey*, September 7, 1912, 726-30.

⁷The Chinese Exclusion Act passed in 1882, was extended in 1892, and then made permanent in 1904. See Bill Ong Hing, *Defining American Through Immigration Policy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 36-43. In 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt negotiated the Gentlemen’s Agreement with Japan to restrict Japanese laborers from emigrating to the United States (Hing, 40-44). Senators Henry Cabot Lodge (Republican, MA) and William P. Dillingham (Republican, VT) had been placed in charge of an investigation on immigration as part of a political compromise to get Lodge to drop the literacy requirement from a bill in 1907. See Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 124-27 for more information.

primarily as unskilled laborers in mines, canneries, laundries, and factories.⁸ Still, they detected some disturbing traits or practices among the recent immigrants, specifically, that they did not fit well (not even as second-class Americans) because of their lack of literacy, English-language skills, and disinclination to obtain an education. The Commission further noted the immigrants' propensity toward crime and public relief if they lived in one community for an extended period of time. As a result, the writers concluded that, "it is evident that in the case of the Mexican he is less desirable as a citizen than as a laborer," foreshadowing the later promotion of Mexicans as only temporary workers rather than as potential Americans.⁹ Like Clark, however, the commission members believed Americans had little to fear from the new arrivals as they thought that few Mexicans would remain in the country due to their itinerant lifestyle.¹⁰

Agribusiness leaders also began to promote Mexicans' pattern of returning to Mexico after harvest as a means for addressing the exclusionists' and other Americans' concerns about unrestricted borders. For if the immigrants did not remain in the country, Americans would not need to worry about how to include them, or to fear that they would subvert national identity. At the beginning of the First World War, these growers, now marginalizationists, had lobbied the U.S. Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson for exemptions from the existing immigration rules, specifically from the literacy act of 1917. Secretary Wilson's decision to grant them waivers from the literacy requirements contributed to the growing image of the immigrant as temporary. Wilson's action codified the immigrants' "temporary" stay in the United States, making the practice seem

⁸Senate, *Reports of the Immigration Commission, Immigrants in Industries* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1911), pt. 25, 2: 682-83. Hereafter this will be cited as the Dillingham Commission.

⁹*Ibid.*, 690.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 682.

more common, real, and even natural through its very formalization. This would have enormous ramifications since it allowed the marginalizationists to accept the labor of the immigrants without worrying about them as permanent settlers.¹¹

The rhetoric of people who debated Wilson's policy, the resulting articles in the Spanish- and English-language press, and the actions of the immigrants themselves all reinforced the growing notion of Mexicans as temporary workers. After granting several emergency extensions for his ad hoc temporary worker policy, Secretary Wilson determined that once the war had ended he could no longer justify the exemptions from the literacy act without legislation to support his actions. As a result, Wilson and the marginalizationists turned to the U.S. Congress for assistance.¹² In the first few months of 1920, congress members debated the Hudspeth Resolution, which provided for the continued importation of otherwise inadmissible Mexican agricultural workers for one more year.¹³ Much of that discussion centered on the issue of whether or not the immigrant employees would actually be temporary. If they were temporary, questions of incorporation or exclusion would not have to be considered for the Mexicans would not be in the country long enough to pose any threat to national unity. But if they did remain permanently, then the familiar and sensitive issue of whether, and to what extent, to

¹¹In formulating this argument, I considered the concept of "policy feedbacks," coined by Theda Skocpol. See Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 57-60. As Skocpol argues, policies are important for they both expand the reach of the state and affect social groups and identities, which in turn can then impact the state, resulting in additional policy changes. I view Wilson's decision to issue this ruling as instrumental in that it leads to more Mexican immigration and a new way for Americans to view the immigrants and the immigrants to view themselves. In turn, this results in a new set of policies such as, eventually, repatriation.

¹²W.B. Wilson, Secretary of Labor to Representative Claude Hudspeth (TX), June 7, 1919, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group (RG) 85, Entry 9, file 54261/2021, National Archives, Washington, DC.

¹³Actually this resolution was somewhat different, providing for the admission of otherwise inadmissible Mexicans in the southwestern states of Texas, California, Arizona, and New Mexico, areas that presumably faced a shortage of laborers to harvest cotton and food crops.

admit the foreigners would arise once again. Because many marginalizationists wanted to avoid this kind of debate, one that would lead undoubtedly to more restriction, they attempted to persuade their adversaries that the original exemptions under Wilson had succeeded in supplying growers with valuable interim labor *and* in getting the immigrants to return to Mexico.

Representative Carl T. Hayden, a long time Democrat from Arizona, took the lead in promoting the immigrants' temporary status. He had imbibed the marginalizationists' rhetoric from the statehood era and argued that *nativos* could become good second-class Americans under the control of their Anglo employers. It was thus not a major shift in outlook for Hayden and the growers he represented to modify the existing marginalization strategy from one emphasizing a second-class American status to that of a temporary worker.

Hayden worked assiduously to convince his fellow congressmen that the Hudspeth Resolution was itself only a temporary measure to address the immediate agricultural emergency. He explained that Mexicans would want to emigrate only for a short while since their country's political situation would soon stabilize and the immigrants would leave to develop their homeland. Hayden used words like "temporary," "return," and "emergency," repeatedly during his testimony in front of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization to emphasize how Mexicans would have no long-term rights in the U.S. To reassure nervous politicians that the short-term immigrants would not stray from their initial employers, Hayden added that the growers in his state had meticulously tracked the workers who had entered under Wilson's initial exemption policy, and would continue to do so under the new resolution. To politicians

concerned about extensive monitoring, bureaucracy, and the immigrants' lack of freedom, Hayden argued that the immigrants had the choice not to come to the United States in the first place and that, "as an alien...he had no right to do anything here other than that which he agreed to do," which was to work in a prescribed place, for a specific employer, for a finite period of time.¹⁴

Other Arizona marginalizationists followed Representative Hayden's lead, and promoted the image of Mexicans as only temporary workers. William H. Knox, the head of the Arizona Cotton Growers' Association, explicitly stated that that he and fellow association members only wanted the immigrants' labor and were "not asking for the Mexican to come in here as a permanent resident We are asking only for him to come in here as a temporary resident."¹⁵ These assertions, however powerful to Americans at the time in terms of emphasizing the image of Mexicans' as transitory and temporary, are somewhat suspect given that some Arizona employers had been accused of pressuring immigrants to naturalize due to the state's constitutional requirement for citizen labor on public works contracts. This was likely an incentive for other employers to force naturalization as well. Still, the growers' rhetoric in the national forum implied that the immigrants would maintain only temporarily and not become Americans.

Regardless of whether these new marginalizationists believed their own language about the short-term status of the newcomers, their repetition of certain themes and arguments in the congressional debate fueled the rise of an image of Mexican immigrants as temporary workers. Representative Carlos Bee (Democrat, TX) argued that Mexicans

¹⁴House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Temporary Admission of Illiterate Mexican Laborers*, Hearings, 66th Cong., 2d sess., (1920): 263-75; quotation on 265. Hereafter cited as *Temporary Admission Hearings*.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 191, 196.

enjoyed warmer weather and would rather leave Texas for southern climes when the weather cooled.¹⁶ Texas cotton growers also tended to support the proposed legislation, reassuring cautious legislators of how temporary the immigrants would be. John Davis, an agriculturalist, informed committee members that passing the Hudspeth Resolution would not only aid the farmers, but help to improve circumstances for Mexicans since he believed that those who “come over here with sandals on their feet,” return “with their shoes on.” He perceived his role as part of a white man’s burden to lift up the lowly Mexican.¹⁷ Congressmen Claude Hudspeth and John Nance Garner, both Democrats from Texas, reported (although they supplied no hard evidence) that between 80 and 90 percent of the immigrants returned to Mexico. Garner added that of those who remained, only two percent had moved outside Texas, suggesting that the immigrants who stayed would remain safely within the confines of one state, and would not spread throughout the U.S. to compete with American workers for skilled jobs or endanger national identity.¹⁸

Various middle-class, Spanish- and English-language periodicals reported regularly on these congressional debates and in doing so helped to feed and sustain the growing image of the immigrants as temporary. *El Tucsonense* (Tucson, AZ), the middle-class and conservative Spanish-language newspaper, discussed Wilson’s exemption policy in a number of articles, enough to bolster the nascent link between the new immigrants and their temporary status. In a seemingly unrelated story, a prominent Mexican American called upon the club members of his civic association to work with those Mexicans who were “simply passing through...enjoying the hospitality of the

¹⁶Ibid., 36.

¹⁷Ibid., 87-88.

¹⁸Ibid., 3-14.

American nation,” emphasizing the short duration of the immigrants’ stay.¹⁹ Servando Esquivel, a writer for *Outlook* magazine and a member of the Mexican Frontier Committee of the YMCA, stressed Mexicans’ temporary prospects in the states even as he requested that more be done for them while in the country. He argued that they should obtain some benefit in exchange for their hard labor and called upon the U.S. to provide funds for an educational center so that when the Mexicans returned to Mexico they would go back with more than only the “*padrone*” idea as a model for citizenship.²⁰ *Literary Digest* emphasized the immigrants’ migratory tendencies by reporting how many Mexicans returned home after the harvest season to “spend their wealth in easy living in Mexico.”²¹ In *Survey* magazine, the columnist J. Blaine Gwin emphatically asserted that, “Mexicans have no intentions of coming to the United States to reside.”²² The titles themselves often reiterated the notion of Mexicans as temporarily in the U.S. such as with “Back and Forth to Mexico,” another of an increasing number of articles on Mexican immigration.²³

The immigrants’ own actions further deepened the image of them as temporary residents. Most immigrants planned or at least dreamed of returning to Mexico in the future, waiting only until they had saved sufficient funds.²⁴ Few made any effort to become citizens, due to the abusive treatment many experienced in the U.S. and the spirit

¹⁹“Los braceros y el costo de la vida,” *El Tucsonense* (Tucson, AZ), February 19, 1920. Quotation from “Brillante exito fue el segundo banquete del ‘Club Comercial Hispano-Americano,’ ” *El Tucsonense*, April 20, 1920, my trans.

²⁰Servando I. Esquivel, Asociación de Jóvenes, El Paso, “The Immigrant from Mexico,” *Outlook*, May 19, 1920, 131.

²¹“Mexican Invaders Relieving Our Farm-Labor Shortage,” *Literary Digest*, July 17, 1920, 53-54.

²²J. Blaine Gwin, “The New Mexican Immigration,” *Survey*, August 3, 1918, 492.

²³J. Blaine Gwin, “Back and Forth to Mexico,” *Survey*, October 6, 1917, 9-10.

²⁴Mark. A. Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 111-112.

of nationalism growing in their native land.²⁵ Efforts to pressure immigrants to Americanize during wartime had backfired, further reducing their interest in becoming residents. But even before the war the Dillingham Commission had reported that of 978 Mexican immigrants who had been eligible for U.S. citizenship during the period of study, a mere 16 had naturalized. Only 17 others had started the process. The commission also noted Mexicans' especially slow progress in learning English compared to other immigrant groups.²⁶ The immigrants' decisions suggest that, at least initially, they separated where they worked from what they considered to be their home. The ongoing trend of low naturalization, with less than five percent of Mexican immigrants naturalized in 1920, only solidified the idea of the immigrants as temporarily in the U.S.; for initially they hoped to be short-timers as well.²⁷

The immigrants' lodging in the United States further emphasized their temporary status, in their minds as well as in those of the general public. Initially, many of the first Mexican immigrants employed by railroad corporations moved in a serial fashion. They transferred from one boxcar home supplied by a railroad company to another, and still one more, so as to be closer to their work when they moved down the line. By the early 1920s, enormous boxcar communities had been constructed for rail employees, with the largest two outside of Kansas City (which housed nearly 10,000) and Gary (IN). During the war years, so many Mexicans entered the United States, either through the Wilson exemptions or otherwise, that the workers found housing wherever they could: in the

²⁵See Helen Delpar, *Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1992), 12-14 and Fernando Saúl Alanís Enciso, "No cuenten conmigo: La política de repatriación del gobierno mexicano y sus nacionales en estados unidos, 1910-1928," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 19 (Summer 2003): 406.

²⁶*Dillingham Commission*, 58, 231, 690.

²⁷Regarding low naturalization rates, see Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 111 and G. Bromley Onnam, Pastor, Church of All Nations, Los Angeles, "The Mexican in Los Angeles from the Standpoint of the Religious Forces of the City," *Annals of the American Academy* 93 (January 1921): 130-33.

deplorable tent camps in Arizona, among the railroads' boxcar communities, in ramshackle hotels and basement units, or within the cramped rooms of run-down boarding homes. The more desperate and resourceful slept in cars or local parks. These overcrowded communities bred germs and disease, particularly the dreaded tuberculosis. Employers justified the poor housing quality by noting that there was little available lodging and that sanitation was not as dire as the critics alleged. Regardless, the massive boxcar communities as well as the tent camps in Arizona emphasized to everyone that Mexican immigrants would not or should not be in the U.S. for long. More permanent structures would not be necessary as the immigrants stayed in the United States only long enough to pick crops, earn a little money, and return home.²⁸

The growing emphasis on the workers' temporary status had some validity as the employers ended up returning nearly half of the immigrants they had brought in—as stipulated by their contracts—via Wilson's exemptions. In March 1921, the Department of Labor instructed its participating employers to return “all such aliens then in their employ.” By June of that same year the process was still underway and the Commissioner-General of Immigration reported that 34,922 or nearly 50 percent of the 72,862 Mexicans who had contracted for temporary work had been sent back.²⁹

The statistics of their return, along with the writings and actions previously mentioned, all contributed to the notion of Mexicans as temporarily in the United States. As Anglo Americans continued to see and hear about Mexicans who lived and worked in

²⁸See Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 58, 67-68. Also, see House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Temporary Admission Hearings*, 195 regarding the existence of the tent camps and Eric Vaughn Meeks, “Border Citizens: Race, Labor, and Identity in South-Central Arizona, 1910-1965” (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 106-7.

²⁹US Department of Labor, *Annual Report*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1921), 7.

the United States for only a short while—and who moved from job-to-job and place-to-place—they began to view them as naturally restless and rootless. They believed that people who tolerated such an unorganized and unnatural lifestyle must be primitive beings and incapable of becoming American. No longer would Mexican immigrants be granted a marginal but permanent status in the United States. Instead, their physical presence and hard work would be tolerated on only a temporary basis.

Is the Temporary Worker Fictional?

Even as the image of the temporary Mexican spread throughout the nation, there were signs that this notion was often more strategic than factual. While many immigrants *did* indeed return to Mexico, a significant portion remained or later came back again, causing some Americans to question the reality of the immigrants' ephemeral status. Representative John Box (Democrat), an exclusionist representing East Texas and an opponent of Secretary Wilson's exemption policy, asserted that, "the swinging door is seen to swing in only one direction," with the Mexican immigrants remaining permanently in the U.S.³⁰ Furthermore, although almost half of the imported workers had been returned by June 1921, the Department of Labor reported that another 21,400 (29%) of those entering via the exemptions had deserted for unknown locations. The growing Mexican *colonias* or neighborhoods in various cities also confirmed that significant numbers of immigrants were establishing roots and staying longer than anyone had originally envisioned.³¹

³⁰House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Imported Pauper Labor and Serfdom in America: Statement of Honorable John C. Box*, Hearings, 67th Cong., 1st sess., (1921), 17. Quotation is from a reprint of *Dallas News*, February 1, 1921 in the abovementioned hearing.

³¹US Department of Labor, *Annual Report*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1921), 7.

In part, this more permanent status was a consequence of the immigrants' own decisions. Even though few had expressed any interest in citizenship, they remained in the U.S. for better paying jobs, more opportunities, and political stability. Their actions confirmed this as many of the imported workers deserted their initial short-term contracts in favor of more lucrative jobs outside of the agricultural sector. Although it was possible for an initial employer to transfer an immigrant's exemption contract to another company for the remainder of their term, more frequently the immigrants left without any notice. This freed them to remain in the country as long as they liked, or at least as long as their presence went unobserved. Exclusionists opposed to the Hudspeth Resolution assembled an impressive array of statistics demonstrating how the immigrants, lured by the "bright lights of the city," often violated their initial contract agreements.³²

Railroad corporations and other employers contributed to immigrant dispersal by moving them outside the Southwest. This dissemination provided Mexicans greater access to cities and jobs distant from the Rio Grande while making it even more difficult for them to return to Mexico. Often, the distance and cost of returning were prohibitive since the imported workers were sent to pick sugar beets in faraway Idaho and Michigan or to maintain railways in distant Pennsylvania and various parts of the Northeast. Consequently, when the immigrants broke their contracts to work for other companies, subsequent employers felt no obligation to pay for their return trip. As far as the current employer knew, the Mexicans could be legally admissible immigrants who did not have to go back to Mexico. Undetected, the immigrants who had skipped out on their

³²House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Temporary Admission Hearings*, 39.

contracts could remain long past the expiration of their temporary agreements, even permanently.³³

The problems inherent in this temporary worker policy became even more apparent in the immediate postwar years. By 1921, the U.S. economy sank into a depression. Job-hungry Americans had returned from the European theater of war, the federal government had cancelled war-related contracts, and the price of cotton and other agricultural products plummeted. Amid this crisis, Mexicans were among the first to lose their jobs.³⁴ During these years, many of the previously imported workers endured unemployment and became destitute and dependent on available charity. Wilson's exemption policy had required that the contracting companies return their temporary employees to the border within six months or whenever the extended contract term expired. Frequently, the employers failed to do so because many of their immigrant employees had left before completing their contractual obligations. Although some Mexicans may have desired to return to Mexico during the economic downturn, few had the resources to do so and instead congregated in cities throughout the U.S., hoping to secure jobs. But the federal government had never committed to pay their return passage and neither the original employers (who had lost their workers' labor when they deserted) nor any subsequent ones felt obliged to cover their fares.³⁵

Some immigrants wanted to remain in the United States regardless of their dire situation and the temporary worker rhetoric. William H. Knox, the chief lobbyist for Arizona's cotton interests, explained that while his organization was in the process of

³³Ibid., 106-7.

³⁴Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 49-56.

³⁵Supervisory Inspector at El Paso to Commissioner General, Immigration, January 28, 1920, RG 85, Entry 9, file 54261/202, National Archives.

transporting its contract workers to the border, several Mexicans “deserted” from the truck, underscoring the immigrants’ strong desire to remain despite their impoverished conditions.³⁶ An immigration inspector in Denver found that the unemployed immigrants knew what to say when picked up in local police raids, denying that they had entered via Wilson’s exemption policy and affirming that they had been in the country for more than five years, thus avoiding deportation as a public charge. The inspector believed that their interest in staying in the U.S. was so strong that it was futile to round them up and deport them to Mexico, for they would only attempt to return at their earliest convenience.³⁷ As a discerning Arizona inspector observed, all anyone needed to do to enter the country was “to simply walk across the line at either Morley Avenue or at the railroad crossing in Nogales, Ariz., without baggage.”³⁸

Some of these inspectors themselves contributed to keeping the imported workers in the United States. One such immigration official argued that it was expensive to send the workers back to Mexico and cost about \$120 per immigrant, not including the expense of a sleeping car fare, an attendant, and the time and effort to find the perpetrator.³⁹ Other bureaucrats attempted to legalize literate contract workers by having them return to an immigration station with the appropriate head tax once they could afford to pay. In this way the immigrants became free to stay and work for whomever they chose. Some savvy inspectors understood that the immigrants had no desire to enter

³⁶W.H. Knox, Arizona Cotton Growers’ Association to Supervisory Inspector at El Paso, March 2, 1921, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55091/6, National Archives.

³⁷Supervisory Inspector at Denver to Commissioner General, Immigration, December 6, 1921, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55091/6, National Archives. See also Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 59 regarding how the statute of limitations for deportation under the likely to become a public charge clause was extended to five years under the Burnett-Smith Act of 1917.

³⁸US Department of Labor, *Annual Report*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1920), 442.

³⁹W. P. Mansfield, Office of Inspector, Denver to Commissioner General, Immigration, August 13, 1919, RG 85, Entry 9, file 54261/202H, National Archives.

the U.S. temporarily and used the waiver policy only as a means for evading the literacy and head tax requirements.⁴⁰ A few of these officials took decision-making into their own hands and attempted to legitimize even illiterate Mexicans if they believed that they would make good Americans because they had nice families or steady jobs (although the majority of immigrants were men traveling alone, a significant number emigrated with their families, likely contributing to their interest in remaining in the U.S.). This policy, however, was not enforced at the national level as the Commissioner-General of Immigration reiterated the commission's policy of admitting inadmissible Mexicans on only a temporary basis.⁴¹

Employers, too, did not always abide by the official provisions of Wilson's waiver. The Department of Labor reported that managers could easily dodge contract labor prohibitions by recruiting literate laborers in Mexico, bringing them in under Wilson's exemptions, and then returning them to the immigration office the following day to pay the head tax. In this way the company owners would evade the applicable contract labor laws and allow the immigrants to remain as long as they chose; they would also avoid the bureaucratic hassle of tracking Mexicans when they quit.⁴² These employers frequently complained that they did not want to bear the cost of returning imported workers, some of whom deserted on arrival, when they had not benefited sufficiently from their labor. Often they did not have any idea where their imported workers had gone, recording only "skipped" or "deserted" in their voluminous ledgers.

⁴⁰E.L. Flannery to Supervising Inspector, El Paso, June 2, 1919, RG 85, Entry 9, file 54261/202H, National Archives.

⁴¹Supervising Inspector, El Paso to Commissioner General of Immigration, August 13, 1919 and from the Department of Labor to Commissioner General, Immigration, August 30, 1919 in RG 85, Entry 9, file 54261/202I in National Archives.

⁴²US Department of Labor, *Annual Report*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1920), 428.

Few bosses watched their workers carefully as they worried about the practicality and legality of doing so. A representative of the Spreckels Sugar Company in California wrote to an immigration official in El Paso wondering if it was permissible to hire night guards to patrol the grounds to ensure that no immigrants slipped away in the dark for better employment prospects.⁴³

While the marginalizationists emphasized the effectiveness of the temporary worker policy during the postwar era, there was much evidence to suggest that Wilson's exemption had also increased the number of immigrants who remained permanently in the United States. Ultimately, this information helped exclusionists to table the Hudspeth Resolution, which would have extended the exemption policy. In 1921, after the depression intensified and agribusiness took a financial beating from a steep drop in prices, few growers had any immediate interest in lobbying for additional laborers and waivers from restriction laws.⁴⁴

Enforcing the Temporary Worker Image

Despite the increasing reality of many imported workers' *de facto* permanent status, the temporary worker policy of the wartime era had helped to create an image of *all* Mexicans as transient and temporarily in the U.S., rather than as potential members of the nation. Consequently, during the postwar depression, Mexicans and Americans debated how to enforce the immigrants' temporary status and return the visiting workers to Mexico. There was little discussion by anyone that the local or federal government should take responsibility for providing for the immigrants in their current locations throughout the country, or to assist them in becoming U.S. citizens. Instead, the debate

⁴³J.M. Waterhouse, Spreckels Sugar Company Representative, to George Harris, Acting Supervising Inspector, El Paso, April 23, 1918, RG 85, Entry 9, file 54321/181, National Archives.

⁴⁴Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 41, 49-50.

centered on the immigrants' temporary stay and lack of belonging in the United States. Even the many Mexicans who had every right to remain permanently as they had entered the country legally, paying the full head tax and meeting the applicable literacy requirement, became linked to this image.

By 1921, Mexican immigrants faced pressure to leave regardless of whether they had entered officially, come in under the special waiver provisions, or crossed illegally. As they lost their jobs, these immigrants found themselves dependent upon the largesse of charitable institutions, former employers, or local governments for their daily survival. They lived in makeshift housing in crowded tent communities or slept in the basement of churches. Some of these immigrants then turned to Mexican consulates for relief, bombarding them with requests to return to Mexico where they thought they might fare better or at least be among a more sympathetic population. The consuls generally agreed with their petitions and worked to assist their constituents in moving back.⁴⁵ The Mexican government agreed to help transport its citizens from the U.S. border to the immigrants' interior Mexican hometowns. In a few cases, it funded the entire repatriation. One Mexican consul arranged for 110 Mexicans stranded in New York to return to Mexico via a Spanish ship, the *Antonio Lopez*.⁴⁶ Under pressure, the Mexican government also established a repatriation commission which operated until 1923 and disbursed at least \$250,000 to bring its residents home.⁴⁷ Some estimates indicate that as many as 100,000 Mexicans returned during the years 1921-22. If this is accurate, more

⁴⁵For two examples of this, see article in *Denver Post*, January 19, 1922 and Letter from Charles M. Johnston, Department of State, February 11, 1921, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55091/6, National Archives.

⁴⁶Inspector at Ellis Island to Commissioner General, Immigration, February 22, 1921, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55091/6, National Archives.

⁴⁷"Los mexicanos sin trabajo serán regresados," *El Tucsonense*, February 22, 1921.

immigrants left for Mexico than the 72,000 who had legally arrived under Wilson's waiver.⁴⁸

When funds from the Mexican government proved insufficient to the task of repatriating destitute Mexicans, the consuls lobbied U.S. and local government officials to at least fund the transportation of immigrants to the border.⁴⁹ Their entreaties were generally rebuffed. In one such case, the Mexican consul in Chicago, Francisco Pereda, appealed to the city's mayor, William Hale Thompson, for repatriation assistance. His request was denied as the city officials did not believe that they bore any responsibility for immigrants they had not imported.⁵⁰ Other local governments and charitable organizations did come to the immigrants' aid, but in the process reinforced the notion that all Mexicans were temporary. While these agencies were sympathetic to the immigrants' plight—organizing bread lines, bean lines, and finding places for the immigrants to sleep—they stressed that they could not continue to do so and that, moreover, the federal government needed to take responsibility for its actions and return the immigrants to Mexico.⁵¹ In Texas, the head of the Fort Worth Welfare Association reported that there were over 10,000 Mexicans without work and homes in his city. He recommended that immigration officials “arrest” the immigrants and immediately deport

⁴⁸Manuel García y Griego, “The Importation of Contract Laborers to the United States, 1942-1964: Antecedents, Operation, and Legacy,” in *The Border That Joins: Mexican Migrants and U.S. Responsibility*, ed. Peter G. Brown and Henry Shues (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1983), 52-53.

⁴⁹See “Se llega a un acuerdo para repatriar a los “Cottonpickers,” *El Tucsonense*, February 8, 1921 and Charles Johnston, Department of State to Assistant Commissioner General, Immigration, February 11, 1921, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55091/6, National Archives.

⁵⁰ Francisco Pereda, Mexican Consul to William Hale Thompson, Mayor of the City of Chicago, April 25, 1921, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55091/6, National Archives.

⁵¹Letter from Willows to Fieser, Division Manager of Red Cross, May 3, 1921, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55091/6, National Archives.

them to the border.⁵² The St. Vincent de Paul Society in Detroit gave up waiting for the government to do its part and relied upon its own resources to finance the return of approximately 400 people to Laredo (TX) near the boundary with Mexico.⁵³ The City and County of Saginaw (MI) pooled their funds to send 200 Mexicans to the border in the hopes that the Mexican government would pick up the cost and administration from there.⁵⁴

During the early 1920s, the American press continued to report on the poor condition of the imported workers, emphasizing their lack of belonging and need to return home to Mexico. They noted that the immigrants' circumstances in Denver were especially dire in 1922 with over 3,000 unemployed there.⁵⁵ The Great Western Sugar Company took charge of housing about 125-150 of its former employees in basements throughout the city while the Denver Sunshine Mission administered to many others.⁵⁶ When work opportunities vanished, newspapers portrayed the immigrants as a serious encumbrance and recommended that they be returned to their former homes in Mexico. In Denver, the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that the local District Attorney suggested filling a train with destitute Mexicans and sending it to the border.⁵⁷ Although the conservative *Alianza Hispano Americana Organo Oficial* in Arizona was one of the

⁵²W.H. Robb, Fort Worth Welfare Association to C.N. Adar, American Federation of Labor, April 6, 1921, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55091/6, National Archives.

⁵³Inspector in Charge, Detroit, Michigan, to Commissioner General of Immigration, in RG 85, Entry 9, file 55091/6, National Archives.

⁵⁴Inspector in Charge, Michigan, to Commissioner General of Immigration, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55091/6, National Archives.

⁵⁵Article in *Denver Post*, January 19, 1922, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55091/6, National Archives.

⁵⁶Office of Inspector in Midwest to Commissioner General, Immigration, February 5, 1921, in RG 85, Entry 9, file 55091/6, National Archives.

⁵⁷"La falta de trabajo entre el elemento mexicano," *El Tusconense*, January 29, 1921.

few voices calling for Mexicans to remain in the United States, its complaints about the large exodus only served to confirm the growing notion of Mexicans as temporary.⁵⁸

Deportation, the threat of police raids, and violence all contributed to Mexicans' return and enforcement of their temporary status. In Denver, government officials called upon the municipal police chief to address the problems of Mexicans, whom they considered responsible for increased crime in their communities. As a result, the Denver police chief raided pool halls and other establishments where he suspected he would find destitute Mexicans who had overstayed their temporary contracts. In one such incident in November 1921 he arrested 300 people of Mexican descent, only 35 of whom admitted to entering through the exemption policy and were therefore subject to deportation.⁵⁹ Fear of these raids influenced immigrants' decisions to leave on their own, rather than being forced out at an inconvenient time and without all their possessions. A Denver railroad agent reported increased ticket sales to the El Paso border after stories of stepped up enforcement spread throughout the community.⁶⁰ Impoverished Anglo Americans in Ranger, Texas exercised their frustration by attacking Mexican workers and warning them to leave the next day. These actions all emphasized that the immigrants' sojourn in the U.S. had ended—at least for the moment. The swinging door had swung back toward Mexico.⁶¹

* * *

By the time Secretary Wilson's exemptions from the immigration act had expired in March 1921, the previously identified strategies for including people of Mexican

⁵⁸*Alianza Hispano Americana Organo Oficial*, July 10, 1921, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

⁵⁹Letter from Denver Office of Inspections to Commissioner General, Immigration, December 6, 1921, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55091/6, National Archives.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 53.

descent—pluralism and assimilation—had faded considerably in Americans’ minds, and with it their effectiveness in helping people to imagine how the newcomers might fit within American society. Even the marginalizationists’ more limited form of incorporation—of Mexicans as marginal Americans, permanently consigned to the most menial of jobs—no longer prevailed. Instead, the marginalizationists had learned that the best way to retain open borders for Mexican immigrants was to emphasize the newcomers’ temporary status and more limited presence in the nation. This soon became the dominant strategy for justifying continued Mexican presence within the U.S. Mexicans were no longer second-class Americans, instead they were merely marginal, temporary workers. Despite the fact that many of the Mexican immigrants had entered without regard to the temporary provisions, and that many settled permanently in the nation, Americans embraced this newly articulated strategy and the resulting image of the temporary worker as a way to sidestep seemingly irreconcilable battles over immigration.

The revised marginalization strategy did not even offer the right of permanent belonging, which it previously had provided. The notion of Mexicans as transients or only temporarily in the U.S.—as constructed by the state, the press, the immigrants, the Mexican consulates, and other Mexican and Anglo Americans—had serious consequences for all people of Mexican descent in the U.S. For the assumptions embedded within this temporary worker image were that they did not belong and were forever foreign. As Representative Benjamin Welty (Democrat, OH) had stated so bluntly (and critically) in 1920, the immigrants would be deported “at the end of a

bayonet” when their presence was no longer desired.⁶² His voice was prescient since such activities began in the following year.

By the early 1920s, then, a discernible shift had taken place from the days of statehood. Americans, tired of the former battles to ensure national homogeneity and unity, sidestepped the issue by admitting Mexicans as immigrants who came only for a short time. In so doing, Americans reaped the benefits of Mexican labor without having to consider the inconvenient questions about how their presence would influence American identity since they would soon leave. By the time Wilson’s exemption policies had ended, and it had become increasingly obvious that many of the previously admitted immigrants had remained far longer than anyone presumed, this linkage between “Mexican” and “temporary” had become well-established and resistant to any evidence to the contrary.

⁶²House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Temporary Admission Hearings*, 257.

Part III

Immigration Restriction Debates

1926 to 1930

Chapter Six

Closing the Swinging Door?

By the mid-1920s, Americans and Mexicans had seen how the swinging door could work. In 1917, the door swung inward to the U.S., exempting Mexicans from contract labor laws and new literacy and head tax requirements. After the 1921 depression, the door swung outward as many immigrants returned to Mexico as required by contract, via their own volition, or through a combination of financial assistance and pressure from Americans or the Mexican government. These immigrants had provided needed labor at a low cost, acted as a safety valve for the Mexican state whose leaders feared economic uprisings, and in many cases had eventually returned to Mexico as desired by both the Mexican and U.S. governments. Their brief or even continuous presence had not endangered American national identity as most had not naturalized or remained in the U.S. Still, the marginalizationists—those who argued that Mexicans posed no threat to national unity—had not yet persuaded the majority of Americans of their case. Alternate strategies for ensuring national unity and for addressing the Mexican question persisted. Throughout the 1920s, increasingly powerful exclusionists, revived assimilationists, and a dwindling group of pluralists continued to promote their strategies for how to deal with immigrants while protecting national identity and unity. Despite their efforts, they would not be able to dislodge the marginalizationists from their growing dominance.

Exclusion

Exclusionists had reason to be confident that they could close the borders against Mexican immigrants since they had recently achieved many of their other goals. In 1917,

they had succeeded in excluding virtually all Asian immigrants, and in imposing literacy requirements and an increased head tax on all potential immigrants. This effectively reduced the total number of eligible entrants. A few years later, exclusionists persuaded Americans that the continued influx of European immigrants was too high. In both 1921 and 1924 they had succeeded in passing restriction bills that reduced immigration to a trickle, especially from southern and eastern Europe, and that banned South and East Asian immigration completely. They had some success with restricting Mexicans as well by denying the continuation of a temporary worker policy that had flourished during and immediately following the First World War. With their increased political muscle, they then turned their attention to excluding Mexicans, whose presence was rendered more visible due to the decreased inflow of Europeans and Asians. While the Democratic Senator from Georgia, William F. Harris, had attempted to add the western hemisphere to the 1924 restriction bill, his proposal failed 60 to 12 because few senators then worried as much about Mexicans as Europeans. Besides, exclusionists knew that they needed the support of western senators (who generally favored open borders for Mexicans) to pass European restriction. For the time being, they were willing to compromise on the issue of Mexican immigration.¹

The exclusionists' success in decreasing immigration from Europe and Asia, however, had the unintended consequence of contributing to greater emigration from western hemisphere countries, especially Mexico. Continuing to face few employment options at home, Mexicans traveled in greater numbers to *el norte* to fill jobs left vacant due to the declining pool of Europeans and Asians. In addition, from 1926 to 1929,

¹Robert A. Divine, *American Immigration Policy, 1924-1952* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 54.

refugees fled the outbreak of the *Cristero* War in central Mexico in which the Catholic Church and its followers protested the government's crackdown on religion and enforcement of secularization. These immigrants provided the labor to expand cotton and foodstuff production, including sugar beets, persimmons, avocados, lettuce, and cantaloupes, throughout the American Southwest and Midwest. They also moved into the industrial cities of Chicago, Detroit, and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania to take better-paying factory jobs and settle in growing *colonias* or neighborhoods. They put down roots by dedicating churches such as Our Lady of Guadalupe in Detroit in 1923, founding labor organizations similar to *Los Obreros de San José* in Indiana in 1925, and establishing Spanish-language newspapers like *El Amigo del Hogar* in the Midwest. Although these new entities experienced financial troubles due to the transience of their patrons, their very existence suggests that Mexicans remained in the U.S. for more than a harvest season.² Whereas Mexicans had represented only 3.8% of all immigrants coming to the U.S. during the decade from 1911 to 1920, this percentage had grown nearly fourfold by 1924 when Mexicans represented 12.4% or 87,648 of all immigrants entering the United States.³

As their numbers and visibility increased, exclusionists began to redefine Mexican immigrants as the newest and most serious threat to American national identity. One early observer compared the increase in Mexican immigration to that of a rising temperature on a thermometer, a dangerous foreboding of a virus embedding itself in an

²Zaragoza Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 145-54.

³Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 152-53. The total number of immigrants officially entering in 1924 was 706,896. The U.S. population in 1924 was 105,710,620.

unwary host.⁴ Taking note of such symptoms, exclusionists regrouped to protect the nation from this Mexican “menace” and to “ ‘close the back door.’ ”⁵ Heads of patriotic and eugenicist organizations, labor leaders, and other exclusionists now advocated that the restriction laws applied to Europe and the eastern hemisphere in 1924 be extended to the western half as well, or at least to Mexico (which opponents argued was their primary intention).⁶ Exclusionists successfully lobbied politicians to propose various restriction bills, which were debated extensively from 1926 to 1930.⁷ These bills, introduced by members of both parties, including Congressmen Albert Johnson (Republican, WA), John Box (Democrat, TX), and Senator Harris, all provided for quotas which would restrict Mexican immigration to approximately 1,500 to 2,200 entrants per year, depending on the particular proposal.⁸ This contrasted dramatically with the approximately 60,000 Mexicans legally emigrating to the U.S each year from 1926 to 1929.⁹

In order to pass the bills they promoted, exclusionists adopted a two-fold strategy. First, they defined Mexicans as even more dangerous and unassimilable than the recently restricted Europeans due to their race and class. Secondly, they contested the marginalizationists’ claim that the immigrants remained only temporarily in the United

⁴Albert W. Atwood, “Where have the Miners Gone?” *Saturday Evening Post*, March 10, 1923.

⁵Quoted in Divine, *American Immigration Policy*, 53. The term menace was used to describe Mexicans in various articles and testimony. See Remsen Crawford, “The Menace of Mexican Immigration,” *Current History* 31 (Oct., 1930-March, 1931): 902-7 for one example.

⁶Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 18.

⁷Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 173.

⁸Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931: Socioeconomic Patterns* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), 139.

⁹US Department of Labor, *Annual Reports*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1926-29).

States, arguing that Mexican immigrants did stay longer and that their presence endangered the nation.

The exclusionists attempted to discredit the immigrants' potential American status by emphasizing their mixed blood or Indian heritage. Harry Laughlin, the eugenicist from the Eugenics Record Office in Long Island, recommended that only those Mexicans who had a pure Castilian ethnicity should be allowed to enter America.¹⁰ A Princeton University economist, Robert F. Foerster, reported that Latin American immigrants had 90% Indian blood.¹¹ Another restrictionist, Russell Bennett, editor of the California *Holtville Tribune*, asserted that the immigrants did not have more than a “dash of Spanish blood” and were, in fact, “Amerinds” rather than “Mexicans of Spanish descent.”¹² William C. Hushing, a representative of the American Federation of Labor, testified to a congressional committee reviewing immigration that Mexicans immigrants were “Indians” and not “of Spanish stock.”¹³ These exclusionists worked hard to make distinctions between the recent Mexican immigrants and those they considered to be Spanish American. They viewed the former as being of mixed race or Indian heritage and having a low class status, and the latter as white, European, and of a higher class standing. In doing so, they demonstrated the lingering influence of pluralist efforts to assert the equality of Spanish and Anglo Americans during the statehood era.¹⁴

In fact, a growing number of Americans argued that the recent immigrants had a mixed or Indian heritage that was different from the Spanish Americans in New Mexico

¹⁰Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 208.

¹¹Ibid., 206-7 and Divine, *American Immigration Policy*, 56-57.

¹²House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, Hearings, 71st Cong., 2d sess., (1930): 317.

¹³House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, 366.

¹⁴The exclusionists may have been more willing to embrace Spanish Americans because of their recent success in restricting Spanish immigrants through the quota laws of 1921 and 1924.

and others parts of the Southwest. In *Foreign Affairs*, Glenn Hoover summed up the distinctions between people of Mexican descent in New Mexico and recent Mexican immigrants, explaining that the latter were “almost all of the Indian type, and to this extent differ somewhat from the Spanish-speaking population in New Mexico, descendants for the most part of white settlers with but little admixture.”¹⁵ Policymakers in the Labor Department agreed with these assessments, noting that Mexicans were not of pure Spanish or Indian descent and instead had a mixed heritage.¹⁶ Because many Americans increasingly believed that the newcomers had a diverse background, they became more receptive to the exclusionists’ strategy of closing the border.

The advocates of exclusion also sought to gain support for restriction by conflating class and race, suggesting that only Indian “serfs” would accept such migratory working conditions and miserable pay. According to them, no self-respecting white man of any class in the United States would accept this type of work or pay. Norman Blaney of the California Farm Bureau explained that “a white man of any value at all, demands steady work to maintain their [sic] rightful standard of living.”¹⁷ Chester Rowell of *Survey* magazine found it astounding that while Europeans had been restricted primarily for “political and economic grounds” and Asians due to “reason of race,” Mexicans, “to whom all of these objections apply,” continued to be admitted. He added that “the Mexican peon is racially as alien as the Chinese coolie” and less assimilable in his view than “the Balkan peasant.” To clarify, Rowell explained that the “Mexican peon

¹⁵A summary of Hoover’s article is in “Mexican Immigration,” *New York Times*, October, 1929 in Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group (RG) 85, Entry 9, file 55639/616, National Archives, Washington, DC.

¹⁶Harry Hull, Commissioner to James K. Fisk, California Joint Immigration Committee, March 19, 1932; Secretary Davis to Hiram W. Johnson, Chair of Senate Committee, February 5, 1929, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55639/617A, National Archives.

¹⁷Norman M. Blaney to Roy L. Garis, Vanderbilt University, December 24, 1929 in RG 85, Entry 9, file 55639/616, National Archives.

is not a “white” man. He is an Indian.” But Rowell differentiated between the recent Mexican immigrants and those of “Latin American culture” in Mexico City, whom he viewed as better than the peons at the bottom of Mexican society. Rowell’s considerable emphasis on the class status of all the immigrant groups, as evidenced by his use of pejorative terms such as peon, peasant, and coolie, suggests that there was no room in American society for this kind of an underclass or lower caste. Americans, in his view, were not only white and of European descent, they were also independent workers of a higher class standing.¹⁸

Other exclusionists agreed that class mattered in preserving American identity. The head of the congressional committee on immigration restriction, Representative Johnson, noted that “it is the peon type” as opposed to Mexicans from a higher class “that has been sucked into the United States in large numbers since 1917.” Consequently, Johnson supported the restriction of immigrants from Mexico.¹⁹ Representative Wallace White (Republican, ME) opposed restricting immigrants from Canada, primarily on class grounds. He argued that the Canadian immigrants, emigrating in equal numbers to Mexicans, soon naturalized and became “an integral part of our body politic.” He noted that in contrast to Mexican immigrants “they are doctors, lawyers, merchants, skilled mechanics—they are men of industry, sobriety, and are a worth-while addition to the population of the New England States.”²⁰ In other words, because they provided skilled or professional labor, they could enter the nation.

¹⁸Chester H. Rowell, “Why Make Mexico an Exception?” *Survey*, May 1, 1931.

¹⁹House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Restriction of Immigration from Republic of Mexico*, rept. No. 1594, 71st Cong., 2d sess., (1930): 2, 6.

²⁰House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, 323-25, quotation on 325. There was very little debate over Canadians as immigrants and potential Americans; most seemed to agree that they could become American and only extended the restriction to them so as not to offend Mexico. While the quotations shown emphasize the class status of the Canadians as a reason for

The significance of immigrants' class status mattered even to such ardent exclusionists as the newspaper editor Russell Bennett who unwittingly argued that assimilation was possible for Mexicans with a higher class status. While disparaging the publisher for the *Beverly Hills (CA) Citizen* for opposing Mexican restriction, Bennett noted that the newspaperman had no familiarity with Mexican field workers as he instead "rub[bed] elbows with such Mexican cheap labor as Lupe Velez," the popular Mexican movie-star in Hollywood.²¹ Bennett's sarcastic language implied that he himself would not mind if Velez, in reality an attractive and well-to-do starlet, remained permanently in the United States. He objected instead to the low-wage, Mexican workers whom, Bennett argued, the publisher of the *Beverly Hills Citizen* knew nothing about.

Other exclusionists believed that the immigrants' class status had harmed even their own culture and therefore would damage U.S. cultural traditions as well. August Fast, a private citizen, supported restriction because he believed that Mexicans had a culture of inertia, asserting that, "Mexicans prefer to remain industrial slaves, they have no ambition."²² Another exclusionist thought that Mexicans should be restricted because of their migratory habits, deeming them too "transient" to become American. A newspaper publisher agreed, arguing that it was impossible to assimilate the "mostly nomadic" Mexicans.²³ Labor leader, William Hushing, also perceived the Mexican immigrants as lacking in the drive for upward mobility and saw them as "a roving class,"

belonging, many Canadian immigrants did have lower-class status and entered to take logging jobs in the Northeast. The presumption that Canadians were members of the white race contributed to the lack of controversy about them. People testifying in the restriction debates noted their ability to blend in and be the same as other Americans within a generation or two. For information on Canadian immigration, see US Department of Labor, *Annual Reports*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1926-29).

²¹House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, 318.

²²August Fast to Representative Albert Johnson, March 3, 1928, Records of the House of Representatives, Record Group (RG) 233, file HR70A-F14.3, National Archives.

²³House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, 317.

unable to establish permanent homes. These exclusionists felt that Mexicans' lower-class standing prevented the immigrants from becoming American because they lacked stability, were not independent workers, and did not have the goal to become so.²⁴ In other words, these exclusionists thought that being American meant wanting to strive for the American dream and/or being stable and settled.

A few exclusionists did not care about the race, class, or culture of the immigrants but did have concerns about their nationality and the opportunistic policies of the Mexican government. Romano Herrera, representing Mexican American day laborers, submitted letters, written in Spanish and translated into English, to the Commissioner of Immigration to protest the presence of Mexican immigrants in Laredo, Texas. These letters decried the government's decision to allow Mexican immigrants to work in the U.S., thereby lowering native Americans' wages, while the Mexican government refused to allow Americans to work across the border in Mexico. Their complaint was not based on how the newcomers would integrate into American society—after all, they shared the same language, ethnic heritage, and class status—but on the injustice of permitting Mexican nationals to benefit over American citizens while the Mexican government's lack of reciprocity prohibited Americans from working in Mexico.²⁵

Even some Mexican officials held exclusionist views, contributing to the growing movement for restriction. While these bureaucrats did not support the exclusion of Mexican citizens from the U.S. on class or racial grounds, they did want to keep their constituents in Mexico, if for no other reason than to demonstrate that their revolutionary experiment was working. They worried that they were losing their best workers to the

²⁴Ibid., 366-67.

²⁵Romano Herrera to the Commissioner of Immigration, October 29, 1929, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55639/617A, National Archives.

United States and that these immigrants would never return. Alfonso Fabila, a Mexican official, lamented how Mexican immigrants pined for their return to Mexico, but became so entranced with their new opportunities for consumption that they racked up too much debt to leave.²⁶ At the same time as Mexicans emigrated, foreigners from Syria, Turkey, Palestine, Lebanon, and China were arriving in Mexico, with the potential to upset Mexico's own fragile national identity.²⁷

In the U.S., all of the arguments concerning the inassimilability of Mexicans gained strength in the late 1920s. Worried about how immigration would affect their country, Americans did not need much urging to accept the exclusionists' arguments. While the leadership of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) had initially avoided supporting restriction proposals, preferring to work informally with Mexican labor organizations to stem emigration, they joined the exclusionists' ranks in 1928, after other methods had failed. In addition, the governor of Arizona and the state legislatures of California, Arizona, and Oregon all went on record opposing Mexican immigration.²⁸ *Literacy Digest*, a national magazine, reported that the majority of its readers favored the restriction of Mexican immigrants.²⁹ The *Saturday Evening Post*, a popular magazine with a circulation of nearly three million readers, regularly published articles urging more restriction.³⁰ A nationwide survey in 1930 demonstrated that most respondents then

²⁶Alfonso Fabila, *El problema de la emigracion de obreros y campesinos mexicanos* (Mexico City: Publicaciones de la secretaria de gobernacion, 1929), 12-13.

²⁷Secretaria de relaciones exteriores, *La migracion y proteccions de mexicanos en el extranjero* (Mexico City: Ministerio de relaciones exteriores, 1928), 17.

²⁸Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 228.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 205.

³⁰Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 29.

worried about the “Mexican invasion” and believed that “these people [Mexicans] can never be assimilated with white Americans.”³¹

To bolster their case for closing the door to immigrants, exclusionists contested the marginalizationists’ claims that Mexicans moved to the U.S. only temporarily. They pointed to the growing “Mexicanization” evident in expanded *colonias* or “Little Mexicos” throughout the United States.³² George Lorimer, editor of the nativist *Saturday Evening Post*, observed that Mexicans were “pushing farther North” and “crowding in the slums” rather than departing as other Americans claimed.³³ Exclusionists denied that Mexicans returned to Mexico after a harvest season, explaining how employers turned “Mr. Mexican loose to shift for himself,” giving him the opportunity to take American (more permanent, factory-type) jobs or simply to subsist on local charity.³⁴ Another exclusionist warned how “CALifornia [sic]” would soon become “MEXifornia [sic],” noting dramatic—albeit impressionistic—changes in the school population, which were “once 100% white, now over 80% Mexican peon,” as evidence of this trend.³⁵ Harry Laughlin anticipated that Mexico would eventually reconquer and repopulate the American Southwest due to the increasing number of female Mexican immigrants and

³¹Survey results summarized in Remsen Crawford, “The Menace of Mexican Immigration,” 902-7. The survey was apparently conducted by Reps. Box (TX) and Thomas Jenkins (Republican, OH) of the House Immigration Committee. Questionnaires were sent to several thousand Americans, including merchants, teachers, and judges.

³²The term “Mexicanization” is from House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers from Mexico Hearings*, 69th Cong., 1st sess., (1926): 35. The rest is from a Letter from Theodore Farmer to Committee on Immigration, May 23, 1928, RG 233, file HR 70A-H3.3, National Archives.

³³George Horace Lorimer, ed., “Present and Future,” *Saturday Evening Post*, March 15, 1930, 28.

³⁴T.J. O’Donnell from California to unnamed newspaper on April 7, 1930 in RG 233, file HR 71A-F16.4, box 517, National Archives. There were many voices stating that the immigrants had not left as initially claimed. See the various hearings on immigration, 1926-1930 and letters to representatives. For one example, see letter from Alexander Hamilton Bolton, February, 1928 to Representative Joseph Crail (Republican, CA) in RG 233, file HR 70A-H3.3, National Archives.

³⁵Pamphlet in RG 233, file HR 71A-F16.4, box 517, National Archives.

their higher birth rate relative to Anglo American women.³⁶ Representative Johnson explained that while he had heard much testimony regarding how the workers returned to Mexico, he had yet to see any documentation supporting this. Moreover, he noted that the AFL's recent decision to support immigration restriction suggested that the immigrants remained and posed a threat to American workers.³⁷

Through their various writings and congressional testimony against Mexican immigrants, exclusionists simultaneously increased Americans' awareness of the scale of Mexican immigration while successfully promoting their views that Mexicans of lower class standing were not capable of becoming American. Most Anglo and Mexican Americans agreed with their assessment. They believed that being American meant having a pure or primarily European heritage and being an independent worker with a decent standard of living. They agreed that the newest immigrants failed to meet these criteria. The exclusionists had less success, however, in defining Mexicans as a permanent threat to the American nation. The marginalizationists would use the exclusionists' own language emphasizing Mexicans' migratory culture to make the case that no harm would be done to American national identity and unity if the borders were left open since the immigrants would not remain long enough to inflict any damage. Ultimately, the exclusionists failed to pass any of the restriction bills they had proposed from 1926 to 1930.³⁸

³⁶Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 156.

³⁷House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Restriction of Immigration from Republic of Mexico*, 6.

³⁸See Divine, *American Immigration Policy*, for the argument that restriction failed due to fears of offending Mexico and Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), in which she explains that restriction never passed since increased enforcement made it unnecessary. See Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States*, 141 for more information on the final results of the proposed bills.

The historian Robert Divine contends that these failures occurred due to U.S. government officials' concern about offending Mexico, an important trade partner. More recently another scholar, Mae Ngai, has explained that the increased enforcement of existing immigration laws made passing such laws unnecessary. Both of these arguments are correct, but they overlook the importance of the growing discourse that identified Mexicans as only living in the United States temporarily. Frequent references to Mexicans' temporary status made it easier for Americans to avoid passing restriction laws that would offend Mexico and frustrate U.S. agricultural interests. This notion of Mexicans as temporary mollified those who worried about how the immigrants' presence would affect American national identity. By the mid-1920s, this image of Mexicans as temporary workers had become so ubiquitous that it influenced the views of assimilationists and pluralists as well.

Assimilation

Americans advocating that Mexicans could assimilate were harder to discern in the immediate postwar era. Hardly any testified in the restriction debates like they had during the statehood discussions. The failed Americanization campaigns of the war years had taken their toll. Yet, while the assimilationists were less visible, they continued to promote their strategy, via religious and reform organizations, as the best one for dealing with the immigrants and ensuring national unity. Primarily, they concentrated on changing and educating those Mexicans already in the United States, rather than engaging directly in the battle between the exclusionists and marginalizationists over whether to close the swinging door or keep it open. In doing so, they strengthened the exclusionists' argument that the immigrants were not temporary, for there was a group of

them who remained. The assimilationists, moreover, agreed that Mexican immigrants who did not assimilate posed a danger to the country. Like the exclusionists, most of them believed that effective integration depended upon having a European heritage. Consequently, many assimilationists either emphasized Mexican's white ancestry or expressed ambivalence about whether immigrants who had a mixed heritage could succeed in fitting within the nation. Unlike the exclusionists, they did not think that class status was permanent or foreordained or that the immigrants were incapable of changing their culture. Instead, they believed that immigrants, at least those who were not at the very bottom of the economic ladder, *could* improve their class standing and learn American ways.

Some assimilationists were Mexican Americans who worked to integrate newcomers into the nation by emphasizing the dominant Anglo American culture, rather than a Spanish or Mexican one. The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), a national organization initially established in Texas in 1928, was central to this effort. Ben Garza, a restaurant owner and President of LULAC, stressed the immigrants' potential American-ness, noting that many who had lived in the United States for several decades believed that they had become citizens even if they had never been naturalized. They thought it happened automatically, alongside cultural change. Regardless of their *de jure* status as non-citizens, they considered themselves officially American. Garza added that his organization educated immigrants on citizenship, patriotism, and the English language. It also encouraged newcomers to acquire additional

education so that they “not only make a better living but they may make a more substantial contribution to the citizenship of our country.”³⁹

Garza agreed with the exclusionists that the immigrants were not in the country temporarily, but saw strong possibilities for their full participation in the nation as Americans, rather than as Spanish Americans. He also believed that the immigrants should not be condemned to remain on the margins of society. Instead, they should educate themselves, modify their culture, and enhance their class standing. He thought this possible because he viewed the immigrants as members of the white race and thus as entitled to American status as any other white person. This is evident when Garza informed a congressional committee that it should not restrict Mexican immigrants because their labor was needed and “no other white race can stand it [the type of work].”⁴⁰ Two other representatives of LULAC, attorneys J C. Canales and Alonzo Perales, also rejected restriction and believed that Mexicans could become good Americans by learning English.⁴¹

Apparently, however, not all LULAC members and Mexican Americans agreed with their leadership. The honorary president and general vice president of the league, C.N. Idar and M.C. Gonzales, complained that Garza, Canales, and Perales had not represented LULAC’s position properly. They asserted that “immigration from Mexico is foreign to the general purposes and aims of the league, which is an organization exclusively based upon principles of Americanism.” These members agreed with the exclusionists that the border’s door should be closed, but like other assimilationists felt

³⁹House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, 258-59. J.C. Canales also says this on pp. 172-73 of the same hearings.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 260.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 180-81.

that Mexican immigrants already within the U.S. could be assimilated. Idar and Gonzales further noted that Ben Garza also worked for the Southern Texas Growers, which might have explained his open border views.⁴² Regardless of how various LULAC members perceived restriction, it is clear that they agreed upon an Americanism rooted in whiteness and the English language, rather than one promoting a mixed heritage, the Spanish language, and a Spanish or Mexican American identity.⁴³

Many missionaries and social workers accepted the exclusionists' claim that the people of the United States needed to consider how Mexicans would fit within the nation for they were not as temporary as the marginalizationists had alleged. But few themselves became exclusionists. Many were Protestants who preferred open borders as a way to evangelize and extend the reach of the church to more people, whether at home or abroad.⁴⁴ The prominent Presbyterian minister, Robert McLean, called for a greater effort to Americanize the immigrants and contested congressional testimony that depicted the immigrants as "rovers," and as a people who returned to Mexico. In his review of over one thousand interviews of Mexican nationals in San Antonio and Los Angeles, McLean found that only a few went back—and generally then only for the holidays.⁴⁵

Most reformers in religious or Americanization-type organizations agreed that the Mexican immigrants who remained *had* to be assimilated. But their advocacy of

⁴²Ibid., 191. Telegram to William Green entered into testimony.

⁴³This fits with Thomas Guglielmo's recent findings in his article in the *Journal of American History* and may be considered an earlier version of what he refers to as the "Caucasian strategy," which was used by LULAC members and other Mexican Americans in 1940s Texas to fight for civil rights for all those who could claim this heritage. I am skeptical of Guglielmo's argument, however, regarding the extent to which the Mexican government used this same language to defend the rights of Mexican citizens in the United States. See Thomas A. Guglielmo, "Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and the Transnational Struggle for Civil Rights in World War II Texas," *Journal of American History* 92 (March 2006): 1212-37.

⁴⁴Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States*, 119.

⁴⁵Robert N. McLean, "Mexican Workers in the United States," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929), 531-38.

assimilation conveyed some ambivalence or doubts about their eventual success because they increasingly saw the newcomers as not white and of a lower-class standing than preceding ones. Don Lescohier, presenting at the 1927 National Conference of Social Work, worried that the newcomers might have too much Amerindian blood, which he feared would make them incapable of assimilating.⁴⁶ Other reformers such as Helen Walker had greater concerns about the dominant U.S. population, wondering if they would ever learn to respect the newcomers, mixed or otherwise, as equals. If not, she felt that restriction might be better than admitting Mexicans who would be forced to remain in a second-class status.⁴⁷ Like Walker, James Batten lamented that many Americans opposed naturalizing Mexicans. At a conference on the status of Mexican immigrants, Batten warned that “90 per cent of our citizens...consider him [Mexican immigrants] merely as a “labor commodity” and a temporary necessity.”⁴⁸ At a time when few considered the immigrants as potential Americans, assimilationists faced an uphill battle to garner resources and support for their efforts.

Few of the testifiers in the immigration restriction debates shared the desire of the reformers in wanting Mexican immigrants to become fully assimilated Americans. One who stated that he did, E.K Cummings of Nogales (AZ), was someone who lived in one of the most entwined communities of Mexico and the United States, a city that literally straddled the political borders of the two nations. Cummings, as head of the local chamber of commerce, likely had an economic motive for his pro-assimilationist and

⁴⁶Don D. Lescohier, “The Vital Problem in Mexican Immigration,” *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 551. See also Charles A. Thomson, “Mexicans-An Interpretation,” *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), 499-503 for another example of this view.

⁴⁷Helen Walker, “Mexican Immigrants and American Citizenship,” *Sociology and Social Research* 13 (5) (1929): 463-71.

⁴⁸James Hoffman Batten, “Southwest and Center: The Mexican Conference at Pomona,” *Survey Midmonthly*, January 15, 1929, 475.

anti-exclusionary views, since the lack of restrictionist legislation would make economic exchange across the border much easier. Thus, Cummings asserted that “the better class of Mexican is a mighty fine citizen. I wish we had a lot of the better class of Mexicans in the State of Arizona.” He further added that Mexicans in Arizona were different from the migrants otherwise discussed in the hearings.⁴⁹ He testified that most of the Mexicans he referred to had a substantial European heritage, explaining that they had only “some Indian blood in him.” When asked by the Representative Johnson if the Mexicans intermarried with “Americans,” he affirmed that they did but again stressed that it was the “better class of Mexicans” that did so. He added that “their mode of living is equally as good as that of the average American family; their homes include every convenience.”⁵⁰ In other words, Mexicans with some financial standing and the proper cultural inclination could buy their way into a greater European heritage and thus American citizenry or social acceptance.

Although the reformers, some members of LULAC, and a few in the business community believed that the recent Mexican immigrants could integrate fully into the United States, they were in the minority. Most Americans did not want Mexicans to enter the United States permanently and become full members of the country. Likewise, many of the immigrants and Mexican officials did not desire this either. As a result, very little time was devoted to the matter of assimilation in the congressional testimony; a very different kind of solution—marginalization—would become a far more popular way of dealing with Mexican immigrants.

⁴⁹House Committee, on Immigration and Naturalization, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers from Mexico*, 138-44.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

Increasingly, Americans began to view the newcomers as different from previous Mexican immigrants or other people of Mexican descent in the U.S. Subscribing to the exclusionists' ideas that the new immigrants were racially different from the Spanish Americans in New Mexico or higher class Mexicans, most Americans no longer believed that Mexican immigrants could integrate smoothly into the national fabric and become like Anglo Americans.

Pluralism

By the late 1920s, few pluralists attempted to extend their strategy for admitting newcomers to the recent immigrants from Mexico. In many ways, the exclusionists and pluralists had joined together to define the new arrivals as outside of American national identity because of their lack of European heritage and lower class status. Oddly, this convergence occurred at the same time that Americans became increasingly intrigued with the nation's Spanish heritage.

This "vogue" for all things Spanish proliferated as various writers glorified the Spanish *padres* and their mission work, in contrast to the former black legend which attributed atrocities against the Indians to the Spaniards.⁵¹ In 1926, Cleve Hallenbeck explained in his history of Spanish missions that the priests who had settled the American Southwest belonged to the Franciscan, rather than the Jesuit, order. These Franciscans, he argued, did not enforce the inquisition on American soil and were more tolerant than their Jesuit brethren in Latin America. Consequently, Hallenbeck believed that these

⁵¹This "vogue" is identified and described in Alfred Coester, "Why Spanish?" *Hispania* 7 (1) (1924): 21-29. Further evidence is from US House Committee on Ways and Means, *Hearings on the Pacific Southwest Exposition*, 70th Cong., (1928), in which Congress approved funds for the commemoration of Spanish priests who landed at the port of Long Beach. The purpose was to recognize and promote that "they were the first white settlers" in the area who "introduced civilization to the Indians" (6).

Spanish *padres* should be celebrated as the bearers of white civilization who had taught and improved the indigenous people in the Southwest.⁵²

Other authors like Sarah Bixby-Smith also created a romantic Spanish past for American history. In her memoir, Bixby-Smith recounted the lyrical Spanish names of the California towns of her youth and then reminisced about the beautiful flowers planted years before by the now long absent Castilian *padres*. In contrast, she remembered the living Mexicans as hot-headed, exotic, and migratory—people who materialized to perform the arduous task of sheepshearing and then disappeared when the work ended. She did not connect the Mexican laborers of her past with Spanish missionaries or any kind of Spanish ancestry.⁵³

A few Mexican Americans tried to make an association between Mexican immigrants and a Spanish heritage, and to minimize or erase any link to an indigenous past or non-European ancestry. Frank J. Palomares, Manager of the Agricultural Labor Bureau for the San Joaquin Valley, argued that Mexicans could become like himself, a good American “of Spanish ancestry.” Like the immigrants, his relatives had been “citizens of Mexico.”⁵⁴ While Palomares saw himself as above many of the Mexican workers because of his elite family background and marriage with an Anglo woman, he also wanted to improve immigrants’ lives. He recognized that racism directed toward them might be directed at him as well. Yet, he was one of only a few Americans extending the pluralist strategy to the newcomers.⁵⁵ Other people of Mexican descent

⁵²Cleve Hallenbeck, *Spanish Missions of the Old Southwest* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1926), v, 7-9, 15.

⁵³Sarah Bixby-Smith, *Adobe Days* (Cedar Rapids, IA: Torch Press, 1925), 81, 101, 121-25.

⁵⁴House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, 152.

⁵⁵Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 39-41.

made distinctions between themselves and the newcomers. Club Latino in Arizona, while sympathetic to the suffering and condition of new arrivals, distinguished between themselves, the long-term *hispano americanos*, and the newcomers or *mexicanos*.⁵⁶

Despite this increasing attraction to Spanish heritage, Anglo Americans seemed less willing to associate Mexican immigrants with this ancestry than they had during the statehood era. This was due primarily to the fact that the newcomers now came from a lower class. Conflating class and race, Anglo Americans perceived Mexican immigrants as *mestizos* or Indians and not as the descendants of dashing *conquistadors* and virtuous missionaries. They made racial distinctions between Spanish Americans, whom most generally accepted as racially white, and the recent immigrants whom they perceived as dark-skinned and the progeny of Indians or mixed parentage.

Most Anglo Americans believed that people with a Spanish heritage would be better able to fit within the nation because of their white race. They also described the differences in class terms, viewing a well-dressed, Spanish-speaking person as Spanish American. One Anglo American woman explained her understanding of the variation between the groups to the economist Paul S. Taylor: “the Spanish are a higher type than the Mexicans, use better language, and are better dressed.”⁵⁷ An Anglo American cattleman from Texas empathized with the upper-class people of Mexican descent who were denied service at hotels for “they are really Spanish and white, but the laborers are Indians.”⁵⁸ A track foreman also understood the distinctions, explaining that Mexicans

⁵⁶“El primer banquete del club latino fue un exito,” *El Tucsonense* (Tucson, AZ), January 26, 1926.

⁵⁷Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Valley of the South Platte, Colorado*, vol. 6, no. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928), 212.

⁵⁸Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Dimmit County, Winter Garden District, South Texas*, vol. 6, no. 5 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1930), 432.

could remain in the U.S. but would have to live and be educated separately from Anglos. He regarded the Spanish as different, asserting that, “the Spanish are all right; they are our equals. But we would not mix with the Mexican Indians.”⁵⁹ A labor representative, William C. Hushing, testified during a congressional committee meeting that the Mexicans immigrants were “not the same type as the Spanish-Americans who have testified here recently.”⁶⁰ Hushing was referring to several members of LULAC, mentioned previously, who as attorneys and business owners held a middle-class status.

Despite the benefits that might ensue, recent Mexican immigrants generally did not claim a Spanish identity or assert that they were white. While one immigrant acknowledged, “I used to say that I was Spanish,” many others recognized the benefits of allying closely with Mexico and the local consulates, even to the extent of wearing buttons proudly asserting themselves as, “*Ciudadanos de Mexico*” (citizens of Mexico). These recent immigrants had embraced the discourse of the Mexican Revolution and perceived themselves as Mexican—a people who prided themselves on their mixed European and indigenous heritage—rather than as people with a pure Spanish heritage.⁶¹ Paul S. Taylor discovered that some upper-class Mexicans and immigrants were offended at being described as Spanish.⁶² To them, this label highlighted the heritage of imperialism and conquest and the pre-revolutionary emphasis on a European identity rather than a *mestizo* or Mexican one, which they preferred.

⁵⁹Paul S. Taylor, *Dimmit County, Winter Garden District, South Texas*, 446.

⁶⁰House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, 366.

⁶¹Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Chicago and the Calumet Region*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), 112. Information collected from period 1928-29. Also, see Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Imperial Valley*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928), 91.

⁶²Paul S. Taylor, *Valley of the South Platte, Colorado*, 212-14.

Pluralism had not expanded its vision much beyond what it was when New Mexico and Arizona became states in 1912. As most of the immigrants in the 1920s came from the lower classes, it was not likely that many Anglo Americans would be willing to regard them as the educated, upper-class Spanish Americans that they had heard about in New Mexico and a few other pockets of the Southwest. And, while a few cautious Mexican immigrants asserted a Spanish heritage to improve their opportunities, most recognized this action as futile, or had little interest in claiming such an ethnicity. Likewise, those pluralists who claimed a Spanish American identity made little effort to share this identity with newcomers. So, a pluralist strategy of belonging, which opened and retained a space for some long-term residents and upper-class people of Mexican descent in the American nation, was not extended to the masses of Mexican immigrants in the 1920s.

* * *

Although the marginalizationists argued that Americans did not need to worry about how Mexican immigrants would affect the nation for they would not remain, many Mexican and Anglo Americans continued to debate alternate strategies—exclusion, assimilation, and pluralism—for dealing with new arrivals and ensuring national unity. To most of these Americans (except for the few remaining pluralists), being American necessitated a European or white heritage and an accommodation to the dominant Anglo American culture. An increasingly important topic in the debates was an awareness of the immigrants' low class background and the argument that being American also meant having a certain standard of living. Few believed that Mexican immigrants, willing to do the least desirable jobs for low pay, had the necessary drive to advance beyond peonage.

In addition, the growing emphasis on the immigrants' constant movement—from place-to-place and job-to-job—made the immigrants appear even less capable of becoming American. Consequently, many Anglo and Mexican Americans began to associate the newcomers pejoratively with poverty, movement, and transience. This discourse merged well with the view espoused by the marginalizationists—that the immigrants would not threaten the meaning of American identity because they would not stay in the United States long enough to do so. By 1930, the exclusionists and assimilationists had succeeded in bringing much attention to the issue of Mexican immigration and the matter of unassimilated Mexicans in the nation. Yet, the marginalizationists increasingly influenced the contours of the debate and kept the door swinging back and forth to admit and eject Mexicans as needed. How they did this is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

“Nómadas¹”: The Promotion of the Temporary Worker

By the mid-1920s, the exclusionists had amassed substantial national influence and convinced many Americans that recent Mexican immigrants did not have the requisite traits to become American. According to this view, the immigrants then coming from Mexico were of mixed racial heritage, belonged permanently to the peon class, and had a primitive culture. For these reasons, the exclusionists argued that Mexicans should be restricted from entering the United States. They advocated that the existing quota laws for Europe or something like them be extended to Mexico so as to reduce the number of Mexicans who emigrated officially into the U.S. from approximately 65,000 to 1,557 per year.² The pluralists no longer posed a threat to the exclusionists' strategy for national unity since few believed the lower-class arrivals could become Spanish Americans. Nor did the assimilationists have many followers, as most Americans could not envision that the lowly and racially suspect newcomers could learn American ways. Yet, despite the exclusionists' success in portraying the immigrants as un-American, they faced an active body of marginalizationists who adamantly opposed Mexican restriction or exclusion. By 1930, these marginalizationists had succeeded in foiling all bills related to minimizing the immigrants' entry. How did they do it?

¹Nomads. Enrique Santibañez, Mexican consul, used this term to refer to Mexican immigrants in *Ensayo acerca de la inmigración mexicana en los estados unidos*, (San Antonio: Clegg Co., 1930), 51.

²See US Department of Labor, *Annual Reports*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1925-30) for statistics on annual immigration. For information on the proposed immigration limits, see Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow: Mexican Immigration Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1976), 207 and Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931: Socioeconomic Patterns* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), 137.

Recently, historian Mae Ngai has explained that the Great Depression and increased enforcement of existing immigration and related laws—such as the head tax, literacy test, and contract labor prohibitions—effectively reduced Mexican immigration, making the passage of restriction laws moot. Robert Divine, another historian, has demonstrated how nascent pan-American relations and the fear of offending Mexico, an important trading partner, prevented any restriction bills from passing. Both of these arguments overlook the growing dominance of the marginalization strategy and its appeal for Americans who desired the benefits of Mexican labor without threatening their national identity.³

Marginalizationists, including agriculturalists, industrial employers, and their political allies, agreed with the exclusionists that Mexican immigrants could not become full Americans. They accepted the exclusionists' arguments that the newcomers were of mixed heritage, were not independent and aspiring workers, and had an inferior culture. But unlike the exclusionists, they did not think it mattered, for they asserted instead that the immigrants would only be in the nation temporarily—to provide needed labor—and then return to Mexico. Moreover, if a few did remain, they would not subvert U.S. national homogeneity and identity, for they would remain safely under the control of their Anglo American employers and marginalized from the rest of society. Created during the statehood era and growing rapidly during and after the First World War, this strategy became the dominant way for explaining how the new immigrants would fit within American society. They would be allowed to enter and work, but then would be expected to leave soon afterwards.

³See Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) and Robert A. Divine, *American Immigration Policy, 1924-1952* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

The widespread acceptance of this strategy helps to explain why Americans acquiesced to ongoing immigration from Mexico. It was not only because of the greater enforcement of immigration laws and pan-American pressure that open borders prevailed, but also due to the marginalizationists' success in promoting the image of the immigrants as temporary workers, rather than as potential Americans. The marginalizationists' frequent assertions and arguments regarding Mexicans' temporary status influenced Americans, allowing them to enjoy the benefits of cheap labor without having to worry about whether the newcomers would undermine national cohesion. Immigrants would work for low wages and then return home before their class, race, and culture impinged on the American character and nation.

Promoting the Temporary Worker Image

Americans were more receptive to the marginalizationists' arguments concerning Mexicans' temporary status due to the shortage of laborers available for migratory, agricultural, and unskilled jobs. As crop production in the U.S. Southwest expanded, farmers increasingly had difficulty finding sufficient temporary pickers. Immigration quota laws, imposed against Europe and the eastern hemisphere in 1921 and 1924, further reduced the supply of workers. In 1929, the California Farm Bureau Federation reported that it faced more serious itinerant labor shortages every year.⁴ During that same year, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce published a study concluding that economic development (including agriculture, railroads, mining, and factories) in the American Southwest, West, and Midwest would be severely hampered without Mexican

⁴California Farm Bureau Federation Resolution, Annual Meeting, November, 1929, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group (RG) 85, Entry 9, file 55639/616, National Archives, Washington, DC.

immigration. As of 1930, the United States had more land in agriculture than in 1900, but fewer workers than thirty years before.⁵

This labor shortfall occurred partially because American workers preferred to do other kinds of work. Between 1920 and 1930, six million Americans moved from rural areas to urban ones, eschewing agricultural jobs in favor of steadier and more lucrative employment in towns and cities.⁶ Employers advertised extensively for migratory laborers, only to find that few responded to the call and none accepted the jobs. The Phelps-Dodge Corporation explained that of the Americans who had applied for mining jobs, most rejected the low-skilled positions and took only specialized or advanced ones. Fred Cummings of the Great Western Sugar Company in Colorado received petitions from over 3,700 farmers requesting more employees and concluded that this gap occurred because white workers had been educated beyond the point where they felt they should have to pick beets.⁷ The president of the Utah State Agricultural College noted that the “American farm boy” aspired to be a manager and that the “average American does not want his own children or relatives to become exclusively or predominantly menial workers.”⁸ J.T. Whitehead, the manager of a reclamation project in Colorado explained that it was necessary to have a class of people doing the lowliest jobs that few Americans would accept in order to “preserve Americanism.”⁹

⁵Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States*, 85, 125-26.

⁶Ibid., 85; Harry Schwartz, *Seasonal Farm Labor in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 41-42; Article reprinted from *The Washington Herald*, February 11, 1930 in 71st Cong., 2d sess., *Congressional Record*, (April 1930), 7137.

⁷House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers from Mexico*, Hearings, 69th Cong., 1st sess., (1926), 62-64.

⁸House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, Hearings, 71st Cong., 2d sess., (1930), 91.

⁹House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers from Mexico*, 112.

Americans agreed with these marginalizationists and called on Mexican laborers, frequently recruited in family groups, to perform the jobs increasingly defined as unsuitable for U.S. citizens.¹⁰ As Mexican immigrants gravitated toward temporary, agricultural, and unskilled work, even the national American Federation of Labor (AFL) did not complain about Mexicans entering the country to perform jobs that few Americans saw as providing a decent standard of living and the kind of respect and autonomy they expected. The AFL was far more concerned about those immigrants who did not stay on the farms, venturing to cities for better-paying employment and competing with Americans for more attractive positions.¹¹

Gradually, Americans began to see a migratory lifestyle and temporary agricultural work as endemic to Mexicans as a group. This prejudice then provided a rationale for why the immigrants could not become American: real Americans never would have accepted such poor working conditions and pay. In contrast to the Mexican immigrants, Anglo and Mexican Americans then considered themselves to be white Americans who were independent, upwardly mobile, and living in fixed and stable communities. These Americans had begun to regard the recent Mexican immigrants as racially distinct from themselves, permanently of the lower-classes, and as a migratory people who moved from job-to-job and place-to-place, with no real stability or belonging in the American nation or, perhaps, anyplace. As the immigrants left one location for a job in another, their nomadic practices made them seem perfectly suited to the

¹⁰In the first half of 1928, 32,000 Mexicans emigrated to the U.S. Of these, 20,000 were male adults, the remainder were women and children. Agriculturalists hired them particularly to help with cotton, beet, and fruit crops. See Linna E. Bresette, *Mexicans in the United States, A Report of a Brief Survey* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1929), 8-9, 12.

¹¹C.M. Newman, American National Livestock Association to El Paso Chamber of Commerce, October 12, 1927, Records of the House of Representatives, Record Group (RG) 233, file HR70A-F14.3, National Archives.

requirements of agricultural labor with its seasonal tasks. R. G. Risser of the California Vegetable Union explained that a Mexican immigrant was most appropriate for agricultural work because his “migratory character makes him fit into the needs of each locality for transient and mobile labor.”¹² In short, itinerant work had become something that Mexicans did and Americans did not.

Americans also found Mexicans more desirable than Puerto Rican, Filipino, or black laborers because of the ease with which they could be sent away. These other groups had more rights as Americans or had greater distances to traverse to return home than Mexicans did. Their very permanence in the nation helped the marginalizationists contrast them against the temporary, and therefore more desirable, Mexican immigrants. Ralph Taylor of the Agricultural Legislative Committee of California argued that if Mexicans could no longer enter the country, the “vacuum” might be filled by the “Porto Rican negro” whom he saw as a greater threat to the nation than temporary Mexicans.¹³ E.J. Walker of the Central Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce summed up the beliefs of many agriculturalists by noting that the problem with Puerto Ricans was that the “Porto Rico negro” was an American citizen who “becomes a fixture,” whereas a Mexican immigrant is “an alien [who] is returnable to his own country.”¹⁴ Walker conceded some rights and some claim on belonging to Puerto Ricans, but extended no such courtesy to the Mexicans he hired.¹⁵ They could be returned.

¹²R.G. Risser, California Vegetable Union to Representative W. E. Evans, December 21, 1928, RG 233, file HR 70A-F14.3, National Archives.

¹³House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, 222.

¹⁴Statement from E.J. Walker, Executive Secretary, Central Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce (AZ), n.d., RG 233, file HR 70-A-F14.3, National Archives.

¹⁵In 1917, Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens per the Jones Act.

Initially, some agriculturalists in the Southwest had hoped that Puerto Rican migration would ease the labor shortage and had imported 1,100 workers from the island in 1926. This experiment ended disastrously as the Arizona Cotton Growers' Association found their new employees too demanding. As the growers' representative explained, the Puerto Ricans expected to be taken care of and then insisted on being returned to their native isle when certain wages and conditions failed to materialize.¹⁶ Reporting on this incident, the *Pittsburgh Courier* noted that "a horde of unfortunate black men, women, and children" had been promised free transit from Puerto Rico to Arizona as well as decent wages and living conditions. Instead, the growers' association charged them \$66.50 for their transportation, an additional amount for meals, and wanted to pay them less than the prevailing wages from the preceding year. Because the Puerto Ricans refused to work under such unfair terms, the growers' association moved them into the State Fair Grounds in Phoenix "without proper food or shelter in an attempt to force them into submission."¹⁷

Eventually some Puerto Ricans made it to Texas where they appealed for assistance. Mary Wood of the United Charities of Galveston (TX) requested financial help from the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization for the destitute Puerto Ricans from Arizona. According to Wood, they had no jobs, did not speak the language, and needed money for the cost of a steamer back to the island. The Committee refused to cover these expenses, explaining that the Puerto Ricans, as American citizens, could not be deported and that consequently the government had no responsibility to pay

¹⁶Senate Committee on Immigration, *Restriction of Western Hemisphere Immigration*, Hearings, 70th Cong, 1st sess., (1928), 36-37.

¹⁷George Perry, "Imported Porto Rican Laborers Suffering at Hands of Arizona Cotton Growers' Combine," *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 9, 1926.

for their return.¹⁸ While the Arizona press was sympathetic to the Puerto Ricans' plight, it was clear that the editors did not want any more Puerto Ricans to enter the state, arguing that, "any further entry of these people should be prevented."¹⁹ The local growers agreed. They began touting the merits of Mexican laborers who had no citizenship rights and generally left at their own expense.

Few agriculturalists or other Americans relished the idea of Filipinos filling the available agricultural jobs. Like Puerto Ricans, Filipinos lived too far away for most to afford to leave on their own, and could not be sent away as they were colonial subjects or "nationals" who had the right to move throughout the United States and its territories.²⁰ In part because of their right to remain permanently in the nation, Filipinos reportedly learned English quickly, intermarried with white or black Americans, organized strikes against unfair pay and working conditions, and moved on to more lucrative jobs and positions when they could. Many Americans feared their ability to displace other Americans from jobs and businesses.²¹

Southwestern and midwestern employers also avoided hiring black Americans from other parts of the nation. As with Puerto Ricans and Filipinos, black Americans could not be easily sent away. Their employment was also problematic as the agriculturalists worried that they would be "pirating [workers] between sections [of the U.S.] and industries" and that the "negroes would create a much larger social problem and school problem than do Mexicans since the latter are not American citizens and a

¹⁸Mary Wood to Representative Johnson (WA), November 14, 1927, RG 233, file HR 70-A-F14.3, National Archives.

¹⁹From an Arizona paper, reprinted in George Perry, "Imported Porto Rican Laborers."

²⁰Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 96-97.

²¹House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, Hearings, 71st Cong., 2d sess., 1930, 60-61, 244-46; "Mexican Labor Exclusion Bill Would Cause Influx of Filipino Population," Hayden Collection, MSS-1, Hayden Papers, box 580, file 2, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

very large percentage of them return annually to Mexico.”²² Again, it was the permanence of black Americans that made them less desirable than Mexicans. Employers feared that they would remain in the vicinity after the seasonal work had ended and become dependent upon local charity.

Many agriculturalists and their political allies preferred Mexican labor precisely because they believed that the immigrants would reside only temporarily in the U.S. They perceived Mexicans as short-timers who had little interest in competing with Americans or in belonging to the American nation. The president of the *Los Angeles Times*, Harry Chandler, testified that Mexicans were “not enterprising like other races, but are more desirable from our standpoint.”²³ Fred Hart of the California Farm Bureau agreed, explaining that Mexicans did not compete with Americans as other groups since “you don’t find the Mexican buying land and settling down and doing those things.”²⁴ Harry Chandler added that few Mexicans interacted with other Americans (in terms of where they chose to live or whom they chose to marry) or attempted to naturalize, “Mexicans do not come here to live, they do not come here to mix...They keep to themselves.”²⁵ George Clements of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce went even further, asserting that even if Mexicans did remain, there was an easy solution for “in any event, he is an alien, which offers the possibility of relief should we desire it through deportation” as had occurred previously during the early 1920s.²⁶ Clements believed that

²²Ventura County Farm Bureau to Representative Johnson, January 31, 1928, RG 233, file HR 70A-F14.3, National Archives.

²³House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, 60.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 209.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 69.

²⁶George P. Clements to Representative Phil D. Swing, December 27, 1928, RG 233, file HR 70A-F14.3, National Archives.

Mexican laborers remained only at the whim of the American people; they did not belong and could be removed whenever desired.

By the mid-1920s, most marginalizationists recognized the advantages in promoting Mexicans as temporary inhabitants over admitting them as potential second-class or subordinate Americans. Hence, they persuaded many Americans that they had nothing to fear from open borders and Mexican immigrants who would soon leave. Still, observing that some Mexicans did not return to Mexico, a few marginalizationists continued to stress that immigrants who stayed permanently would not threaten the nation as these newcomers would remain at the bottom of society and not contest existing hierarchies. One Arizona farmer testified that although he was not sure if Mexicans made good citizens, he believed that they made “passable” ones.²⁷ A sugar beet grower informed legislators that the immigrants generally “drift[ed] back,” but that if they remained they were only “worker[s] and never will be anything else.”²⁸ A Texas farmer argued that the immigrants generally returned but when they did not he noted that “I think Texans [white Americans]...feel satisfied that they are fully capable of maintaining their superiority over the Mexican.”²⁹ A representative of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce agreed, noting that while half of the city’s residents were Mexican (presumably of Mexican descent) “the Mexican is not in any way controlling the institutions or retarding the Americanization of the city of El Paso.”³⁰

The marginalizationists strengthened the prevailing image of Mexicans as only temporarily in the United States by bombarding Americans with anecdotes and statistics

²⁷House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, 139.

²⁸House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers from Mexico*, 95.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 46.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 53.

regarding the immigrants' transitory status in the U.S. Harry Chandler testified that "a large number of them [Mexicans] come in automobiles and then they drive home."³¹ In close questioning by some dubious lawmakers, various employers asserted that when the Mexicans left, they returned to Mexico rather than taking jobs in other parts of the nation. Representative John Garner (Democrat) of Texas assured fellow legislators that "80 per cent of the Mexicans that come over for temporary work go back" as "all they want is a month's labor in the United States, and that is enough to support them in Mexico for six months."³² The Central Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce in El Paso reported that 80 to 90 percent of Mexicans returned.³³ A resolution submitted by the Anaheim (CA) Union Water Company informed Congress that Mexicans were "temporarily resident in the United States," with "most of the laborers returning home at the close of the harvest season."³⁴ Many others concurred, repeating these or even larger percentages of the number of Mexicans who had left. Few provided any hard data. Reliable statistics were slippery and difficult to find. While the U.S. immigration commissioner reported few cases of immigrants returning to Mexico in his annual reports, Mexican officials cited a much higher number.³⁵ In either case, the incessant repetition about the immigrants' leaving reinforced the image of Mexicans as temporary in the minds of many Americans.

Few marginalizationists were as active as Carl Hayden, the former Democratic representative and then senator from Arizona, in defining Mexicans as temporary.

³¹House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, 61.

³²House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers from Mexico*, 188.

³³"Declaration of Principles" from the Central Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce, El Paso Conference, November 18-19, 1927, RG 233, file HR 70A-F14.3 National Archives.

³⁴Resolution from the Anaheim Union Water Company, February 6, 1928, RG 233, file HR 70A-F14.3, National Archives.

³⁵Secretaria de relaciones exteriores, *La migración y protección de mexicanos en el extranjero*, (Mexico City: Ministerio de relaciones exteriores, 1928), 11-13.

Hayden went further than mere promotion of this image by calling for the codification of the existing back and forth practice into a temporary worker program. Although there had been severe problems with a similar policy during the First World War, leaving destitute Mexicans stranded far from the border without food and work, Hayden believed it could be improved and that a German program offered an attractive model. According to Hayden, the German state had successfully imported Polish workers for seasonal work and then returned the Poles before they jeopardized Germany's racial character or endangered "the German standard of living or way of thinking." Hayden further emphasized that "their temporary admission had no effect upon either the Government or the people of Germany."³⁶ He did not mention what the Poles or the Polish state thought of this program, or if they had benefited.

Even an ardent exclusionist like Representative Albert Johnson (Republican, WA) seemed intrigued with the possibilities of creating a temporary pool of workers. Politically astute, he recognized that this was a potential way for balancing the labor demands of agribusiness against those like himself who feared the changes the newcomers would make in the nation. In debating restriction, Johnson frequently asked people on both sides of the debate what they thought about a temporary worker program; generally the responses were positive. But one factor which prevented Johnson and his followers from embracing this idea was how to ensure that the temporary status would apply to the entire Mexican family without violating federal laws.

Johnson understood that the birthright citizenship clause in the 14th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as interpreted and upheld in the 1898 Supreme Court case *U.S. v.*

³⁶House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers from Mexico*, 191.

Wong Kim Ark, clearly conferred citizenship to children born in the U.S., regardless of the status of their parents. This decision posed a problem for Johnson as he considered the creation of a temporary worker program. For while the immigrants could be returned to Mexico per the terms of a contract, their citizen children had the right to remain. Representative John Box (Democrat, TX), another exclusionist, also demanded to know just “how is Uncle Sam going to force them into Mexico—those children born into the United States?”³⁷ Johnson wondered the same in the committee hearings and wanted to know if there would be any problems if they needed to remove children. He also questioned the possible relationships that Mexicans might form with Anglo Americans in the states, and whether there were or should be prohibitions on interracial marriage so that the immigrants would not be tempted to remain permanently for those reasons. Further troubling Johnson was how the family unit overall would affect temporary status, as he wondered if those who emigrated in groups would be more or less likely to return to Mexico.³⁸ This was a major issue for, in comparison to most other immigrant groups, more Mexicans emigrated as families.³⁹ Clearly, the problems in devising such a program were in how to work around certain principles and details: how long the season would last, who would bear the cost and responsibility for the workers’ return, and how much Congress could restrict the immigrants’ freedom in terms of movement and marriage. Ultimately, the problems overwhelmed Johnson and his fellow exclusionists who did not support or approve a formal, temporary worker program.

³⁷Ibid., 94-95.

³⁸Ibid., 195.

³⁹Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 34.

Despite the marginalizationists' failure to establish such a program, the mere subject and discussion of it contributed to the growing discourse of Mexicans as temporary. Throughout this and other debates regarding Mexican immigration, agribusiness, legislators, and other participants providing testimony frequently used language referring to Mexican immigrants as sojourners, homers, and rovers, or migratory and seasonal as well as temporary and transient.⁴⁰ Often those testifying did not actually know where the Mexicans went, did not care, or for their own purposes in retaining open borders, preferred that the answer remain muddled and merged. In the final analysis, it did not really matter to the marginalizationists that some migratory workers stayed in the U.S. What did concern them was their ability to depict all Mexicans as mobile and restless so that other Americans would not recognize the immigrants' growing permanence and fear the consequences of their extended presence on American homogeneity. Although some critics had questioned the accuracy of the marginalizationists' claims, that the immigrants remained only temporarily, the opponents' use of the same terms emphasizing constant movement and migration (to disparage the immigrants) only enhanced the growing image of Mexicans as temporary.⁴¹ The constant repetition of such language helped to fix in American minds the image of Mexican immigrants as only temporary laborers who would never become American.

⁴⁰The word guest, a less pejorative euphemism for some of these words, was not used until a much later date.

⁴¹One of many specific examples in the congressional hearings was S. Parker Friselle, the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee of Fresno (CA) County Chamber of Commerce who described Mexican immigrants as "transient" and "homers," whom "like the pigeon goes back to roost" in his testimony. Roy Richard Woodruff, the House representative from Michigan used words like "drift" to emphasize Mexicans' movement. See House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Seasonal Agricultural Laborers from Mexico*, 6, 8, 26. Other examples are Russell Bennett, editor of the *Holtville Tribune* in California who referred to Mexicans as "mostly nomadic" and William Hushing, the Legislative Representative of the American Federation of Labor in Washington, DC who described them as "a roving class." See House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Western Hemisphere Immigration*, 317, 367.

The emerging sense of Mexicans as transient contributed to the growing notion of Mexicans as unable to establish meaningful communities, and thus incapable of being American. Despite Americans' own migratory ways, Americans had a long history of viewing themselves as settled, stable, and permanent. They regarded others who were migratory—generally newcomers or people deemed foreign—as barbaric, unsettled, and wild. This image was clear during the struggles over statehood when legislators opposed to Arizona's admission railed against the territory because of its significant population of single, transient men. These mobile men, they argued, lacked morals and general civilization. Those who favored statehood emphasized that the people of Mexican descent who lived within the territories were exceptionally stable and thus imminently American. This past, then, made it less likely that Anglo or Mexican Americans would envision that the recent Mexican immigrants—depicted as roamers—would qualify as potential or even second-class members of the United States. Their peripatetic practices suggested that they did not belong anywhere at all.

Yet the growing *colonias* in the Southwest, Midwest, and even parts of the eastern United States demonstrated that the immigrants did remain and establish permanent communities. In Chicago, Mexicans increased from 1,310 in 1920 to 75,000 by 1928. The sociologist Emory Bogardus reported that many Mexicans in California were homeowners, suggesting that the immigrants had become permanent settlers. The number of Mexican children likewise increased dramatically on California school rosters.⁴² Yet the length of the immigrants' stay in any particular place, and the meaning of "temporary," was rarely discussed or defined. While policymakers presumed it was of a seasonal duration, lasting three to 18 months, immigrants frequently conceived of their

⁴²Bresette, *Mexicans in the United States*, 8-9.

temporary status in much different terms, related to specific events rather than time. They spoke of returning to Mexico only for holidays, or dreamt of returning permanently when violence in Mexico ceased or the economy improved. This amorphous timeframe made it easier for marginalizationists to fight against various restrictive measures for no one had to explain exactly when the immigrants would leave.

Even American authors and scholars who noticed the immigrants' growing presence unwittingly promoted the marginalizationists' agenda. As they learned of Mexicans' ambivalence toward the United States, due to the discrimination, segregation, and ostracism they experienced within it, they incorporated the findings into their studies. James Batten concluded that Mexicans "cross[ed] the border physically" into the U.S. but remained within Mexico "racially and nationally."⁴³ Helen Walker, a sociologist, reported that most Mexicans had little interest in naturalizing as citizens and "had no desire to become a part of our body politic." She added that even those who had become citizens were generally "peons" who avoided voting since they believed that they were "really not part of the real America."⁴⁴ Even an English-language teacher, in a profession generally linked to Americanization campaigns, thought that she was contributing to "international goodwill" by teaching English since she fully expected that her Mexican students would return to Mexico.⁴⁵ In making these statements, these researchers and educators further enhanced the image of the immigrants as temporary.

But U.S. agricultural interests, their legislative allies, and a handful of American scholars alone did not convince Americans of the merits of an image of Mexicans as

⁴³James Hoffman Batten, "Southwest and Center: The Mexican Conference at Pomona," *Survey Midmonthly*, January 15, 1929, 475.

⁴⁴Helen W. Walker, "Mexican Immigrants and American Citizenship," *Sociology and Social Research* 13 (May-June, 1929): 465-71. Quotations from page 467.

⁴⁵J. Francis Lemon, "The English-Mexican Class," *Hispania* 9 (October 1926): 248-50.

temporary workers. They had help from many Mexicans as well. The actions and discourse of Mexican officials, scholars, journalists, and the immigrants themselves all helped to promote the image that Mexicans would enter the U.S. only to provide their labor, and then return home as quickly as possible. With everyone urging their temporary stay, Mexicans had even less incentive to remain in the U.S. and pursue permanent residency or citizenship.

The Mexican Government Supports the Temporary Worker Image

The Mexican government and officials did much to strengthen the image of Mexicans as only temporary sojourners to the U.S. While embarrassed at the number of Mexicans leaving the country—at a time when the authorities were trying to promote the nascent revolutionary state and prove that they could provide for their citizenry—government officials also regarded emigration as an expedient safety valve. The immigrants' absence served to defuse growing economic tensions until the new leaders could resolve the state's economic problems. The immigrants also provided valuable remittances, an important source of income for the faltering Mexican economy.⁴⁶ Despite the recognizable benefits from the immigrants' short-term absence, the Mexican government wanted the immigrants to stay connected to their native country so that they would continue to send money home, and eventually return to re-build the war-torn society when Mexico was ready to absorb them. Therefore they did much to promote voluntary repatriation as the ultimate goal.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Some Mexican scholars and officials did see the loss of Mexicans as negative and that it only enriched the North at the expense of Mexico. Still, many others recognized that there were few opportunities in Mexico and that the remittances from the North contributed to the Mexican economy. See Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States*, 104-10.

⁴⁷Lore Diana Kuehnert, "Pernicious Foreigners and Contested Compatriots: Mexican Newspaper Debates over Immigration, Emigration and Repatriation, 1928-1936" (PhD diss., University of California-Riverside, 2002), 19, 28, 54-61.

To increase the likelihood of the immigrants' continued allegiance and eventual homecoming, Mexican officials established *comisiones honoríficas*, or honorary commissions, to extend the reach of the Mexican consulates far into the United States. In the early 1920s, fewer than 60 consulates existed to serve two million Mexicans in the U.S. Consequently, the Mexican president, Alvaro Obregón (1920-1924), encouraged the creation of honorary organizations, with the first one established in Texas in 1921, to ensure that more Mexicans remembered the homeland. Under the official sanction of the Mexican consulates, these commissions offered various kinds of assistance to Mexicans in the U.S., such as helping them to contest police or employer mistreatment or incidents of discrimination. They sponsored nationalistic activities to maintain ties with the immigrants abroad, registering them with the consulate, and sponsoring classes in the Spanish language, literacy, and Mexican history.⁴⁸ They also organized libraries emphasizing the greatness of the nation, which included Mexican maps, Mexican history, and Mexican literature. In part, this was done to counteract Americanization efforts such as those conducted by the Friendly House in Phoenix, which taught immigrants English as well as how to read. In the late 1920s, a few consulates established private schools to further combat assimilationist efforts, with some consuls going so far as to visit various *colonias*, urging parents not to permit their children to Americanize.⁴⁹ By the end of the decade, many honorary commissions had sprung up throughout the United States, extending the influence of the Mexican government deep into *el norte*.

⁴⁸Jaime R. Aguila, "Protecting 'Mexico de Afuera': Mexican Emigration Policy, 1876-1928" (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2000), 64-75, 211-12.

⁴⁹F. Arturo Rosales, *!Pobre Raza!: Violence, Justice, and Mobilization Among México Lindo Immigrants, 1900-1936* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999), 36-44.

In addition to the honorary commissions, Obregón encouraged the creation of *Brigadas de la Cruz Azul Mexican* (The Blue Cross) to raise money for the immigrant community in the United States. The Blue Cross members fed and clothed the impoverished and visited the immigrants hospitalized or incarcerated in the U.S.⁵⁰ These efforts helped to keep the immigrants connected to Mexico and only temporarily attached to the United States. The Blue Cross, honorary commissions, and Mexican consulates all helped to remind Americans that the immigrants had little interest in or need to become part of the nation; they belonged in Mexico.

At the same time that the Mexican government sanctioned emigration, it also pronounced itself eager and willing to welcome the return of Mexican citizens from the United States. It thereby enhanced the idea that the immigrants had only left temporarily and would soon return to Mexico. This was not idle rhetoric. These officials did provide funds to recruit experienced Mexican farmworkers from the United States to colonize underutilized Mexican land. The plan involved assisting the immigrants with their return home as well as providing them with land and resources. The repatriates then were expected to use their recently acquired knowledge to establish efficient and successful farms. These schemes, however, usually failed as the land proffered was generally of poor quality, the projects underfunded, and the immigrants not provided with adequate equipment and machinery to make the farms a success. Also, the immigrants themselves generally had few resources and little experience in developing a farm, especially given their lowly positions picking crops in an unmechanized industry in the U.S.⁵¹

⁵⁰Rosales, *!Pobre Raza!*, 42-44, 78.

⁵¹Kuehnert, "Pernicious Foreigners and Contested Compatriots," 19, 28, 54-61, 78, 261-62.

Various Mexican scholars and writers also enhanced the image of Mexicans as only temporarily in the United States. According to these authors, all persons of Mexican descent, whether seasonal migrants, Mexican citizens in the U.S. for a longer duration, or even American citizens of Mexican origin, belonged to an “imagined community” affiliated with the Mexican nation.⁵² These writers desired and encouraged many of these *hijos de México* (children of Mexico) to return to Mexico, bringing what they had learned in the U.S. of modern agriculture, industry, work habits, and technology back to their native country.⁵³

Manuel Gamio, a prominent Mexican anthropologist, argued in this vein and recommended that Mexicans go to the United States for experience, but then return to develop their homeland.⁵⁴ Many Mexicans in the mid-1920s shared this view and optimistically regarded the returning Mexicans as “super-Mexicans,” who had “undergone socioeconomic mestizaje [mixture].” These repatriates then were expected to resolve the problems of Mexico, training other leaders in the methods that they had learned, and improving the Mexican nation. Such writings emphasized the idea that the *hijos*, no matter the length of their absence, were really a part of Mexico and would be welcomed whenever they returned. Some writers extended this argument to include even those whom had never lived in Mexico but had been in the territory taken by the United States through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.⁵⁵ Despite this welcoming propaganda,

⁵²See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

⁵³Kuehnert, “Pernicious Foreigners and Contested Compatriots,” 267-70. Kuehnert uses the term *hijos de México*.

⁵⁴This is from Robert Redfield’s summary of Gamio’s work on Mexican immigration in 1926-27. See Robert Redfield, “The Antecedents of Mexican Immigration to the United States,” *American Journal of Sociology* 35 (July-May, 1929-30): 433-38. Also see Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration*, 104.

⁵⁵Kuehnert, “Pernicious Foreigners and Contested Compatriots,” 270, 288.

the Mexican government had little success in getting immigrants to return.⁵⁶ Still, the discussion and encouragement helped to cement the image that Mexicans belonged to Mexico, and only temporarily worked in the U.S.

By the late 1920s, however, more Mexicans were returning either because of financial hardship or because the U.S. government deported them. At this point the Mexican government openly discouraged Mexicans from leaving Mexico so that they would not have to finance the repatriates' return. They supported the efforts of the Mexican labor union, *Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana* (CROM), to stem emigration and required immigration officials to tell the would-be immigrants of the hardships they would face in the United States. They also began to enforce a 1926 Mexican law, which stipulated that the immigrants provide evidence of a U.S. work contract before they received a travel visa.⁵⁷

In 1928, Enrique Santibañez, the Mexican consul in San Antonio (TX), tried to do his part to discourage emigration by informing Mexicans of the lack of opportunities in the United States. He emphasized that the immigrants would not be accepted as potential citizens and consequently would experience discrimination and financial hardship. Santibañez argued against emigration because he had discovered that even when the immigrants lost their jobs, they did *not* return to Mexico. Instead, they became like “*nómadas*” (nomads), looking for work wherever they could find it.⁵⁸ In this way, they had become rootless, people with no home or sense of belonging in either the United States or Mexico.

⁵⁶Ibid., 254.

⁵⁷Ironically, this requirement was against U.S. laws, which prohibited people from emigrating to the U.S. if they had pre-arranged work contracts.

⁵⁸Enrique Santibañez, *Ensayo acerca de la inmigración mexicana en los estados unidos*, 98, 104-5. Quote is my trans. from p. 51.

As these efforts to stem their movement proved fruitless, many Mexicans began to favor and promote an official temporary worker program, mandating the immigrants' short-term belonging in the United States.⁵⁹ They believed that while the Mexican government was doing all it could feasibly do to stem the movement to *el norte*, it needed to make a greater effort to prevent "*nuestras compatriotas* [our compatriots]" from establishing permanent roots in the United States. The editor of *El Heraldo Mexicano* called upon the Mexican government to establish a temporary work program in which the American employers would send the workers back to Mexico; in this way Mexico would retain a pool of laborers to rebuild the country when it was in a position to do so.⁶⁰ Consul Santibañez concurred and argued that the best solution was for Mexicans to emigrate in accordance with a fixed contract-labor program, in which the American employers would be financially responsible for returning them to Mexico in a few months.⁶¹

Various Mexicans also helped to promote the image of the immigrants as temporary workers by viewing Mexico, rather than the U.S., as responsible for the immigrants' welfare. *El Diario* criticized the Mexican government and consulates for not dealing with the immigrants' poor living conditions, forcing them to rely upon private organizations or *mutualistas* in the U.S. to resolve serious problems. While this author called upon other local organizations in the U.S.—such as independent schools and job placement organizations—to help the indigent, he did not make similar demands upon any level of American government.⁶² This journalist believed that the emigrants did not

⁵⁹See Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States*, 117.

⁶⁰*El Fronterizo* (Tucson, AZ), April 7, 1928. Reprinted editorial from *El Heraldo de México*.

⁶¹Santibañez, 104-5.

⁶²"Los Emigrantes," *El Tucsonense*, July 12, 1928. Reprinted from *El Diario*.

belong in the U.S. long-term, and that Mexico was primarily responsible for their welfare. When the Mexican government tried to get *mutualistas* and charities in the United States to cover the cost of the immigrants' return, Mexicans in Mexican border towns criticized their government for not doing more to help the impoverished repatriates who flooded their communities.⁶³ Important elements of Mexican society, then, actually deepened the marginalizationists' argument that Mexican immigrants had come to the United States only temporarily and that the nation to which they belonged was Mexico.

Mexican Immigrants Sustain the Temporary Worker Image

Influenced by these U.S. and Mexican officials and the poor treatment they experienced, many Mexican immigrants in the 1920s also considered their stay in the United States as temporary. Whether this ended up being the case or not, they spoke openly of returning to their *patria*. A septuagenarian explained that he had recently emigrated to the U.S. but intended to stay only until he could afford to purchase a barbershop back in Mexico.⁶⁴ A seasonal railroad worker in the U.S. reported that he considered Mexico his "home and final resting place."⁶⁵ Mexicans as far away as Chicago made various references to their eventual return once they had sufficient money, the political situation in Mexico had improved, or more opportunities for advancement developed in their homeland.⁶⁶ Certainly, some immigrants recognized that their duration in the U.S. would be lengthy, others not, but virtually all shared the *desire* to make their time in the United States brief, regardless of how likely that might be.

⁶³Kuehnert, "Pernicious Foreigners and Contested Compatriots," 54, 77, 261-62.

⁶⁴Quoted in Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States*, 77.

⁶⁵Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Chicago and the Calumet Region*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), 275.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

This desire sprung not only from nostalgia or yearning for some aspect of a remembered homeland, but also from the efforts of the Mexican government and their representative consuls in the U.S. to keep Mexico alive in the hearts and minds of the immigrants. These officials hoped to generate a sense of community amongst Mexican citizens abroad and at home, especially in the wake of the tumultuous Mexican Revolution. This so-called *México lindo* (beautiful Mexico) movement, or campaign for the immigrants' devotion, included all kinds of elaborate celebrations and pageantry. Festivals in the U.S. memorialized various political events such as *Cinco de Mayo*—commemorating Mexicans' success over the French in the 1862 battle at Puebla—and *Dieciseis de Septiembre*—glorifying Mexico's independence in 1821 from Spain. Likely influenced by such efforts, most Mexicans in the U.S. prominently displayed some symbols of Mexico in their homes. These included portraits of the revered former president, Benito Juárez, and the Virgin of Guadalupe, an important religious figure in Mexico.⁶⁷

Despite some of the immigrants' distance from their homeland, and their emphasis on daily survival, many were well aware of and attracted to the dramatic changes and increased nationalism pulsing throughout Mexico. In the Midwest, Mexicans organized to sponsor art exhibits of the latest works of David Alfaro Siqueiros, one of the foremost artists associated with incipient Mexican nationalism. In 1928, hundreds of Mexican immigrants traveled to Chicago to hear José Vasconcelos, a well-known Mexican official, who had given voice to Mexico's revolutionary nationalism. In Chicago, Vasconcelos spoke eloquently of *la raza cósmica* (the cosmic race), a slogan he had coined to express the nation's more expansive view of Mexican identity rooted in the

⁶⁷Rosales, *!Pobre Raza!*, 5-7.

melding of an indigenous and European heritage.⁶⁸ Consequently, Mexicans abroad felt more connected to their native country and a stronger sense of belonging there; few pursued naturalization in the U.S.

At the same time that the immigrants became engrossed with this new version of Mexican nationalism, they faced greater hostility from Americans who had become more aware of their presence. Increasingly, Mexicans recognized that many Americans saw them as second-class Americans, if they viewed them as any type of Americans at all. The immigrants' exclusion from permanent status in the U.S., and their own disinterest in naturalization, fed upon each other and compounded both. Although the immigrants sometimes received favorable attention from missionaries or social workers, other reformers daily impressed upon Mexicans just how they would have to change—in terms of dress, religion, food, language, and housing—in order to become successful in American society. This kind of pressure irked the new arrivals who resisted this intrusion into their personal lives. Felipe Hale, an immigrant, proudly explained how he continued to cook his meals in an *estila mexicana* (Mexican-style) rather than adopt American foods and preparations. In addition, he recounted how he had sent his daughter to school in Mexico, rather than in Arizona where flag worship outweighed education.⁶⁹

⁶⁸The concept of the cosmic race celebrated *mestizaje* (or mixture) and the cultural mixing of Europeans and native Americans. It signified that Mexican identity would henceforth be rooted in an Aztec or indigenous heritage and the creation of a new mixed race, the cosmic race, which would be superior to all existing ones. All Mexicans, then, theoretically, could see themselves in this more inclusive Mexican identity, which previously had emphasized a pure European heritage. Africans and Asians, however, were excluded from this national narrative and not recognized as being a part of the nation's history or current era. Also, the new ideology called for the indigenous people to change their ways to coincide with those who had already melded their cultures and identity. See Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 151, 157. See also Kuehnert, "Pernicious Foreigners and Contested Compatriots," 11-12.

⁶⁹Manuel Gamio, *El inmigrante mexicano: la historia de su vida, entrevistas completas, 1926-27*, eds., Devra Weber, Roberto Melville, and Juan Vicente Palermo (Mexico City: Regents of the University of California, 2002), 413-14.

Mexican immigrants were in a difficult bind. They were working in a country whose citizens did not want them to become members of the nation and wooed by the country they had left but which could not provide them with jobs. Many immigrants dealt with this awkward situation by claiming ongoing allegiance to Mexico, even as they continued to work in the United States. To remain connected to Mexico and apart from Americans who discriminated against them, some immigrants made a point of refusing to learn English.⁷⁰ Others dreamt of their return and wrote *corridos* or songs expressing this sentiment, “I go sad and heavy-hearted to suffer and endure; my Mother Guadalupe, grant my safe return.”⁷¹ The writers for *El Correo Mexicano*, a Spanish-language newspaper in Chicago, expected that most immigrants, including themselves, would return to Mexico eventually, and lauded those immigrants who organized themselves into associations to stay affiliated with the homeland. According to these journalists, the Mexican nation would reward the mobile immigrants for their loyalty when they returned to their *patria* (native country).⁷² These immigrants lived in the U.S. physically, but culturally and psychologically they remained Mexican.

Some Mexicans *were* temporary workers or “birds of passage.” Yet many others had remained and settled in the growing *colonias*—despite their nostalgia for their native country—and begun to put down roots in the American nation. But the success of the temporary worker image overwhelmed this distinction in the minds of most Americans. To most Americans in the late 1920s, *all* Mexicans were in the U.S. only temporarily,

⁷⁰Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 55-56.

⁷¹*Corrido* quoted in Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States*, 76.

⁷²“A propósito de la emigración,” *La Opinión* (Los Angeles), October 5, 1926.

conveniently providing their labor and then returning home so that U.S. national identity would remain intact.

The Marginalizationists' Success

Although the exclusionists successfully portrayed Mexicans as un-American due to their race, class, and cultural background, the marginalizationists had convinced a sufficient number of Americans that the immigrants would provide their labor and then leave. In the 1920s, this notion of the temporary worker contributed substantially to the marginalizationists' victory over exclusionists in preventing the European quota laws from being applied to Mexico. This image of Mexicans as temporary workers, rather than as potential Americans via the pluralist or assimilationist strategies, had become the dominant way to regard Mexican immigrants. Their physical presence was tolerated in the short-term, but they had no real place or permanence in the American nation.

By the close of 1930, the debates over immigration restriction and temporary worker policies had resolved themselves through the deepening depression and greater enforcement of existing legislation (including the collection of head taxes, determinations of literacy, and investigations of contract labor violations). Five times during the latter part of the twenties Americans had debated whether to restrict Mexican immigration and five times they had opted against a restrictive policy in favor of more open immigration, which most believed or hoped would result in only temporary workers, rather than potential citizens. By 1930, Americans recognized that the crisis over restriction had largely vanished since fewer Mexicans were emigrating. The ardent marginalizationist, Senator Carl Hayden, enthusiastically declared that "the Mexican quota problem has been

solved.”⁷³ In Arizona alone, the number of Mexican immigrants entering the nation decreased from a high of 9,041 in fiscal year 1926 to 749 in 1930.⁷⁴ As this decline paralleled national statistics, the more pressing concern then became what to do with the thousands of Mexican workers whose presence in the United States during a growing economic crisis was a glaring reminder of just how fictional the image of the temporary worker had been.

⁷³*Congressional Record*, 71st Cong., 2d sess., (1930), 7111.

⁷⁴“Mexican Labor Exclusion Bill Would Cause Influx of Filipino Population,” Hayden Collection, MSS-1, Hayden Papers, box 580, file 2, Hayden Library, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ.

Part IV

Repatriation

1930 to 1935

Chapter Eight

“To Keep America American”:¹ The Temporary Worker is Sent Away 1930 to 1935

Santiago Lopez grew up near Tucson, Arizona, although he was born in Mexico around 1907. At some point he returned to Mexico and in 1925 crossed the border again near Sasabe, Arizona. Two years later, the border patrol arrested Lopez and ordered him out of the U.S. He left but came back within only two hours, walking into the United States a few miles west of Nogales. Seven years later, Lopez was working on a ranch owned by the Southern Arizona Bank and Trust Company when immigration authorities nabbed him again; this time, they initiated formal deportation proceedings. Hearing of Lopez’s troubles, Hubert H. D’Autremont, the vice president of the Tucson Bank, wrote to his congressional representative, Lewis W. Douglas, and asked him to intercede in the case. D’Autremont vouched for his employee by recounting Lopez’s extensive history in the country and explaining that his presence would do “no harm to the United States.”² By this time, Lopez had lived continuously within the U.S., save two hours, for nine years. Additionally, he had spent some time growing up in Arizona and was only 25 years old. To which country did he belong?

In the nineteenth century, Lopez might have continued his transnational peregrinations through both countries, hardly noticing his journey across invisible boundary lines. If he had reached adulthood in the first decade of the century, he might have apprenticed himself much as Carlos Jácome had done in Tucson, rising

¹A common restrictionist slogan quoted in Paul S. Taylor, “More Bars Against Mexicans?” *Survey* 64 (April 1930), 26.

²Hubert H. D’Autremont to Lewis Douglas, February 5, 1932, Lewis Douglas Papers, AZ 290, box 181, University of Arizona Library, Tucson.

economically to become a member of the middle-class and potentially accepted as Spanish American. Yet by the mid-1920s, his initial encounter with border agents had convinced him to stay put, remaining in the U.S. rather than risking a trip outside the country.³ If asked, Lopez likely would have said his preferred home was in the United States; clearly his contestation of deportation suggests that he wanted to live there.

By 1930, however, the broad marginalizationist camp—of employers, the U.S and Mexican governments as well as academics, journalists, and some immigrants—had succeeded in defining Mexicans’ presence in the United States as temporary. Perceived as short-timers, the immigrants purportedly would not affect Americans in any way, except to benefit them through the sweat of their labor. The growing prevalence of this temporary worker image would up-end the lives of people like Santiago Lopez who had committed to a life in Arizona. The immigration bureau, unimpressed by Representative Douglas’s intercession, ruled that Lopez had violated the 1924 immigration law for crossing without a visa and the 1917 Immigration Act for entering the U.S. as an illiterate. Lopez had returned to the United States unlawfully after having been granted permission to depart on his own recognizance, and in lieu of a formal deportation hearing. Because he violated this agreement, Lopez could not then re-apply for admission despite his employer’s offer to cover his entrance fees and teach him English. The conviction that Mexicans should remain only temporarily in the nation surely undergirded the ease with which the immigration officials deported Lopez. For despite

³Mae Ngai makes the argument that due to increased restriction, Mexicans stayed longer in the U.S. rather than risking deportation or being prevented from re-entering the U.S. at a later date. See Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

his time in the U.S., American bureaucrats quickly determined that he did not belong there.⁴

Background on Repatriation

During the 1920s, when the economy boomed for cotton growers in the Southwest, the marginalizationists had successfully persuaded many Americans that their strategy for dealing with Mexican newcomers was the best.⁵ They had argued in favor of allowing Mexicans to become subordinate Americans, destined to remain in dead-end jobs, or, more commonly, to be only temporary residents. In either case, the result would be the same: that Mexicans who came to the United States would not threaten U.S. national identity or the nation's unity, for either they would remain under the control of Anglo American employers or soon leave the country (or both).

This growing consensus rested on a variety of factors: relatively open borders, a strong economy, and the immigrants' temporary stay in the U.S. The agreement increasingly muted the most strident exclusionists and silenced the few assimilationists and even fewer pluralists who wondered how and if the most recent Mexican immigrants had the requisite racial heritage or class status to integrate into the nation. It also blinded most Americans to the reality that immigrant behavior was contradicting the image of Mexicans as temporary workers. The economist Paul Taylor observed that Americans

⁴Hubert H. D'Autremont to Lewis Douglas, February 5, 1932; Lewis Douglas to Hubert H. D'Autremont, February 10, 1932; Harry E. Hull to Lewis Douglas, March 24, 1932; Hubert H. D'Autremont to Lewis Douglas, March 29, 1932; Lewis Douglas Papers, AZ 290, box 181, University of Arizona Library.

⁵Although some areas of the country were already experiencing falling crop prices and depression, cotton prices continued to soar throughout the 1920s. In fact, many agriculturalists switched to cotton from other crops because of the higher prices. This cotton boom, however, did not benefit pickers whose wages fell during the same period. See Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1939), 191-93; Devra Weber, *Dark Sweat, White Gold: California Farm Workers, Cotton, and the New Deal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 21, 35-41, 215.

had overestimated the number of temporary workers because they had failed to distinguish between internal and international migration. While some Mexicans traveled between the U.S. and Mexico, other families migrated along regular circuits from Texas and New Mexico to the beetfields of Colorado, Michigan, and others parts of the Midwest.⁶ The sociologist Ernesto Galarza reported that while there had been much “back and forth” Mexican immigration in the first years of the twentieth century, this practice had changed to “a more or less permanent settlement in the United States.”⁷

Indeed, many Mexican immigrants *had* decided to stay. They brought their extended families, bore children, and thereby increased the population in crowded Mexican *colonias* or *barrios* of the U.S. These *colonias* then spread throughout the nation, from various cities in the Southwest into eastern Pennsylvania and the outskirts of Detroit, Chicago, and other towns in the Midwest. By 1930, the U.S. Census calculated that at least 1,422,533 people of Mexican descent lived in the United States, double their population from 1920.⁸ Despite the immigrants’ increased numbers, Paul Taylor argued that most Americans presumed that Mexicans would “melt like the snow” when they were no longer needed.⁹

But as the depression intensified, many Americans became aware that the immigrants had not melted away as expected. An editor of *Survey* magazine observed

⁶Paul S. Taylor, *An American-Mexican Frontier: Nueces County, Texas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934), 103-4.

⁷House, *Select Committee to Investigate the Interstate Migration of Destitute Citizens*, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., (1940-1941), pt. 10, 3883.

⁸See “Population of the United States by Color or Race,” Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce (Washington: GPO, 1931). Official figures for people of Mexican descent are notoriously inaccurate. The 1930 figure includes all people of Mexican descent except those deemed as members of the white race, which accounted for an additional 65,965. The 1920 statistic (700,541) is an estimate since Mexicans were not recorded separately from whites until the 1930 census. Neither decennial census accounts for the number of undocumented Mexican immigrants. Mae Ngai estimates that approximately 200,000 such immigrants arrived between 1908 and 1920 and an additional 100,000 annually throughout the 1920s. See Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 131.

⁹Paul S. Taylor, “Mexicans North of the Rio Grande,” *Survey*, May 1, 1931, 205.

that “what we have to reckon with are the fortunes of a permanent Mexican population.”¹⁰ By 1931, the Arizona state legislature felt sufficiently concerned to warn the U.S. Congress that “large colonies of Mexican people” inhabited their state. Moreover, these Americans worried that Mexican immigrants remained with “little desire or intention to become American citizens,” taking jobs from “citizen workers” and lowering their standard of living.¹¹ Americans now believed that they had the right to enforce the immigrants’ temporary status and began to call for Mexicans’ repatriation or removal.

The economic downturn of the early 1920s had evoked a similar response, but the difference was that in the 1930s there were no contracts stipulating the immigrants’ return date. There was no temporary work program or fixed policy, only rhetoric implying Mexicans’ non-binding, temporary status. In fact, there was no requirement at all for legal immigrants to leave. They could live in the United States as long as they liked. Even those who had entered the country illegally prior to the 1924 Immigration Act could not be deported for this reason alone, or for becoming a public charge, if they had lived in the U.S. continuously (and could prove it) for at least five years.¹² Many Americans, however, did not recognize or wish to understand the difference between

¹⁰Editor’s note, “Now is the Time to Take Stock” in Paul S. Taylor, “Mexicans North of the Rio Grande,” 135.

¹¹“Ban on Alien Inflow from Mexico Asked,” *Tucson (AZ) Daily Citizen*, January 27, 1931.

¹²The 1924 Immigration Act authorized immigration officials to deport people whose only crime was to enter the country illegally for not coming in through an appropriate entrance station, paying the necessary fees, and passing medical and literacy exams. It eliminated the statute of limitations on illegal entry. This meant that if an immigrant entered illegally after 1924, they could be deported whenever caught, regardless of their years in residency. Later, the 1929 Registry Act provided a method for immigrants to legalize their status. If they could prove continuous residency since 1921, and paid \$20, they could get a certificate which would make them legal, allowing them to exit and re-enter the country without problem and begin the naturalization process if they wished. Between 1930 and 1940, 115,000 people took advantage of this law, over 80% of them were Canadian and European. Few Mexicans used this law either because they did not know about the act, could not provide sufficient proof, or did not have money to pay the \$20 fee. See Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 82.

those who could and could not be forcibly removed. While the U.S. government had no jurisdiction to conduct wholesale deportations against any immigrant group who had legal claims to be on American soil, Americans nevertheless began to argue that all people of Mexican descent in the U.S.—often regardless of the technicalities of their birth or citizenship—needed to be removed to protect American workers. Having accepted the marginalizationists’ arguments that the immigrants would be in the United States on only a temporary basis, many Americans perceived all Mexicans through the lens of this status and believed that it was time for them to go. Just as many Americans and Mexicans in the 1920s had concurred that the marginalizationists’ strategy of open borders for Mexicans made good immigration policy, they now agreed that the other element implicit in the strategy—the right to remove these people whose labor was no longer needed—should be enforced as well.

Estimates vary, but scholarly consensus is that approximately 500,000 people of Mexican descent left the United States in the first half of the 1930s, representing an exodus of about one-third of all people of Mexican descent in the U.S. Those who left included those whom the United States deported, those whom various local government or organizations helped to return, and those who repatriated themselves.¹³ The federal government actually did not deport very many people of any immigrant group in the 1920s. However, in the 1930s, Mexicans were disproportionately expelled compared to other immigrant groups: 8,335 Mexicans were sent away in 1931 compared to 2,276

¹³From the General Department of Statistics in Mexico City in James Carl Gilbert, “A Field Study in Mexico of the Mexican Repatriation Movement” (master’s thesis, University of Southern California, 1934), 19; Francisco E. Balderrama and Raymond Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 121-22; Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), 2.

Canadians and 6,162 immigrants to all of Europe.¹⁴ Another 10,000 plus immigrants (from all over the world) left annually as “voluntary departures,” cases in which immigrants agreed to leave on their own, rather than await a formal hearing that resulted in deportation 95 percent of the time. The vast majority of these departures were Mexicans.¹⁵ The advantage of bypassing the deportation process was that immigrants could then apply for re-entry in the future. If they were deported, the 1929 Deportation Act mandated that they could never apply for re-admission.¹⁶ Unfortunately, many who opted for a voluntary return later discovered that it was next to impossible to get back into the U.S. legally. Immigration officials considered the visa applicants as “likely to become a public charge,” a legitimate category for denial, and thus rejected their appeals for admission. Immigration authorities made these decisions based on the immigrants’ financial resources, whether they ever had received any form of relief while in the United States, or if they had previously left the country at any government’s expense. As few immigrants attempting to cross the border had any funds, and many had taken advantage of railfare or relief, the immigration agents had ample reasons to deny most visa requests.

¹⁴Only 16,000 to 20,000 immigrants from all areas of the world were deported each year in the early 1930s. One-third to one-half of all immigrants deported in these years were Mexican. While deportations were uncommon, the U.S. investigated 100,000 people each year, increasing Mexicans’ fears of being removed. Deportations increased dramatically after the 1929 Deportation Act provided more funds for investigation and removal. From 1908 to 1920, the U.S. deported only two to three thousand immigrants annually. See Francis F. Kane, “The Challenge of the Wickersham Deportations Report,” *Journal of Law and Criminology*, 23 (Nov-Dec 1932): 589 and Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 131.

¹⁵Kane, “The Challenge of the Wickersham Deportations Report,” 591; US Department of Labor, *Annual Report*, from the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington, DC: GPO, 1932), 6, 73.

¹⁶In 1932 the 1929 Deportation Act was amended to allow those who had been deported to re-apply one year later with the Secretary of Labor’s permission. This was done to address hardship situations in which family members had been separated as a consequence of deportation. Those deported for cause, such as because they were deemed criminals or were anarchists, could not take advantage of this amendment. The 1929 Deportation Act also defined illegal entry as a misdemeanor with jail time and/or fines. A second illegal entry constituted a felony with greater jail time and fines. See Kane, “The Challenge of the Wickersham Deportations Report,” 604; for details on the Deportation Act, see Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 59-60.

In one month, immigration officials rejected 78 percent of Mexicans' requests for entrance visas.¹⁷

Most of the immigrants returning to Mexico did not get picked up or processed for deportation but instead decided to repatriate themselves. Repatriation was ostensibly voluntary, in contrast to involuntary deportation. Although most repatriates arrived at the decision to leave of their own volition, in the sense that they were not forcibly removed, all faced various pressures encouraging them to go. The rise in anti-immigrant legislation in many states and municipalities prevented immigrants from working in a variety of fields (by limiting professional licenses to citizens) and public works jobs, making it difficult for them to "live where they could not work."¹⁸ Two-thirds of the repatriates interviewed by sociologist James Gilbert identified job loss as their primary motivation for returning to Mexico.¹⁹ Increased incidents of racial discrimination, the omnipresent fear of being arrested and deported, threatened removal from relief rolls, and intimidation or violence all contributed to immigrants' decisions to leave. The persuasive and combined efforts of various Mexican consuls, American government officials, and various charitable and relief organizations further encouraged Mexicans to take advantage of potential new opportunities in Mexico. These included colonizing underutilized Mexican land, constructing national highways, or guarding and excavating archaeological ruins such as Monte Alban in Oaxaca and the now famed Teotihuacán

¹⁷Monthly statistics are from July, 1931. See "Immigration from Mexico," Department of State, September 24, 1931, Carl Hayden Papers (MSS 001, Box 654, Folder 3), Arizona Collection, Department of Archives and Manuscripts, University Libraries, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

¹⁸Harold Fields, "Where Shall the Alien Work?" *Social Forces* 12 (Dec. 1933): 213-221. Quote is from Justice Hughes in his decision against the Arizona law, which restricted the number of non-citizens employed by private companies. Quoted in Fields, 221.

¹⁹Gilbert, "A Field Study in Mexico," 25.

outside of Mexico City.²⁰ The massive return migration, voluntary and involuntary, suggests that marginalizationists and their supporters had achieved some success in imposing a temporary status upon the former immigrants.

Marginalizationists and Exclusionists Enforce the Temporary Worker Image

When the panic of 1929 first hit, some Mexicans fled the United States immediately; many others chose to ride out the hard times. Once Americans recognized that the immigrants were not leaving in the anticipated numbers, they encouraged or coerced Mexicans to depart. The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company laid off its Mexican employees and promptly informed them that they would pay for their transit to the border in appreciation of their good service, as well as to remove any obligation of providing for them.²¹ Senator Carl T. Hayden, one of the chief marginalizationists, advocated stepped-up deportation drives and increased funding to remove Mexican workers.²² Initially, the marginalizationists had wanted a surplus of laborers so that they could have their choice of workers and pay them low wages, but by the early 1930s they supported Mexican repatriation and deportation because they no longer needed Mexican labor. These employers now preferred American “Okies” and “Arkies,” who had become willing to accept formerly distasteful jobs after losing their tenancies or farms in the Great Plains.²³

²⁰Edna Ewing Kelley, “The Mexicans Go Home,” *Southwest Review* 17 (April 1932): 305-7.

²¹Mercedes Carrera de Velasco, *Los mexicanos que devolvio la crisis, 1929-1932* (Mexico City: Colección del Archivo Histórico, 1974), 75.

²²Newspaper clipping, “Congressional Records Show Hayden’s Stand on Immigration and the Copper Tariff,” December 26, 1930, Carl Hayden Papers (MSS 001, Box 503, Folder 54). Senator Hayden advocated this even after increased penalties for illegal entry and greater funding for deportation had just been passed in the 1929 Deportation Act.

²³Harry Schwartz, *Seasonal Farm Labor in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 62.

By January 1933, there was a sizeable labor surplus with more than two workers for every agricultural job in California.²⁴

The exclusionists, who previously had focused on restriction, now joined unemployed Americans and marginalizationists in calling for the deportation of Mexican immigrants to retain the few remaining jobs for U.S. citizens. J.C. Brodie, an active exclusionist, who had long disliked Mexican immigrants and headed up the nativist Committee on Mexican Immigration in Superior (AZ), demanded that the federal government deport all Mexicans. He mistakenly believed the state had done so in an earlier depression and reminded officials that “the Harding Administration...did a splendid thing for the Southwest and America in 1921 when they deported 150,000 Mexican indigents.” He called for a repetition of this policy as “a final and complete solution” to what he deemed the problem of Mexican immigration.²⁵

While immigration officials found Brodie to be a tiresome crank, they took him seriously enough to investigate his myriad complaints. In one case, his perseverance caused Margarito Sanchez, a meter reader for Arizona Edison Company, to lose his job due to lack of American citizenship, despite the fact that Sanchez had lived in the United States for 15 years, had three U.S.-citizen children, and had formally declared his intention to become a citizen by filing the initial paperwork. Brodie’s influence did not stop with Sanchez, as several other Mexican immigrants found their cases intensely

²⁴Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, 228.

²⁵Brodie was mistaken. The federal government did not deport 150,000 Mexicans in the early 1920s. While the Mexican government has statistics showing that approximately 100,000 Mexicans returned in the early 1920s, many of these immigrants repatriated themselves, with the aid of the Mexican government or charitable organizations, or at the expense of their employer if they were brought in via special exemptions approved by the U.S. Department of Labor. The federal government did not obtain the authority to deport Mexicans solely for illegal entry until 1924. They could only deport immigrants if they had become a public charge within five years of their entry, or if they were anarchists or communists. J.C. Brodie to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, March 29, 1934, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group (RG) 85, Entry 9, file 55739/674A, National Archives, Washington, DC.

reviewed at the behest of the indefatigable Brodie. Brodie's frequent letters also brought immigration officials to his town to hunt for immigrants who had not entered the nation through the proper channels.²⁶

Brodie was not alone in his efforts to deport Mexicans and preserve jobs for Americans, particularly white Americans. R.E. Pasters, a cohort of Brodie's in the Committee on Mexican Immigration, claimed that Anglo and Mexican Americans in his town all agreed that it was "next to impossible for white laborers and mechanics to get employment," and called for officials to deport the city's immigrants. He believed that there were at least 400,000 Mexicans throughout the country who should leave and demanded a massive deportation campaign.²⁷ In Texas, W. L. Warren lobbied "to return these people back to Mexico where they belong," so that they would not live off San Antonio's charitable resources.²⁸ From California, Cora West wondered "if there isn't something that can be done to keep the Mexicans and Phillipinos from getting all the work?"²⁹ H. Hanshaw of Port Huron (MI) implored President Roosevelt to allocate the necessary resources and authority to immigration agents so that they could clear her city of Mexicans.³⁰ Some Americans also threatened violence to ensure that few immigrants, and people of Mexican descent in general, would gain employment. In Chicago, Mexicans faced the hostility of Americans and of other immigrant groups who

²⁶Samuel T. Wright, Immigration Inspector to Inspector in Charge, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Tucson (AZ), April 9, 1934, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55739/674A, National Archives.

²⁷R.E. Pasters to U.S. Representative Lewis Douglas, March 16, 1931 and April 3, 1931, Lewis Douglas Papers, AZ 290, box 181, University of Arizona Library; R.E. Pasters to Rep. Albert Johnson and Sen. Henry R. Ashurst, February 25, 1931, Records of the House of Representatives, Record Group (RG) 233, file HR 71A-F16.4, box 517, National Archives.

²⁸Letter from W. L. Warren, August 14, 1933, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55739/674A, National Archives.

²⁹Cora West to President Roosevelt, August 6, 1933, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55639/616A, National Archives.

³⁰Ms. H. Hanshaw to President Roosevelt, August 11, 1933, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55639/616A, National Archives.

congregated outside the packinghouses where they worked in order to intimidate them.³¹ In Terre Haute (IN), violence erupted when American laborers attacked Mexicans working on the railroad, leading the immigrants to quit out of fear for their safety.³² In another case, an enraged crowd forced a California contractor to take refuge in a municipal building because he had hired immigrants.³³

Many elected officials shared the belief that Mexicans should go. In the process, these politicians often disregarded the law as they clumped together all people of Mexican descent, regardless of citizenship or legal status. The Mayor of Wickenburg (AZ), Charles Ryder, was one such man, declaring public works jobs off-limits not only to Mexican immigrants but also to Mexican Americans.³⁴ Americans in many local communities and state legislatures around the country acted similarly to Mayor Ryder, passing various exclusionary and anti-alien measures. By 1933, ten states—generally in the Midwest, West, and Northeast—had laws requiring citizenship for employment on public works contracts. Four others gave U.S. citizens preference on such jobs. Wyoming required that immigrants must have filed their first papers toward citizenship before being eligible for this type of work. Anti-alien laws also extended to various trades and professions, with three states requiring barbers to be citizens.³⁵ Some states also began passing additional residency requirements of one year or more for certain

³¹Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 66.

³²Robert Frazer, Consul General, Mexico, D.F. to U. S. Secretary of State, January 28, 1931, State Department Records, Record Group 59, file 812.5511/107, National Archives.

³³Robert N. McLean, "The Mexicans Return," *Nation*, August 24, 1932, 165.

³⁴Interestingly, a Spanish-language publication in Tucson slyly commented in a parenthetical that the mayor was a naturalized Arab. It is likely this was done to contrast his more recent American status with the newspaper's readership, many of whom were native-born Americans. See "No Solo a los Mexicanos Sino a los Hispano-Americanos se les Niega Trabajo," *El Tucsonense* (Tucson, AZ), June 17, 1930 and Thomas E. Sheridan, *Los Tucsonenses: The Mexican Community in Tucson, 1854-1941* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), 216.

³⁵Harold Fields, "Where Shall the Alien Work?" 213-221.

public works projects, making it particularly hard for people of Mexican descent, immigrant or otherwise, to qualify since many regularly migrated within several month cycles to different states and jobs.³⁶

Governor Edwin C. Johnson of Colorado, a vigorous enforcer of the temporary worker image, called for the expulsion of all aliens (by whom he meant primarily Mexicans) from his state. Immigration officials ignored Johnson's wishes, declining to deport the Mexicans who were legally present in the country. Johnson responded by announcing his own plans to round up Mexicans and hold them in an internment camp in Golden, just outside Denver, until the necessary arrangements could be made for their permanent removal to Mexico. Although Johnson's pet project never materialized—and it is possible that he never expected that it would—he hoped his announcement would cause Mexicans to fear being removed and depart on their own.³⁷

Shortly after Johnson's proclamation, some people of Mexican descent stopped to request gas money from a charitable organization so that they could get to jobs they had held previously in Greeley (CO). Instead of helping, the relief workers turned them over to the local sheriff who detained 40 of the travelers and ordered them out of the state. Although half the exiled workers were American citizens, Johnson denied this, declaring that those expelled were "mostly aliens without passports."³⁸ His words suggest that, in his mind, a person of Mexican descent never could be American.

³⁶Lawrence Leslie Waters, "Transient Mexican Agricultural Labor," *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 22 (June 1941): 49-66.

³⁷Amy Elizabeth Davis, "Deportation and the Border Blockade: How Western Conservatism Impacted Immigrant Sugar Beet Workers in Colorado Between 1900 and 1940" (master's thesis, University of Oregon, 2003), 2, 61-68.

³⁸*Ibid.* Also see Sarah Deutsch, *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class, and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest, 1880-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 165-66.

Johnson was not alone in his thinking. The New Mexican and Texan governors wired their support, hoping to adopt similar practices within their own states. The Mexican Consul in Colorado also backed Johnson because he knew that there were no jobs for Mexicans in the Colorado beetfields and thought it better to help the workers leave the country. Other Mexicans raised few complaints, believing that the governor and Americans had the right to protect their citizens first. Unfortunately, they did not recognize how American many of the Mexican nationals felt that they had become in their long absence from Mexico.³⁹

The controversial governor finally overstepped his bounds when he declared martial law and established checkpoints on the southern border of his state to scrutinize entries. Johnson alleged that he had to do so to preserve jobs for Americans. Within only a few days, over 422 people had been denied entry into Colorado. The New Mexican governor, Clyde Tingley, had previously supported Johnson's actions against immigrants, but turned against these draconian sweeps and searches when he learned that many of the people detained were Mexican Americans whose families had lived in New Mexico long before it joined the union. Eventually, Governor Johnson backed down.⁴⁰

Assimilationists and Pluralists Join the Consensus

In addition to the exclusionists, who had always wanted Mexicans expelled from the U.S., the few remaining assimilationists joined the growing consensus that the immigrants ought to leave. Primarily middle-class religious and secular reformers of

³⁹Although only between five and 13% of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. in 1910, 1920, and 1930 had become naturalized citizens (see Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 20), I argue that Mexicans' extended duration in the U.S.—in that they settled and established lives there—rendered them American. See Davis, "Deportation and the Border Blockade," 61-68; "The Lesson of Mr. Johnson," enclosure in *El Universal* (Mexico City), May 11, 1935, RG 59, file 812.5511/170, National Archives.

⁴⁰Davis, "Deportation and the Border Blockade," 3, 68-74.

Anglo and Mexican descent, the assimilationists had declined in numbers and fervor since the First World War. The economic downturn and incessant appeals to preserve all available jobs and relief for American citizens then inclined most assimilationists to join forces with the marginalizationists and their expanding group of allies.

These former assimilationists justified their support for the marginalizationists and repatriation drives in humanitarian terms. Rather than permitting Mexicans to starve in their midst, they argued that the best way to advocate on their behalf would be to encourage and assist them to depart for Mexico where they might find more empathy and opportunities. Placida Garcia Smith, a Mexican American from Colorado and director of the Friendly House, an Americanization agency in Phoenix, made it part of her mission to repatriate Mexicans. In July 1933 she reported having helped 130 families to the border since the previous spring.⁴¹ A similar organization, the Neighborhood House in St. Paul (MN), no longer considered Mexicans legitimate neighbors and worked in conjunction with the Ramsey County welfare office and the Catholic Church to repatriate 15 percent of St. Paul's Mexican *colonia*.⁴² In 1931, the Pueblo (CO) Family Service Society explained that it had always helped Mexican immigrants and was doing so again by assisting 200 people to leave.⁴³ A social worker in Detroit rationalized his efforts by observing that a Mexican worker and his family “ ‘would be happier in their own country.’ ”⁴⁴ A member of the middle-class Americanization organization, the League of

⁴¹Letter from Director of Friendly House, Placida Garcia Smith to Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, July 11, 1933, Hugh C. Gilbert Papers, 1914-1933, MS 1097, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson; “Placida Garcia Smith,” 80-81, Arizona Women Collection, Department of Archives and Manuscripts, University Libraries, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

⁴²Dionicio Valdés, *Mexicans in Minnesota: The People of Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2005), 9-18.

⁴³Davis, “Deportation and the Border Blockade,” 54-55.

⁴⁴Norman D. Humphrey, “Mexican Repatriation from Michigan: Public Assistance in Historical Perspective,” *Social Service Review* 15 (Sept 1941): 511.

United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), expressed anger at being associated with immigrants whom he regarded as “cotton picking ‘drifters,’ ” suggesting that he had nothing in common with such people and would do nothing to help them integrate into the nation.⁴⁵ Even Chicago’s Hull House helped some immigrants to return to Mexico.⁴⁶ A writer for *Current History* magazine, Remsen Crawford, applauded this trend, noting how efforts to avoid “alienizing Americans” had replaced flagging campaigns to Americanize the immigrants.⁴⁷ A few years later, the journalist Carey McWilliams agreed with this assessment (although not the sentiment that underlay it), noting that the assimilationists who had been so eager to transform Mexicans in the 1920s either remained silent in the early 1930s or promoted and facilitated repatriation.⁴⁸

Like the assimilationists, the pluralists had dwindled considerably in numbers and authority since their heyday during the statehood debates. Mostly located in New Mexico and in a few pockets in Arizona, these pluralists had never considered post-World War I Mexican immigrants as potential Spanish Americans. Instead, they viewed the recent arrivals as of a different class and racial background than themselves. Consequently, they did not criticize repatriation and deportation policies. In a few cases, they actively supported them. Mr. Delao, an Arizona businessman of Mexican heritage who referred to himself as Spanish American, urged the U.S. government to deport Mexicans who had

⁴⁵Rubén R. Lozano, “LULAC Subsidiaries,” *LULAC News* 2 (Oct 1932), Chicano Collection. Department of Archives and Manuscripts. University Libraries. Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

⁴⁶Adena Miller Rich, “Case Work in the Repatriation of Immigrants,” *Social Service Review* 10 (Dec 1936): 601.

⁴⁷Remsen Crawford, “The Deportation of Undesirable Aliens,” *Current History* 30 (Sept 1929): 1079.

⁴⁸Carey McWilliams, “The State of the Union: Getting Rid of the Mexican,” *American Mercury* (1933): 322-24.

not naturalized or made any effort to do so.⁴⁹ Journalists for *El Tucsonense*, a Spanish-language newspaper, suggested that officials exercise more discretion, but not cease, repatriation and deportation campaigns. They recommended stipulating that Mexicans without documents be sent away first, then recent immigrants, and finally, if necessary, long-term Mexican residents.⁵⁰

The few times in which pluralists openly criticized repatriation were when Anglo Americans extended discrimination in the workforce and repatriation to all persons of Mexican descent, regardless of their nationality or class status. One such situation that roused the pluralists to activism was Governor Johnson's expulsion of Mexican Americans from Colorado.⁵¹ But mostly they, like the assimilationists, either assisted with repatriation, or ignored it.

Mexican Government Officials and Journalists Support the Consensus

Throughout the 1920s, Mexican government officials, journalists, and other prominent Mexicans had encouraged immigrants to remain connected to their homeland and to repatriate at some point in the future. Therefore, during the early years of the Great Depression, when the immigrants were no longer wanted in the U.S., these same Mexicans felt an obligation to assist fellow citizens with their return.

Mexicans' interest in helping the immigrants stemmed from humanitarian and nationalistic impulses. They wanted to help their compatriots as well as to use them to fulfill nationalist agendas of settling and improving underutilized land. In 1931, a journalist for the Mexico City *Excelsior* urged repatriation "not only for the sake of

⁴⁹J.C. Brodie to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, September 30, 1933, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55739/674A, National Archives.

⁵⁰"Los mexicanos en E.U. perderemos," *El Tucsonense*, February 7, 1931.

⁵¹Davis, "Deportation and the Border Blockade," 61-68.

patriotism and national dignity but for that of humanitarianism” because of the poor treatment the immigrants experienced in the United States.⁵² Other writers for the same periodical complained that while it was important to “repatriate the nationals,” they believed that many U.S. investigators did not review the individual circumstances sufficiently. Thus, they often expelled the heads of families, leaving dependents without a source of income. Despite this mild criticism, the paper supported the overall objective of sending Mexicans back to Mexico.⁵³

Mexican officials generally expressed delight at the immigrants’ return and considered how to do even more to encourage it. The Mexican Secretary of Exterior Relations promoted legislation (which never became law) that removed citizenship status from those Mexicans absent for ten years or more. He promoted this draconian policy since he believed it would cause more Mexicans to return.⁵⁴ Governor Andrés Ortíz of the state of Chihuahua noted approvingly that several hundred repatriated families had settled around Villa Ahumada, building adobe homes and farming land that had not been tilled since the first years of the Mexican Revolution. He demonstrated his eagerness to have more such repatriates or *repatriados* for he believed that “they are experienced farmers with a knowledge of the American system of cultivating.”⁵⁵

⁵²Translation of *Excelsior* (Mexico City), February 9, 1931 included in Letter from Robert Frazer, Consul General in Mexico to U. S. Secretary of State, February 18, 1931, RG 59, file 812.55/98, National Archives.

⁵³Translation of *Excelsior*, February 11, 1931 included in Letter from Robert Frazer, Consul General in Mexico to U. S. Secretary of State, February 18, 1931, RG 59, file 812.55/98, National Archives.

⁵⁴“Pierden su nacionalidad los mexicanos?” in “Notas Editoriales,” *El Tucsonense*, October 2, 1930.

⁵⁵William P. Blocker, American Consul, to US Secretary of State, January 3, 1931, RG 59, file 812.5511/102, National Archives.

While various colonization schemes had long been proposed to settle and secure the northern territory of Mexico, with varying degrees of success, the Mexican government expanded its investment in such ventures in the 1930s. This time government officials anticipated greater success since they believed that the returning nationals would bring new skills and knowledge and thereby improve the land and the Mexican economy. They also hoped to divert the *repatriados* from moving to communities already overburdened with unemployed workers. To facilitate colonization, Mexican officials offered long-term loans, land gifts, seed, food, and tools. In the end, they committed to more than they could deliver, incorrectly anticipating that the repatriates would have more of their own supplies to contribute. These projects mostly failed.

One of the most famous and spectacular failures was that of *Pinotepa Nacional*, a tropical swampland in the state of Oaxaca. Mexico's National Repatriation Committee initially planned to have over 5,000 settlers clear the land of trees and brush, establish productive farms, and grow a variety of market crops including pineapples, mangoes, watermelon, the *ajonjoli* seed (used for oil), and the usual subsistence crops of corn, beans, and vegetables. Instead, only 700 or so repatriates moved there during the winter of 1932-1933. While the *repatriados* had thought that they would have more control over their settlement, they soon became frustrated by the dictatorial attitude of the organizing officials. Yet this was the least of their difficulties. Although the colonizers succeeded in clearing some land for housing and recreation, they began to get sick. The region's native peoples had warned them that no outsiders ever grew old there. They were right. Shortly thereafter, two to three people per day began to die. The newcomers

had no immunity against the various disease-infested mosquitoes, *nihua* bugs, which burrowed under fingernails, *jejens* or black flies, and the *pinolillo* microbe that made people itch. Eventually, the *repatriados* fled on their own. One small group evacuated after only a month, walking eight days through dense tropical forests and high mountains to reach Oaxaca. Several months later the remaining repatriates, having suffered from disease, hunger, and malnutrition, marched 23 days en masse towards the sea and Acapulco. There they encountered the campaigning Lázaro Cárdenas, the future president of Mexico, who made sure that they had provisions and transit to Mexico City where they might find jobs. By spring 1934, the *Pinotepa Nacional* project had collapsed. Although other such ventures did not have this ignominious end, none of them lasted very long.⁵⁶

Aside from these colonization projects, to which only five percent or so of the repatriates went, the Mexican government tried to help other returning nationals as well.⁵⁷ The government did not have the resources to bring the immigrants home from interior locations in the United States, but officials did arrange to pay for transit from border cities to inland Mexican communities. Consuls and other prominent Mexicans worked closely with local governments and charitable organizations in the U.S. to cover the cost of sending Mexicans to the border via train. Ignacio L. Batiza, the Mexican consul in Detroit, was particularly active in arranging for repatriation. The Mexican communities in Michigan were hit especially hard by the depression so Batiza saw it as his role to help his compatriots back to Mexico. In this effort, he allied not only with members of

⁵⁶Gilbert, "A Field Study in Mexico," 105-19. Also see Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans*, 139-141.

⁵⁷Emory Bogardus, "Mexican Repatriates," *Sociology and Social Research* 17 (Nov-Dec., 1933), 170.

community organizations, but also with the famous Mexican artist, Diego Rivera, who happened to be present in 1932, working on a mural at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Rivera was reportedly distressed upon observing long lines of Mexican nationals awaiting handouts. He decided to use this opportunity to organize the workers for a socialist-style, agrarian community near Zihuatenejo in the state of Guerrero, Mexico. To drum up support for his colony, Rivera established an organization, the League of Mexican Workers and Peasants, and donated 700 pesos for agricultural tools. Batiza and Rivera made speeches throughout the Mexican *colonia* to enhance interest in the project, explaining that it was not likely that the immigrants' situation in the U.S. would improve any time soon. Within two weeks, 850 workers had signed up with the league.⁵⁸

While Batiza, Rivera, and others in Michigan helped approximately 1,300 Mexicans return, many immigrants remained unconvinced that their lot would improve back in Mexico and opted instead to ride out the depression in the U.S. Batiza's and Rivera's activism, however, reinforced the temporary worker image in the minds of many Americans as they saw that even Mexican officials and prominent Mexicans believed that the immigrants belonged in Mexico. Later, both Batiza and Rivera would reverse their views, after they discovered that the Mexican government was not providing sufficient support or opportunities for the repatriates.⁵⁹ But by then, many more Mexicans had already left.

Despite the late defection of Batiza and Rivera, most Mexicans continued to support the temporary worker image. In 1932, the Mexican state decided that it would no

⁵⁸Statement by Ignacio L. Batiza, Mexican Consul in Detroit to the Mexican *colonia*, October 13, 1932, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55784/585, National Archives; Mercedes Carrera de Velasco, *Los mexicanos que devolvio la crisis*, 67-68; Zaragosa Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 170-186.

⁵⁹Vargas, *Proletarians of the North*, " 170-186.

longer collect statistics for emigrants since they did not regard any citizen as having left the country permanently.⁶⁰ Mexican officials provided more than just rhetoric as they tried to help the *repatriados* by lifting the onerous *franquicia* tax that had been imposed on their goods when they returned to Mexico. This had forced them to sell their property for less than its value in the U.S., or to spend their last resources to cover the prohibitive fees. This policy reversal helped the immigrants to preserve their funds and assets and gave them a better chance of establishing themselves in their former homes. Some used the cars they drove and the tools they carried with them to offer taxi services, or to work as mechanics. More than one brought their barbershop chairs so that they could reinstitute the businesses they had lost due to shrinking Mexican *colonias* in the U.S. or other consequences of the depression.⁶¹ The Mexican government also assisted the repatriates by passing restrictive immigration laws, preventing all foreigners from entering Mexico except tourists with large amounts of cash. This decision ensured that all available jobs would be preserved for Mexican nationals.⁶²

While the Mexican state and most of its constituents supported repatriation, some Mexicans expressed frustration with their compatriots' "habit of emigrating." They wondered why they had left in the first place, since people in the U.S. mistreated them and they had "been thrown out time and time again." One journalist so objected to this

⁶⁰Report by Edward Anderson, American consul, Mexico, D.F., "Analysis of Mexican Migration Statistics: 1932-1936," November 11, 1938, RG 59, file 812.55/297, National Archives.

⁶¹Regarding shrinking *colonias*, see "35,000 Mexicans Leave California," *New York Times*, April 12, 1931, 5 in which one merchant in southern California reported a twenty to fifty percent decline in business; Kelley, "The Mexicans Go Home," 308; Lore Diana Kuehnert, "Pernicious Foreigners and Contested Compatriots: Mexican Newspaper Debates over Immigration, Emigration and Repatriation, 1928-1936" (PhD diss., University of California-Riverside, 2002), 261-62.

⁶²See "Mexico Puts Bars on Immigration," *New York Times*, February 17, 1934, RG 59, file 812.5511/154, National Archives.

emigration that he called for measures to restrict Mexicans from leaving.⁶³ Others complained about the *repatriados* who had returned, called them *gringos* (a derogatory term for Americans), and discriminated against them.⁶⁴ But sociologist James Gilbert found that over 80% of the repatriates he had interviewed believed that they had not been abused, and that most of their fellow Mexicans treated them as citizens who had fallen upon hard times.⁶⁵

U.S. Government Officials and Journalists Support the Consensus

As in Mexico, prominent Americans and government officials continued to support the idea that Mexican workers did not belong in the U.S. and developed various proposals to make the immigrants temporary. The impetus for this came from the top. President Herbert Hoover declaring Mexican immigrants to be a primary cause of unemployment since they allegedly took jobs from Americans.⁶⁶ Hoover's Secretary of Labor, William N. Doak, immediately acted upon the president's words and took it upon himself to ensure that Mexicans would be removed from the United States. In February 1931 he issued an order to all 35 immigration district offices, calling upon them to work with local charitable agencies to rid the country of as many aliens as they could. To do so, he relied upon a provision of the 1917 Immigration Act that permitted the federal government to pay for the removal of those immigrants who had been in the U.S. for less than three years, faced serious economic problems after entering, *and* wanted to return. He anticipated that many would apply for this generous offer of transit, but was

⁶³"The Lesson of Mr. Johnson," *El Universal*, May 11, 1935, RG 59, file 812.5511/170, National Archives.

⁶⁴Bogardus, "Mexican Repatriates," 172.

⁶⁵Gilbert, "A Field Study in Mexico," 157-8.

⁶⁶George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 213.

disappointed to learn that only 159 Mexicans left under this provision along with several hundred immigrants from other countries.⁶⁷

Consequently, Secretary Doak worked with various local officials in Los Angeles to encourage Mexican immigrants to return to their native country. Charles P. Visel, head of the Los Angeles Citizens' Committee on Coordination of Unemployment Relief, eagerly complied with this new agenda, masterminding a plan to create an atmosphere of anxiety that would induce immigrants to flee in advance of deportation or other reprisals. Those involved in this campaign believed that such policies would result in more jobs for Americans and/or reduced relief expenditures. Although Doak was criticized for his aggressive tactics in ordering immigration officials to conduct raids (many of which turned up few deportable immigrants), he succeeded in his objective to persuade or force many immigrants, legal or otherwise, to leave.⁶⁸

While accelerating the repatriation of Mexican immigrants from Los Angeles, the U.S. Department of Labor also investigated various complaints against Mexican immigrants in other communities. Frequently, the bureaucrats determined that many of the immigrants they encountered were in the United States legally and could not be deported. W.W. Simon, a welfare worker for Associated Charities in Superior (AZ), explained that most of the Mexicans on relief had lived in her town "for years and years." Visiting immigration officials confirmed the accuracy of her statements and noted that none of the people on her list could be deported. Still, there were some immigrants who did not have the proper documentation. These Mexicans either hid until the officials had

⁶⁷See Rich, "Case Work in the Repatriation of Immigrants," 569-605; Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans*, 39-65; Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 50-66.

⁶⁸See Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans*, 39-65; Balderrama and Rodríguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 50-66; C.P. Visel to Secretary of Labor, March 19, 1931, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55739/674A, National Archives.

left for the next community or decided to repatriate themselves before being deported.⁶⁹ In this way the federal government assisted the out-migration of Mexican immigrants and continued to enforce the immigrants' temporary status by helping to remove those immigrants who had remained longer than most Americans had wanted them to stay.

The federal government also sanctioned and facilitated repatriation initiatives already underway. When John Zurbrick, the U.S. District Director of Immigration in Detroit, learned that the Mexican trains had not arrived at the border as scheduled and that the repatriates had been forced to wait in enclosed trains "without light or heat" for many hours, he solicited funds from the U.S. Commissioner-General of Immigration, Harry E. Hull, to improve the quality of the trips. Zurbrick believed that if these campaigns went smoothly, the news would encourage other Mexicans to leave, freeing up more jobs or relief funds for American citizens.⁷⁰ Approving Zurbrick's request, Commissioner Hull expressed his pleasure "that so many citizens of Mexico and their children, who were entirely or partly destitute, have been started to their home country."⁷¹ Other federal employees agreed. U.S. Congressman Douglas noted that Mexicans in Arizona would be more comfortable in Mexico as it was, "their own country and they will be happier there as well as more healthful."⁷² John S. Littell, the American Vice Consul in Mexico City, found other reasons to commend repatriation, observing that the returned residents would help boost Mexico's economy since it had lost "most able-

⁶⁹N. D. Collaer to District Director, U.S. Immigration Service, El Paso, n.d., Lewis Douglas Papers, AZ 290, box 181, University of Arizona Library.

⁷⁰John L. Zurbrick to Commissioner-General of Immigration, October 20, 1932; John L. Zurbrick to Mexican Consul, Ignacio Batiza, November 23, 1932; Edward J. Shaughnessy, Acting Commissioner-General to John L. Zurbrick, October 27, 1932, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55784/585, National Archives.

⁷¹Harry E. Hull to District Director of Immigration in Detroit, November 18, 1932, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55784/585, National Archives.

⁷²"Congressman Douglas to Aid Return of Yaquis to Valley," *Star*, May 26, 1931, Lewis Douglas Clippings, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

bodied and enterprising citizens” in the preceding three decades.⁷³ There was little sense among U.S. government officials—even those stationed in Mexico—that repatriation had or would pose a problem for many families or for Mexico itself.

Many American journalists and writers began echoing the words of government officials on Mexicans’ preference for residing in their homeland, and about the temporary nature of Mexican migration. They titled their articles, “Back to the Homeland,” “Guitars Strum as 400 Mexicans Start Home,” “Jobless Latins to be Sent to Homes,” and “Send Them Home.”⁷⁴ Edna Ewing Kelley, the author of another similarly headlined story, “The Mexican Goes Home,” reveals how much she had absorbed of the marginalizationists’ rhetoric when she wrote, “it was not difficult to entice them back, for they had only been sojourning in this country.” She further depicted Mexicans’ departure as a merry occasion, reminiscent of a “fiesta,” and observed how even a friendly dog trotted “happily” at the side of a retreating caravan. Oddly, she matter-of-factly mentioned how “one man died and six babies were born while the party was en route,” as if this was merely to be expected in a long journey.⁷⁵ Clearly, Kelley never seriously considered that any of these immigrants had belonged in the nation on a permanent basis or that they might have established deep roots in the United States and regretted leaving.

Contesting the Temporary Worker Image

Some Mexican immigrants did agree to return to Mexico as most Americans and Mexicans had thought and hoped that they would. They went back either because they

⁷³John S. Littell, American Vice Consul in Mexico City, “Trend of Migratory Movements in Mexico,” July 20, 1934, 6, RG 59, file 812.55/225, National Archives.

⁷⁴See “Back to the Homeland,” *Survey* (Jan., 1933); “Guitars Strum as 400 Mexicans Start Home,” RG 85, Entry 9, file 55784/585, National Archives; “Send Them Home,” *Express*, Feb 13, 1931 as noted in Hoffman’s *Unwanted Mexican Americans*, 55; and “Jobless Latins to be Sent to Homes,” *Tucson Daily Citizen*, Jan 8, 1931.

⁷⁵Kelley, “The Mexicans Go Home,” 303-11.

hoped for better circumstances across the border in their native land or because they were frustrated due to the lack of opportunities in the U.S., increased anti-alien laws, discrimination, and incessant pressure to leave. One man in his 70s indicated that as he had been gone for five years, it was time go home. Others longed for and were intrigued with the various possibilities promoted by the Mexican consuls for their own plot of land and a new start, and signed up for colonization projects.⁷⁶

But many more immigrants demonstrated that they preferred to remain in the United States, as they now considered it their home. Paul Taylor discovered in his field research among Mexican immigrants that “bonds to the mother country have become tenuous.”⁷⁷ While U.S. welfare officials and Mexican consuls initially expected that the immigrants would sign up in droves for free transit back to Mexico, they were surprised when few did. Instead, the bureaucrats had to rely upon relentless persuasion, coupled with the coercive power of anti-alien laws and threats to remove individuals from relief rolls, to get immigrants to agree to depart. In Detroit, relief workers used special techniques to encourage Mexicans to leave and referred any person of Mexican descent who applied for welfare to their “Mexican Bureau.” This bureau was designed to convince the applicants to return to Mexico, rather than accept welfare. When some immigrants expressed reluctance in going, they discovered that they had to receive their monthly food allotment in a public cafeteria, rather than eat in privacy as other recipients did. Still, many Mexicans accepted this indignity over the alternative of repatriation.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Newspaper article, “Guitars Strum as 400 Mexicans Start Home,” RG 85, Entry 9, file 55784/585, National Archives.

⁷⁷Paul S. Taylor, “Mexicans North of the Rio Grande,” 205.

⁷⁸Humphrey, “Mexican Repatriation from Michigan,” 502, 505, 511.

Other people of Mexican descent patiently explained to frustrated bureau workers, year after year, why they had no interest in migrating back to Mexico. One such Mexican national repeatedly informed welfare workers that he had lived in the U.S. for over 12 years, that he had American-born children, and that he had no relatives in Mexico. In one of the most egregious cases, 15-year old Mary Lou enlightened her persistent interviewer that she did not wish to move to Mexico because she was an American citizen and had never been there. Moreover, she had little interest in ever going for she had heard only negatives stories from repatriates.⁷⁹

Some Mexican immigrants tried to remain in the U.S. but found themselves caught in the complicated web of U.S. immigration laws, which made little or no allowance for family relationships or the length of time the immigrants had lived in the United States. One such case involved a Mexican immigrant who settled in Cudahy (MN) with her father in 1924, and bore a child there a few years later. In 1930, she briefly returned to Mexico to visit her sick grandmother but left her two-year old baby in Minnesota. A few months later, when she tried to return, her entry was denied because of the perception that she would become a public charge. Yet denial for this reason made little sense given that her father owned two houses, retained a stable position at Burlington company (a job that he had held for ten years), and earned \$90 per month, sufficient to support his daughter and her child.⁸⁰

Celia Vasquez had the misfortune of growing up in a household so large that when her family emigrated to the United States her parents could not afford to pay the entrance fee for everyone. Thus Celia, her sister Belen, and brother Alfredo entered

⁷⁹Ibid., 502, 507-12.

⁸⁰Valdés, *Mexicans in Minnesota*, 9-18.

illegally through Nogales (AZ). Years later, Celia married an American citizen. Having been reported as delinquent by her estranged brother Alfredo who faced a deportation charge of his own, Celia had to report for a similar hearing the day after her wedding. Her new husband moved quickly and successfully to have her take advantage of the bureau's voluntary departure policies, which allowed her to leave on her own and then immediately apply for re-admission. On October 17, 1932, Celia left the U.S; she applied for re-entry the following day. Although she succeeded in obtaining an immigration visa, her entrance was denied that December. The records do not show why Celia was rejected or if she was ever re-admitted. What is clear is that her life and home had been in the United States. Her parents, most of her sisters and brothers, and her husband with whom she had been together for many years prior to marriage, all lived in Arizona. She was in Mexico alone.⁸¹

Celia's case was not unusual. An anonymous man, born in the Yucatán peninsula of Mexico, emigrated in 1915 as a young teen after both his parents died. Other than a few visits to Mexico, this man remained permanently in New Orleans (LA) for about fifteen years where he married and then raised two children. Despite his ties to the United States, this unfortunate man was deported when immigration officials found that he did not have the appropriate paperwork to satisfy the authorities. Distressed with his exile, he plaintively wrote to President Hoover, hoping for restitution. He justified his case by explaining that he had thought he was an U.S. citizen when he lived in New Orleans, and begged for the opportunity to become officially American, adding, "I feel as I were one." With his family in New Orleans, he declared that there was nothing for him

⁸¹Case of Celia and Belen Vasquez in Lewis Douglas Papers and Letters to Arthur A. Heredia, August 8, 1932; August 9, 1932 and Letter to Inspector-in-Charge, Nogales, AZ, November 8, 1932, Lewis Douglas Papers, AZ 290, box 181, University of Arizona Library.

in Mexico. He then stated simply, “I like to get back home.” But it was too late. The extant laws would not permit his return. The man then became what he had alleged at the beginning of his letter: “I am a man without a country.”⁸²

Tiburcio Vasquez, a 38 year old legal Mexican immigrant and musician who had resided in the United States for most of his life also faced increased scrutiny during the hyper-charged, anti-immigrant years of the Great Depression. When the Arizona crank, J.C. Brodie, demanded that immigration officials investigate the status of the musician Vasquez, the bureaucrats complied. They found nothing amiss and noted, moreover, that Vasquez had recently submitted his first papers for American citizenship. But Vasquez had a problem. In 1930, his wife and children returned to Mexico after eleven years in the U.S. Soon after, they decided to come back and reunite with Vasquez in Louisiana. During their absence, Vasquez stayed off relief and held a variety of jobs, including roadwork, copper smelting, working in a gold mine, teaching music, and playing music at various dance halls in Phoenix. In 1933, Vasquez filed for citizenship so that he could begin the process of bringing his wife and children back to the United States. Vasquez was permitted to stay, but it is unclear whether his wife and children were ever allowed to join him. Vasquez was a legal immigrant with a long history in the U.S., and his wife and children had previously lived there for eleven years. Yet they all came under suspicion and had their family unification imperiled because the marginalizationists had persuaded many Americans that Mexican immigrants should be in the U.S. only temporarily.⁸³

⁸²Information in a letter reprinted from a Mexican immigrant (with name removed) to President Herbert Hoover, n.d. in Kane, “The Challenge of the Wickersham Deportations Report,” 606.

⁸³Statement by Tiburcio Navarro to A.A. Spurgeon, Inspector-in-Charge, Immigration and Naturalization Service, June 29, 1934, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55739/674A, National Archives.

Unlike these cases in which Mexicans tried to remain or get back to the U.S., other Mexicans agreed to return to Mexico, but only because they had no choice. Mrs. Antonio Frías, awaiting to take a train south to the border, pointed to her crying children and noted how they would miss their schools and friends. Another woman, Mrs. José Perez, stated that she and her husband did not want to leave because “we loved it here.” But as her husband, José, could not find work in the U.S., they were going to seek it elsewhere.⁸⁴ Others boarded the southbound train but either had a different agenda—that of getting to a new part of the United States where jobs or family might be more plentiful—or changed their minds en route since 12 people asked to disembark in San Antonio. Informed that the railroad officials would not permit them to leave, these passengers had to continue on to the Mexican side of the border. Clearly this trip had become less than voluntary for them. Recognizing their limited options, a few intrepid souls jumped through the train windows at Laredo, attempting to hide in the railyard and remain in the U.S. The following morning the authorities found the wayward repatriates and put them back on the train to Mexico.⁸⁵

As some Mexicans in the U.S. began to hear of other repatriates’ travails, and the failures of colonization, they became even less inclined to follow their compatriots south. Repatriates told interviewers that while they had been pleased to see old friends and family, they yearned to return to the United States as soon as possible. A 44-year old barber who had lived in the United States for 24 years complained that he and his wife did not wish to be in Mexico and were extremely unhappy. Sociologist James Gilbert

⁸⁴Newspaper article, “Guitars Strum as 400 Mexicans Start Home,” RG 85, Entry 9, file 55784/585, National Archives.

⁸⁵R. W. Gangewere, U.S. Immigrant Inspector to District Director of Immigration, Detroit, November 29, 1932, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55784/585, National Archives.

discovered that many of the younger repatriates desperately wanted to return to the U.S., persistently asking him about job opportunities and assistance in getting there. Many of the repatriates eventually found employment in Mexico, working as taxi drivers or as agricultural workers, but they were often not satisfied with their new circumstances.⁸⁶

Children and young adults, born in or mostly raised in the United States, had a particularly difficult time with adjustment since Mexico had never been home to them. They complained of the lack of things to do, the absence of economic opportunities and consumer goods, cultural differences, and in general missed their schools and friends in the U.S. One repatriate expressed deep frustration with his situation, explaining that “even if I can’t get work there right away. I’d rather be there. There is nothing here. I’m just wasting my time.” An eleven-year old repatriate disliked the new environment in arid Mexico with its stark landscape and lack of daily comforts such as hot water and a soft bed. She had trouble in school as well, having to repeat several years because she did not understand Spanish well enough to move forward with her studies. Gilbert concluded that 70 percent of the children or young adults he interviewed had become “cultural misfits,” people who did not belong in Mexico.⁸⁷

The few extant statistics available on repatriates’ attitudes all indicate that many yearned to be in the United States and likely considered it their home. The scholar Osgood Hardy reported that all of the repatriates he interviewed wished to go back to the U.S. James Gilbert found that of the 101 he interviewed, 73 wanted to settle permanently in the U.S., while the remaining 28 were either unsure or planned to revisit at least

⁸⁶ Rich, “Case Work in the Repatriation of Immigrants,” 604; Gilbert, “A Field Study in Mexico,” 67, 70, 140.

⁸⁷Quoted in Gilbert, “A Field Study in Mexico,” 67, 70, 140.

temporarily.⁸⁸ The Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio found Mexican repatriates divided about whether they wanted to stay permanently in Mexico.⁸⁹ Regardless of the exact numbers, it seems that just a few years after the major repatriation movements, at least half of repatriates indicated that they had not really wanted to leave the U.S. and intended to return as soon as they could. At one border entrance, immigration officials estimated that 90% of the people detained for illegal entry were former repatriates.⁹⁰ Some succeeded in re-crossing the border within a short period of time. In 1933, H. M. Brown complained that “dozens of those who were sent to Mexico by the Red Cross have returned” to Arizona.⁹¹ William A. Carlson, a member of the county commission of Greeley (CO), notified immigration officials that some of the Mexicans who had previously been repatriated with county funds were already returning, “unsolicited, uninvited and unwanted” and called for their deportation.⁹²

The many unhappy repatriates had little recourse to change their situation. Marginalizationists had allied with powerful U.S. legislators, various officials in the U.S. and Mexican governments, Mexican and American journalists, and ordinary Americans to promote their strategy of convincing everyone that Mexicans were temporary immigrants. Mexican immigrants, constrained by their circumstances in the 1920s, had initially contributed to this developing notion as well, but by the early 1930s, many of them had changed their minds and decided that the U.S. had become home. Yet even the

⁸⁸Ibid., 5, 8, 38, 53-55, 63, 137, 160 and Osgood Hardy, “Los Repatriados,” *Pomona College Magazine* (January 1933):71-73

⁸⁹Gamio’s research and conclusions are discussed in Gilbert, 5.

⁹⁰Agnes K. Hanna, “Social Services on the Mexican Border,” *Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), 698.

⁹¹H.M. Brown to Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, March 14, 1933, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55639/616A.

⁹²Wm. A. Carlson, Chair, Board of County Commission, Greeley, CO to Commissioner-General of Immigration, Harry E. Hull, n.d., c. 1933, RG 85, Entry 9, file 55639/616A, National Archives.

Mexican consuls, journalists, government officials, and American assimilationists—who might have been presumed to be sympathetic to the immigrants’ plight—had succumbed to the marginalizationists’ rhetoric and believed that Mexicans would be better off in Mexico. While there was some criticism of how deportation was conducted, particularly for the most egregious removals such as with Governor Johnson’s actions in Colorado or the warrantless round-ups and raids in Los Angeles and other cities, few complained about the notion that Mexicans belonged in Mexico and should return there in hard times.⁹³ The temporary worker image initially had offered something for everyone, including many immigrants. By the 1930s, however, it had become a convenient rationale for denying tens of thousands of immigrants the right to claim America as their home.

Redefining Migratory Workers as Good Americans

One reason Mexicans had been encouraged to leave the U.S. in the 1930s was because employers had found a replacement source of labor ready to accept unsavory tasks and migratory jobs at low wages. In the 1920s, migratory jobs held no prestige. Americans then linked the characteristics of the job with the people who performed them and viewed both the jobs and the people who filled them as lower class and not American. Yet, during the Great Depression, some Americans found themselves needing the formerly undesirable employment. Thus they worked to redefine the jobs as dignified and worthy of being held by an American, rather than by a Mexican temporary worker.

⁹³For some examples of criticism see “Smuggled Over Mexican Line,” *Tucson (AZ) Star*, November 15, 1933, Aliens Ephemera Clippings file, Arizona Historical Society (Tucson, AZ); Jane Perry Clark, “Aliens in the Deportation Dragnet,” *Current History* 36 (April 1932): 27-31; Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 54; Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexican Americans*, 77-80. Also see Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration*, 148 who notes how difficult it was for many to criticize repatriation.

In 1940, the scholar George Gleason reported that at the beginning of the previous decade, “80% of the migrant workers were Mexicans and Filipinos” in California. He estimated that by 1935, “the complexion of the agricultural migrants has literally changed, so that 80-90% are now native white Americans.” He explained that as the California newcomers were now people “whose culture is similar to our own,” he felt that the poor conditions of the migratory worker “must be promptly faced and wisely solved.”⁹⁴ Agreeing with Gleason, U.S. legislators differentiated between Mexican workers who had performed much of the migratory work in the 1920s and the new migrants. They wrote that the former Mexican laborers had been repatriated and that now “those who leave home...are predominantly normal, worth-while American people.” In case there was any dispute about which Americans they referred to, the congressional authors explained that the new migratory workers included the “descendants of the oldest white families in the Southeastern and Eastern States.”⁹⁵ Consequently, American scholars and officials attempted to redefine the previously maligned migratory jobs as well within the American tradition.

In the 1930s, various writers of federal and state government publications began to laud the character of transients and migratory laborers. David Cushman Coyle argued in the Works Progress Administration’s *Depression Pioneers* that those who migrated internally were among the very best Americans because of their individualism, drive, and courage. “They are Americans in the old tradition, doing their best to fend for themselves.” Coyle believed that the new transient was someone who had only recently

⁹⁴David Cushman Coyle, *Depression Pioneers*, Works Progress Administration, (Washington, GPO, 1939), 9, 18; House, *Select Committee to Investigate the Interstate Migration of Destitute Citizens*, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., (1940-1941), pt. 8, 2996.

⁹⁵House, *Preliminary Report of the Select Committee to Investigate the Interstate Migration of Destitute Citizens*, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., (1941), 9.

fallen upon hard times, “superior to the run of the population,” and more highly educated. One such case was that of Jim Slade who had lost his job after holding a position for five years in the Youngstown steel mills. Upon hearing of opportunities in Flint (MI), Slade moved there and landed a job. Shortly afterwards, he was laid off and needed relief. According to Coyle, “Jim Slade can hardly be considered an undesirable citizen because he had the gumption to find himself a job in a distant city and then got left flat.”⁹⁶ Yet before the depths of the depression, few Americans would have applied the same logic to a *betabelero* or beetpicker of Mexican descent who had migrated from Mexico or other parts of the U.S. to the Michigan beetfields.

The Texas Transient Bureau reclaimed iconic American heroes to boost the status of migratory workers. The bureau’s *Alamo* publication highlighted the connections between Daniel Boone’s intrepid spirit, migration, and the new transient workers. The most obvious of such connections was that of a sketch entitled “Transients,” in which the artist depicted Abraham Lincoln, Daniel Webster, and Sam Houston alongside “today’s transient” who appeared to be a well-dressed white man.⁹⁷ A more curious juxtaposition in the same publication was that of an association of migratory people with American heroes like Davy Crockett who fought at the Alamo. The authors argued that, “these heroes of the Alamo were transients.”⁹⁸ Anglo Americans previously had not looked upon migration as something noble and patriotic, and instead had disparaged such movement as uncivilized and intrinsic to Mexicans’ character. Yet, Davy Crockett of the famed coonskin cap had himself been an emigrant from the United States to the then Mexican state of Texas. The irony of this was lost on the authors.

⁹⁶Coyle, *Depression Pioneers*, 10, 13, 18-19.

⁹⁷Sketch, “Transients,” *The Alamo* 1, December 5, 1934.

⁹⁸“The Eternal Transient,” *The Alamo* 1, May 8, 1934.

The trend of lauding the migratory worker would continue throughout the 1930s. John Steinbeck, in his acclaimed novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1936), sympathetically portrayed an “Okie” family, uprooted through no fault of their own, and forced to try their luck in California. Three years later, the success of this book launched a popular movie of the same name. Depression-era murals also valorized the strength and courage of white, working people.⁹⁹

As long as the depression endured, it would be difficult for people of Mexican descent to fit within or be recognized in the nation as any kind of American. The marginalizationists had provided a space for Mexicans only at the bottom of society, as either subordinate Americans or temporary guests, doing work that no Americans wanted to do. The depression wiped out even that lowly status as these jobs were then to be reserved for Americans. With Mexicans safely out of sight, American politicians, government officials, and writers began to adjust and boost the image of migrant jobs and the people who performed them.

But some forward-looking journalists and scholars wondered anew what would happen when the economy improved and once again there was “work no white man will do” at the proffered wages.¹⁰⁰ They were right to wonder. For during the Second World War, that time would arrive, and result in the welcoming of Mexican immigrants once again as temporary workers.

⁹⁹Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 153-54 and 179-81.

¹⁰⁰Robert N. McLean, “The Mexican Returns,” *Nation* 24 (Aug 1932): 166.

Conclusion

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Between 1900 and 1935, the country experienced frequent clashes over what it meant to be an American. Americans argued passionately about how to maintain a cohesive and unified nation as the United States acquired new colonies, as the nation expanded its fixed boundaries to grant territories statehood, and as immigrants entered the country in increasing numbers. Those most active in the debates, generally people in positions of economic and political power, seemed to believe that unity should be grounded in some kind of homogeneity, although they differed as to whether this homogeneity should be defined solely in terms of shared political beliefs and traditions or if it should also be based on having a specific racial background, class standing, or language and culture. Embedded in the debates over statehood and immigration was the question of who could be an American—and who could not. During the first third of the twentieth century, exclusionists, assimilationists, pluralists, and marginalizationists presented their competing visions or strategies on whether to admit certain people into the nation, and how to maintain a unified nation and American identity in the face of growing diversity.

By the end of the era, the exclusionists had failed to prevent Mexicans from becoming members of the nation via statehood or through migration across the border. The assimilationists also failed in their efforts to persuade Americans that Mexican immigrants were capable of melting into an Anglo American mold. The pluralists, while initially successful with their arguments that long-settled people of Mexican descent ought to be accepted as Spanish Americans, failed to gain a similar acceptance for

Mexican immigrants entering the U.S. after the First World War. It was the marginalizationists who prevailed, winning popular support for their strategy of admitting people of Mexican descent as long as they made no attempt to rise above a subordinate status or did not claim any rights to being American. They succeeded by convincing most Americans that Mexicans should be relegated to the margins of the nation as peon-like workers under the control of their Anglo American employers (as during the statehood era) or as temporary workers who would eventually return to Mexico. In this way, the marginalized Mexican workers would not threaten American homogeneity. Americans could continue to promote themselves as descended from Europeans, as having a middle-class standing and aspirations, and as a people who spoke English, permanently resided in the United States, and only accepted migratory jobs during unusual economic times. The lowest-class jobs could be reserved for those already living in the nation as second-class citizens, including Asian, African, and Mexican Americans, or for those who would be in the nation only temporarily.

The marginalizationists' creation of the temporary worker image initially offered something for everyone. It helped keep U.S. gates open to Mexican immigrants, provided Mexico with a respite from its unemployment crisis, and supplied labor for American employers and lower prices for all consumers. It appeared to provide interested groups on both sides of the border with the assurance that Mexican immigrants would not remain long enough to abandon their allegiance to Mexico or to subvert the extant conception of American identity. But this "perfect" compromise came at a high price for the immigrants. For this strategy that had proved so successful in keeping the U.S. open to Mexican immigration in the 1920s, would be used in the 1930s to send

500,000 allegedly temporary workers back to Mexico. It would be recalled and reconfigured again with the creation of a formal temporary worker or *bracero* program in the 1940s. Throughout this history, a discouraging feature of the strategy endured. Its depiction of Mexicans as individuals who only belonged in the U.S. as marginal Americans or temporary workers meant that Mexicans were always vulnerable to being sent away when they were no longer needed or welcomed.

The tragedy in this story is that by the 1930s the majority of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. had not wanted to move back to Mexico. In many ways, they had become Americans: not through the legal process of becoming a formal citizen, or even through social acceptance by Anglo or Mexican Americans, but through the mere fact of having lived within the bounds of the United States for an extended period of time. For many in their ranks, the United States was and had been their physical home for many years. It was the place where they had secured jobs, made friends, established families, raised their children, and settled into communities. In the 1920s, some of the immigrants nostalgically longed to return to Mexico, and perhaps did so to visit remaining friends and family. Yet in moments of crisis, and particularly by the 1930s, many realized that the United States had somehow become home. By then, the image of Mexicans as temporary workers had proved so engrained that no one intended to give them a voice in determining whether or not they would be allowed to remain in the U.S.

The swinging door opened and shut in accordance with the vagaries of the American economy and the marginalizationists' demands. By the mid-1930s, the marginalization strategy had become the dominant way in which Americans viewed Mexican immigrants. A broad array of voices and institutions on both sides of the border

had participated in its creation and promotion, and contributed to its ongoing success. The Mexican government seemed to be little better in this regard than the U.S. Because this consensus was so powerful, it was hard to break the stereotype of the temporary worker and allow the complexity of the Mexican immigrant situation, and immigrant voices, to emerge. Future creators of immigration policy must resist this stereotype in order to avoid the mistakes and injustices of past policies.

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