

**MEXICANS
IN THE
MAKING OF
AMERICA**

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The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem. . . . Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations.

—Walt Whitman, Preface to *Leaves of Grass* (1855)

Settled by the people of all nations, all nations may claim her for their own. You can not spill a drop of American blood without spilling the blood of the whole world. . . . We are not a narrow tribe . . . our blood is as the flood of the Amazon, made up of a thousand noble currents all pouring into one. We are not a nation, so much as a world.

—Herman Melville, *Redburn* (1849)

For Angela, querida madre de nuestras hijas Sabina, Bianca, and Sophia
And for Latin@s—Past, Present, and Future

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2010 to limit constitutional rights of unauthorized immigrants—has not diminished the growing cultural, lingual, and economic ties that increasingly bind Mexico and the United States.³⁰ The role of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans is therefore central to the story of the making of the United States—at least that part that was Mexican America—since before the United States was the United States.

As with other marginalized groups, particularly African Americans, World War II was a watershed in American history for the struggle of second- and later-generation Mexican Americans for full citizenship rights and equality with Anglo Americans in the schools, on the jobs, and in the history books. Mexican Americans had long insisted that being of Mexican origin did not make one less American, any more than it did Italian or Irish Americans. America's long history of white supremacy became increasingly untenable after World War II, and Cold War Soviet propaganda never tired of pointing out American hypocrisy in supporting democracy around the world while denying equal rights to its nonwhite citizens at home. More than a half-century later, young Americans are increasingly more accustomed to and accepting of the idea that America has become far more racially diverse than at any time in our history.

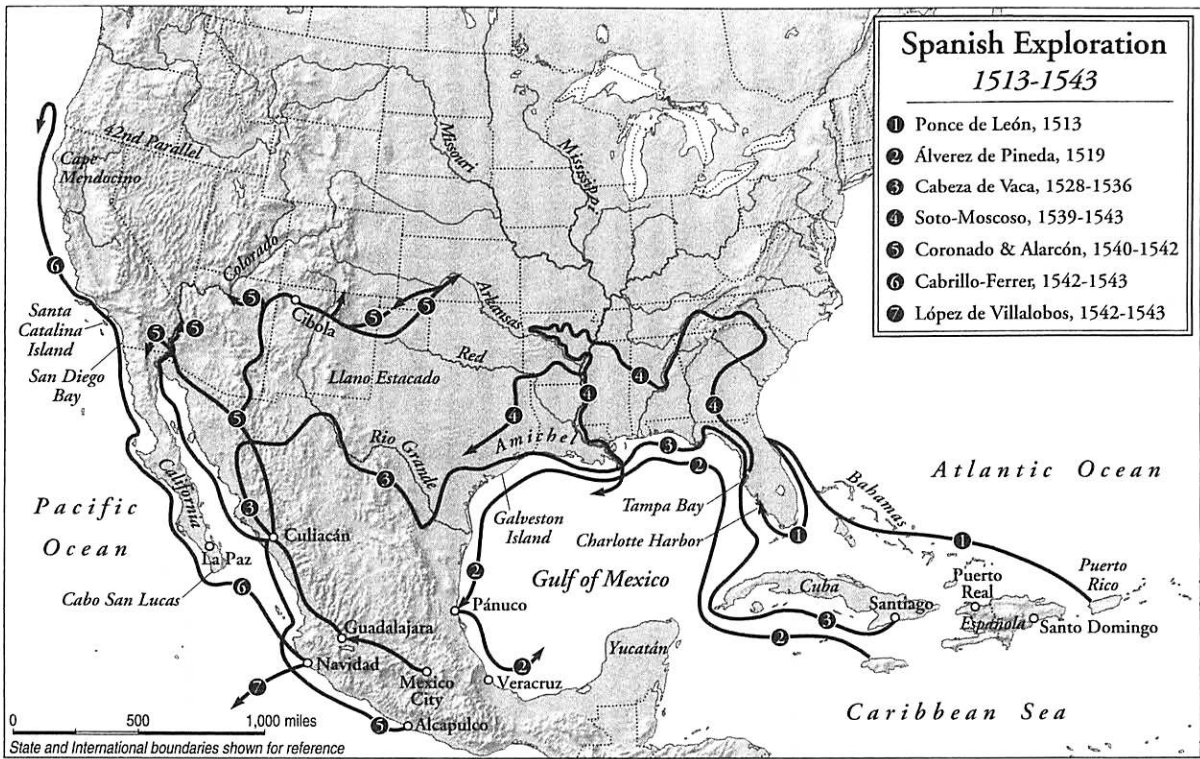
In a broader historical sense, *Mexicans in the Making of America* illustrates what the United States has been reluctant to acknowledge for most of its history, namely, that it is a thoroughly composite culture of racially blended peoples that defies the notion of some normative or static understanding of what it means to be "American." It is in part the history of the United States coming to terms with having seized the northern half of Mexico in the 1848, as well as the islands of Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Cuba in 1898, and the fear that it may have bitten off more than it can safely chew. In examining the ways in which the United States has coped with the very thing it often denies—that it is not, nor has it ever been, a purely Anglo-American nation—*Mexicans in the Making of America* reveals how the United States has become more of what it has always been, only this time, in this century, with a rapidly growing population of U.S.-born Mexicans and other Americans of Hispanic descent. It is in this story of regional, national, and transnational struggles of Latinos and other marginalized groups to enjoy full citizenship rights that we witness the making and *remaking* of American culture into something more democratic, more egalitarian, more accepting of difference—in short, more American.

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THE GENESIS OF MEXICAN AMERICA

Generations of Americans grow up learning about the voyages of Christopher Columbus in 1492 to the islands of the Caribbean, although no American can recall Columbus ever having set foot anywhere in present-day United States. That's because he never did. We learned in elementary school that the Pilgrims arrived somewhere on the coast of Massachusetts in 1620 (near a commemorative stone called "Plymouth Rock"), and that the first permanent English settlement was established in 1607 in Jamestown. We may recall that the Vikings, or Norsemen, explored and for a brief time settled parts of Canada around the year 1000, but our knowledge of what happened between 1492 and 1607 is often a bit nebulous, although the history of Spanish exploration and settlement in what is now the United States is well documented. So why do we learn about the late-arriving pilgrims and virtually nothing about the earlier explorations of the Spanish, let alone the earlier settlements of mixed-race "mestizos," in North America?¹

Before Canada, the United States, and Mexico existed as modern states, their first peoples took shape in bands, clans, tribes, towns, and cities. These peoples made kingdoms, nations, and empires. Of course, these social and political entities rested on materials that indigenous peoples had discovered, invented, cultivated, and developed as they migrated across the continent. When the English founded Jamestown, they survived because of Indian corn, a food discovered and cultivated in central Mexico, then dispersed throughout North America, through informal and commercial exchange over hundreds of years. On first contact then, the ancestors of Anglo Americans encountered Mexican food—turkey, squash, beans, tomatoes,



Spanish Exploration, 1513–1543.

chocolate would follow in both the near and distant future. The native ancestors of mestizo Mexicans made these foods, foods their Spanish ancestors encountered even before their entry into the Aztec empire.²

The first European to set foot on what was to become the United States was Ponce de León, who landed somewhere on the eastern coast of Florida in 1513—over three hundred years before the United States acquired Florida from Spain—and christened the region “La Florida” for the abundance of colorful and fragrant flowers there. During the next three decades Spanish explorers and conquistadors like Hernando de Soto, Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Baca, and Francisco Vázquez de Coronado were the first Europeans to traverse the Appalachian mountains, the Mississippi River, the Grand Canyon, and in the case of Coronado, the high plains of central Kansas where he thought he might find the fabled city of Quivira and all the gold that the Spaniards expected to find there. In 1565, over fifty years before the Pilgrims made landfall, Spaniards founded St. Augustine, the first permanent settlement in the United States (on the Florida coast) and explored much of the present-day U.S. South and Southwest, as well as the shoreline from Bangor, Maine to Florida, and the Pacific Coast as far north as Oregon. By 1600, the American empire of imperial Spain had become, according to one geographer, “a prodigious creation . . . extending from the Río Grande del Norte to the Río de la Plata at the southern portal to Peru.”³ In other words, as the Mexican novelist and essayist Carlos Fuentes put it, “the Hispanic world did not come to the United States; the United States came to the Hispanic world.”⁴

It is not surprising that U.S. history privileges the English colonizers over the Spanish, but it is nevertheless important to recall that much of what we call the American Southwest was permanently settled by Spaniards, mestizos, and their Indian allies centuries before the arrival of westward-moving Anglo Americans in the 1820s. Even before the United States took the northern half of Mexico in the 1848 U.S.-Mexican War, Anglo colonists (some with their slaves) began pouring into the territory from Texas to California where they first encountered Mexican people. From the start Anglo Americans regarded the Mexicans as little better than Indians and utterly incapable of becoming civilized members of the Anglo-American republic. Of course, Mexicans as a whole were principally of indigenous origin, a biological and visible fact that stoked the fears many Anglos had of racial intermixing. Although anti-immigrant rhetoric today has changed over the last 200 years, many of the anti-Mexican sentiments Anglos expressed in Texas in the 1820s continue to inform the fears of Americans today who worry that Mexicans are “reconquering” the Southwest and

potentially every major city in the United States.⁵ The origins of *Mexicans in the Making of America* begin with “first contact” between Anglos and Mexican citizens in Texas in the 1820s and the annexation of the northern half of Mexico in 1848.

The signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 ending the U.S.-Mexican War resulted in the social, political, and economic displacement of Mexicans throughout the Southwest, despite U.S. citizenship conferred by the treaty and guarantees to respect their property rights. Conquest meant that American racism against blacks in the South would be extended to Mexicans and other “foreigners,” like the Chinese, as well as to the original inhabitants of the land, the numerous Indian tribes of the American West.⁶ The consequences of the war were disastrous for Mexico, and its effects are still being felt today as Mexicans continue to immigrate to the United States across a border imposed on their country by war—a border recently militarized with high-tech surveillance technology, including the use of unmanned aerial drones, and the construction of a 700-mile barrier fence, all poignant reminders of conquest.

The long history of Spaniards, Christianized Indians, and Mexicans in the United States begins with a prior conquest—the Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire almost 500 years ago and the northward expansion of colonial New Spain into the present-day Southwest, a conquest that set the stage for the making of Mexican America. Spain’s colony in North and Central America, New Spain, endured for three hundred years—from 1521, when Hernán Cortés presided over the defeat of the Aztec empire, until 1821 when Mexico achieved its independence from Spain. While the history of the native peoples of Mexico—among them the Olmecs, Toltecs, Maya, Aztecs, to name a few—stretches back many thousands of years, most historians trace the beginning of modern Mexico to the first encounter between Cortés and the Aztec emperor Moctezuma. Cortés had come to the New World in search of rank, fame, and wealth, particularly gold, as had most Spaniards. A Spanish soldier who fought in the conquest of Mexico explained that he came to the New World “to serve God and his Majesty, to give light to those who were in the darkness and to grow rich as all men desire to do.”⁷ With candor and clarity, he expressed the dual purpose of Spanish conquest: to convert the Indians to Christianity and to extract from their labor the wealth in the mines and soil of the New World. Through the violence of conquest, a people would evolve who expanded northward as they fashioned the “Spanish” borderlands.

The Aztecs, a warrior band of nomadic tribes from the coastal region of Nayarit in northwestern Mexico, were relative newcomers to the Valley

of Mexico, having consolidated their power over the region only a few decades before the arrival of the Spaniards. The Aztecs demanded tribute from the natives they conquered, which included human sacrifices to their god Huitzilopochtli. Because of their very dominance, the Aztecs constructed the foundation of cultural and political unity on which the Mexican nation would later be built. With the help of a captured Indian slave, Malintzin (“La Malinche”), who served as Cortés’s interpreter and mistress, the Spaniards were able to form important political and military alliances with Indian tribes, such as the Tlaxcalans, who hated the Aztecs more than they feared the Spaniards. For good or ill, Malintzin would symbolize the intermixture of Spaniard and Indian that would make the Mexican nation.⁸ Like some of the coastal tribes near Veracruz, the Tlaxcalans welcomed the Spanish as allies against their Aztec overlords. In the fall of 1519, when Cortés marched on Tenochtitlán, the Aztec capital and future site of Mexico City, he was accompanied by thousands of Indian allies determined to end their vassalage under the Aztecs.⁹

Cortés’s march inland to Tenochtitlán revealed a great deal about the violence that begot New Spain and the Mexican people. In Cholula, a large city about sixty miles from the Aztec capital, the Cholulan *caciques* (tribal chiefs) welcomed the Spaniards and their Indian allies, but secretly had plotted, apparently on orders from Moctezuma himself, to trap and destroy the invaders. Malintzin learned of the plot from a Cholulan woman and promptly warned Cortés, who devised a plan to teach the Cholulans—and the Aztecs—a lesson in Spanish retribution. With the aid of his Tlaxcalan and Cempoalan allies, Cortés ordered the wholesale slaughter of over 6,000 Cholulans, among them many of their priests and *caciques*. Upon hearing the news, Moctezuma believed, according to one chronicler, that further resistance was futile and reluctantly admitted Cortés and his men into the capital city of the Aztec empire, a city soon made the capital of colonial New Spain and later Mexico, including the states that would become the “Southwest.”¹⁰

When one of Cortés’s soldiers, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, first laid eyes on the Aztec capital as he entered the city from the causeway of Iztapalapa, he was struck by its immense size and grandeur, comparing it to “the enchanted scenes we had read of in Amadis of Gaul, from the great towers and temples and other edifices . . . that seemed to rise out of the water . . . for . . . never yet did man see, hear, or dream of anything equal to the spectacle which appeared to our eyes on that day.”¹¹ With about a quarter million inhabitants, Tenochtitlán was larger than any city in Spain, and only four European cities—Naples, Venice, Milan, and Paris—had populations

larger than 100,000 in the early sixteenth century.¹² Moctezuma's offer of friendship and gold to the Spaniards triggered a gold rush that would bring thousands of Europeans to Mexico and the Americas.

After formal exchange of greetings, Cortés and his men moved into the emperor's palace and quietly held him prisoner. Relations between the Spaniards and the Aztecs grew increasingly difficult, particularly among the Aztec nobles who deeply resented the house arrest of their emperor. In the spring of 1520, while Cortés was away from the capital, his first officer, Pedro de Alvarado, suspected that the nobles had plotted against them. He decided upon the same course of action as had Cortés in Cholula: he surrounded thousands of them, unarmed, in the courtyard of the temple during a religious ceremony, and on Alvarado's signal the Spaniards massacred them. Unlike the Cholulans, however, the Aztecs rose up in rebellion, killed a number of Spaniards, and laid siege to the palace where the Spaniards retreated and were essentially trapped. Cortés managed to fight his way back into the palace and, under the cover of darkness, the Spanish force fled the city, losing more than half its men, including many of its Tlaxcalan allies. In many ways, the creation of New Spain owes as much to indigenous peoples as the Spaniards whose Indian allies vastly outnumbered them.¹³

A year later, Cortés returned with reinforcements and retook the city in August 1521 after a spirited defense led by Moctezuma's nephew, Cuauhtémoc. Moctezuma was killed the year before, although whether his death was at the hands of the Spaniards or the Aztecs has never been established. What is clear, however, is that a relatively small band of Spaniards was able to maintain control over the vast Aztec empire in part because of deadly microbes they carried with them from across the ocean—small pox, measles, and other contagious diseases endemic to Europe but unknown in America. With no prior exposure, Indians had not acquired immunities against them. Eight million Indians, about one-third of the native population, perished within a decade of the conquest, prompting many Indians to believe that their gods had abandoned them. Their defeat, in other words, owed as much to infestation as invasion. Without the plagues, the Spanish demographic imprint on modern Mexico would have been minimal—not unlike the impact of the Dutch on South Africans.¹⁴

News of Cortés's victory over the Aztecs emboldened other Spanish opportunists to undertake expeditions in search of gold and glory. Many medieval legends circulated among the Spaniards about the existence of the Seven Cities of Cibola and Quivira, mythical places of fabulous wealth that many Spaniards believed lay in the vast uncharted region to the north

of Tenochtitlán, including Aztlán, the Edenic place of origin of the Mexica (Aztecs). Cortés himself believed in the existence of a northern province of Amazons, "inhabited by women, without a single man, who have children in the way which the ancient histories ascribe to the Amazons." These fantasies would take the Spaniards and their more numerous mestizo and indigenous allies into what is now the southwestern United States.¹⁵

The most famous of these expeditions culminated in the failure of Francisco Vásquez de Coronado to find the mythical Quivira in what is now the heartland of America. Coronado organized his expedition based on a report of Fray Marcos de Niza, a friar who claimed to have seen one of the fabled Seven Cities (in present-day Arizona) and reported that it was larger and more magnificent than Mexico City. Coronado set out from Compostela in the northwestern region of New Spain in 1540 with a large force of over a thousand natives and about 335 Spaniards.¹⁶ In New Mexico Coronado's men encountered a native called the Turk, who told them of the fabulous wealth of Quivira where "pitchers, dishes, and bowls were made of gold."¹⁷ The Turk and Pueblo Indians had apparently deceived Coronado about the existence of Quivira in order to lure him into leaving their villages and never returning. Indeed he took the expedition as far as the present-day town of Lyons in central Kansas. As far as the Zuni and Pueblo Indians were concerned, the Spaniards demanded so much food, clothing, and shelter that they were themselves in danger of starvation and exposure to the elements. They understood well that Spaniards would do anything and go anywhere to find cities of gold, and it required no great strategic plan to tell the Spaniards that great wealth lay a little farther away—as far away from the Pueblo settlements as possible. The Pueblo Indians had asked the Turk, as Coronado later learned, to take them "to a place where we and our horses would starve to death." In the middle of Kansas with nothing but "cattle and sky," as one chronicler recorded, they were far from starving, but neither had they come such a great distance to marvel at the herds of buffalo. Discouraged, Coronado had the Turk garroted and his disillusioned force returned to Tierra Nueva, "the new land," as they called New Mexico.¹⁸ After having explored much of present-day Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas, and spent much of his personal wealth underwriting the expedition, Coronado failed to find the legendary cities or treasures of gold and silver. For the following fifty years, the viceroyalty authorized no further expeditions into what is now the United States, choosing instead to consolidate its control over Indian labor in the Valley of Mexico and the newly discovered silver mines in Zacatecas and other locations in the central corridor of Mexico.¹⁹

As the sixteenth century drew to a close, the Crown decided to establish a permanent presence in the northern borderlands to protect the wealth of its mining corridor and provide a base for Franciscan friars to convert the Pueblo Indians. In 1596 Juan de Oñate led an expedition to the north by way of present-day El Paso, Albuquerque, and finally Santa Fe, where he established the first permanent colony in 1608. In that city his Tlaxcalan Indian allies founded the barrio of Analco, where the Chapel of San Miguel, the oldest church in the continental United States, still stands today. Although humble Pueblo villages were a far cry from the splendor of Tenochtitlán, the Pueblo Indians farmed their own land, providing Spanish and mestizo settlers with a solid agricultural base to establish churches, missions, presidios, municipalities, and other institutions of Spanish colonial society in what we now call the Southwest.²⁰

Spaniards maintained control over hostile natives mainly by acts of brutality, torture, and the point of the sword, a pattern established early on by Cortés, Coronado, De Soto and other *adelantados* (entrepreneurs commissioned by the Crown). The natives, in turn, plotted rebellions, ambushes, and other forms of guerilla warfare to resist Spanish rule. In 1680 united Pueblo tribes launched a full-scale revolt against the Spaniards and the Franciscan friars, who often brutally punished the natives for continuing to worship their native gods. In a few short weeks the Pueblos had driven the Spaniards out of New Mexico north of El Paso. They destroyed the missions, killed most of the priests, and over 350 of the province's 2,500 colonists. As one Spanish officer observed, "The heathen have conceived a mortal hatred for our holy faith and enmity for the Spanish nation."²¹ Although the Spaniards reconquered northern New Mexico in 1693, some Pueblo Indians continued to resist Spanish exploitation and desecration of their culture. The penalty for disobedience was generally the same: an arraignment followed by execution, torture, or enslavement. Many abandoned their pueblos entirely rather than submit to Spanish rule, while other Christianized Indians fled southward with the Spaniards and reconstrued their pueblos near El Paso, where their descendants remain in present-day Texas.²²

In distant northern settlements like El Paso and Santa Fe, Spaniards, mestizos, and Indians frequently intermarried, since Indians vastly outnumbered Spaniards and virtually no constraints existed against the intimate mixing of Spaniards, mestizos, and Christianized Indians. Juan de Oñate, the wealthy, aristocratic founder of settlements near present-day Santa Fe, was himself married to Isabel Tolosa Cortés Moctezuma, the great granddaughter of the Aztec emperor and the granddaughter of Hernán Cortés.²³

As the distinction between Spaniard and Indian became increasingly blurred, mestizos often took advantage of their vaguely defined status to move within both Pueblo and Hispanic social circles.²⁴ Shortly after Oñate's *entrada*, the Spaniards were adapting—assimilating, we would say today—to the native culture. In 1601 a Spanish official, Ginés de Herrera Horta, reported that he had met "a Spanish boy, who . . . grew up among the Indian boys. He knew the language of the Picuris or Queres better than the Indians themselves, and they were astonished to hear him talk."²⁵ Growing up among the Indians was the norm for most Spaniards in the north, where education took place largely in the missions, and Spanish settlers and Hispanicized Indians often worked in close proximity to each other. Spaniards used Tlaxcalans, for example, to colonize and "civilize" the "Chichimecas" of the northern frontier as far north as the Río Bravo. Their mestizo offspring formed a racial category that was encoded in the law and indicated a social status above the Indians but below the Spaniards. The population we would recognize as "Mexican" was thus fashioned both north and south of today's border.

Mexicans were not only the mixed-race offspring of Spaniards and Indians. Spaniards imported as many as 200,000 African slaves during the colonial period to augment the Indian labor force, which had been greatly reduced as a result of small pox and other diseases. While many maintained their culture in places like Veracruz, the port of entry for most Africans, most intermarried with the mestizos, natives, and Spaniards.²⁶ The Spaniards freely mixed with all groups, but they were also obsessed with maintaining legal and social distinctions among the various mixtures, and to that end created a system of classification, or "castas," for the various types of racial mixtures. The principal categories included mixtures of Spanish with Africans, Indians, and mestizos: a Spaniard and an African produced a "mulato"; a Spaniard and an Indian produced a mestizo; a Spaniard and a mestizo produced a "castizo." When these mixed-race persons married others of different racial mixtures, they produced offspring who were classified with the names of animals, such as "lobo" (wolf) and "coyote," while other subcastes yielded more exotic names, such as "jump backwards, kinky-head, hay-seed, whitey, darkey, sambo, village mulatto, stay-up-in-the-air and I-don't-understand-you, or there-you-are." The more distant one's ancestry from "pure-blooded" Spaniard, the more bizarre the racial category.²⁷

In reality, racial identities were highly contingent and fluid, depending on a variety of factors, such as social status, skin color, language, and other factors. A light-skinned castiza might pass as mestiza. A mestizo might

pass as "español." The complicated racial nomenclature hardly reflected the reality of shifting racial identities in New Spain, particularly in the northern borderlands, including New Mexico, where it was possible to be born "indio" (Indian) and, through conversion to Catholicism, fluency in Spanish, and perhaps adoption into a Spanish family, grow up to be mestizo. In other words, while some passed as belonging to a higher socioracial status than they actually were, others passed into a new racial identity as a result of social and economic advancement. The profusion of crisscrossed color lines in Spanish colonial society made it impossible to know with any certainty whether or not dark-skinned individuals had earned the privilege, through petitions to the colonial government, to be called "blanco."²⁸ "When the colour of the skin is too repugnant" for some petitioners to "get themselves *whitened*," wrote the German explorer and geographer Alexander Von Humboldt, the petitioners are often granted the right to "consider themselves as whites (*que se tengan por blancos*)."²⁹

Spaniards were of course the most powerful and privileged group. The colonial elite was divided into two classes of Spaniards: "peninsulares," Spaniards born in Spain; and "criollos," Spaniards born in the New World. Criollos were not "creoles" in the sense of being racially mixed; they were Spaniards born in Mexico rather than Spain, and for that reason alone were not entitled to hold the highest positions in the colonial bureaucracy. This distinction was an important factor in the war for Mexican independence, as many criollos sided with insurgent Indians to overthrow Spanish rule. But already by the end of the eighteenth century intermarriage among peninsulares, criollos, mestizos, and afromestizos had become more acceptable and their offspring, through a decree issued in 1805 called *Limpieza de Sangre* (Blood Purity), could be accorded criollo status.³⁰ Thus, while race and color mattered in the New Spain's social structure, they differed markedly from the black-white divide that characterized the racial regime of the future United States, and that would put Mexicans on the "colored" side of the color line.

Maintaining power based on one's status as "Spanish" operated one way in central Mexico where the vast majority of the population lived, in contrast to the sparsely settled northern borderlands where fewer people were able to claim "pure" Spanish ancestry. Wealth and resources were concentrated in central Mexico, not in the remote northern borderlands, like New Mexico, Texas, and California, where the elites were mostly mestizos. Of the estimated 13,204 people married in New Mexico between 1693 and 1846, only ten persons listed their parents' birthplace as Spain.³¹ These mestizo northerners were the focus of racial ridicule by the Anglo Americans

who would pour into the region. In their eyes Mexicans were hardly different from the Indians with whom they waged constant warfare.

While missionaries had been anxious to convert the Indians from California to Texas, the viceroyalty of New Spain early saw little to be gained, at least economically, from further investment in northern mission enterprises. For one thing, vast distances separated the northern settlements from the more populated and prosperous settlements to the south, making effective government and control in the north both difficult and expensive. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, however, the Crown took measures to protect its northern frontier from foreign threats: missions and presidios were established in east Texas in the 1690s as a buffer against the French in Louisiana, and settlement of California was authorized as a *cordon sanitaire* against the encroachment of English and Russian settlers in the Pacific Northwest. Aside from their importance to the defense of New Spain, however, the northern settlements held little interest for Spanish secular authorities in Mexico City, a perspective that later contributed to the loss of Mexico's northern territory to the United States.³²

Relations between the United States and Spain preceded those with Mexico. Spain assisted the United States in its war for independence, as Spanish troops, including mestizo cowboys from Texas, pushed across the Mississippi River to recover Florida from the British. Thus, "Mexicans," as New Spain's people were then increasingly called, fought in the revolution that founded the United States. Moreover, at the war's end the United States' entire western and southern borders were with the Spanish empire.³³

Even before the United States had won its independence from England, Spanish officials had long feared the territorial ambitions of the Anglo-Saxon settlers and the threat they represented to colonial New Spain. The Spanish ambassador to France, the Count of Aranda, prophesied in 1783 that the newly independent English colonies would one day seize Spain's North American colonies and rule the continent: "This federal republic has been born a pygmy, but the day will come when it will be a giant and an enormous colossus on those regions. . . . Then its first steps will be seizing the Floridas in order to dominate the Gulf of Mexico and once it has obstructed New Spain's trade, it will aspire to conquer the vast empire, which will not be able to defend itself against such a formidable power established on the same continent and contiguous to it."³⁴

The expansion of the United States from pygmy republic to colossus of continental dimensions was not simply the result of the work of "civilized men . . . driven onward by the hand of God."³⁵ War and revolution in Europe contributed handily to the expansionist goals of the early republic.

Shortly after the British recognized the independence of its former colonies in 1783, the French Revolution of 1789 initiated a period of war that preoccupied Europe for the next twenty-five years, providing the fledgling United States with the breathing space it needed to set up its system of government and to develop trade and commerce throughout the states and with other nations. A major break for the United States came in 1803 when France, then on the verge of war with England, abandoned its plans for a French empire in North America and sold the Louisiana Territory. In one stroke the United States had doubled its size and pushed its borders thousands of square miles toward the older Spanish colonial frontier extending from California to Texas (although Thomas Jefferson claimed, incorrectly, that Texas was included in the Louisiana Purchase). In 1819 Spain and the United States signed the Adams-Onís Treaty in which Spain ceded Florida to the United States in return for recognition of Texas as part of New Spain. The United States took full advantage of the conflicts and wars in Europe to wrest Florida away from Spain and Louisiana from France, at a time when those countries could not spare the resources to defend their colonies in North America. Thus, even before Mexico's independence, Hispanic geographic and demographic power was retreating before the Anglo-American advance.³⁶

Mexico was not faring so well as the young republic with which it shared the North American continent. Having declared its independence from Spain in 1810, it fought a series of bloody and costly battles for eleven years before actually gaining it, while at the same time its neighbor to the north (and east) was enjoying the fruits of neutrality from European wars (even as it waged war with the British empire in 1812) by occupying itself with commerce, trade, and westward expansion. After independence, Mexico was virtually bankrupt. After years of war, first with Spain and decades of civil strife and conflict between "Centralists" and "Federalists" afterward, the Mexican government stumbled from one financial crisis to another. Many mines, a major source of revenue for Mexico, had ceased to operate for lack of capital and an endemic labor shortage. Many of the *haciendas* (plantations and large livestock ranches) that were the backbone of agricultural production still lay in ruins, in part because of the scorched-earth practices followed by the insurgents and royalists during the decade-long war of independence. Twenty years after independence in 1821, the wife of the Spanish minister to Mexico described catastrophic consequences of the war on Mexico City and the surrounding countryside: "ruins, everywhere—here a viceroy's country palace serving as a tavern, where mules stop to rest . . . there, a whole village crumbling to pieces; roofless houses, broken

down walls and arches, an old church—the remnants of a convent."³⁷ To complicate matters, the Spanish government had built only three highways in all of Mexico during the colonial period, and these were in a state of serious disrepair. If transportation formed the veins through which flowed the blood of commerce, Mexico was suffering, according to one historian, from "a form of pernicious anemia."³⁸ In the early nineteenth century, the tide of demographic, economic, and military power rolled west with the Anglo-American empire.

No longer a pygmy, the colossus came knocking at the Texas door in the early 1820s, when both Spain and newly independent Mexico were far too weak to resist. Mexico mistrusted the intentions of the Anglo settlers, many of them squatters ("illegal aliens") and slaveholders, but gambled that by giving them generous and cheap land grants, and requiring them to become Mexican citizens (and Catholics), they would become loyal citizens of Mexico and serve as a buffer against further expansion of the United States.³⁹

When Anglo settlers first encountered Mexicans in Texas, they had little understanding of the people, history, institutions, and culture of Latin Americans in general. What Anglo Americans did know was that Mexicans were very little like themselves. After hundreds of years of Spanish rule, most Mexicans were Catholics, a religion that Anglo Americans disdained for its "superstitions" and subservience to Rome. Catholics could not be trusted to put the interests of the nation before their obedience to the Pope. "The people of [Spanish] America are the most ignorant, bigoted, the most superstitious of all the Roman Catholics in Christendom," wrote John Adams, Founding Father and second president of the United States. "Was it probable, was it possible, that . . . free government . . . should be introduced and established among such a people . . . ? It appeared to me . . . as absurd as similar plans would be to establish democracies among the birds, beasts, and fishes."⁴⁰ Just as God had given man "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth," the Anglo dominion over Mexicans and Indians did not include integration into the body politic any more than it did for fish, fowl, or cattle.⁴¹

Even more disturbing to Anglo Americans was the mixed-race appearance of Mexicans. After centuries of *mestizaje*—the blending of Indian, Spanish, and African peoples—Mexicans represented the racial degradation that supposedly resulted from Europeans mixing with the natives they ruled and sometimes enslaved. Anglo Americans rarely mixed with, much less married, the Indians they defeated, who eventually were "removed" to

Indian Territory (Oklahoma) and reservations throughout the American West. Indians in Mexico, though disfranchised, formed an integral part of the nation and in many regions outnumbered *mestizos* and Spaniards.⁴²

Anglo Americans' assessment of Mexican women, however, was not nearly as harsh, even though by New England standards they were morally lax and sexually permissive. These mixed-race women exuded a sensuousness that did not go unnoticed by Anglo men. Anglo women were scarce in San Antonio, where an Anglo settler from Ohio caught his first glimpse of a "Spanish" señorita. He practically became unhinged as he recalled his barely concealed concupiscence upon their first meeting: "Her features were beautiful . . . her complexion was of the loveliest, the snowy brightness of her well turned forehead beautifully contrasting with the carnation tints of her mouth, her pouting cherry lips were irresistible and even when closed seemed to have an utterance . . . but I have no such language as seemed to be spoken by her eyes else might I tell how dangerous it was to meet their luster and feel their quick thrilling scrutiny of the heart as tho' the very fire of their expression was conveyed with their beamings."⁴³ Certainly being the object of Anglo lust had its advantages. Mexican women who married Anglo men, like Jim Bowie of Alamo fame, were among the first Mexicans to have the racial and cultural identity of "Spanish" conferred upon them by Anglo men anxious to whiten their "half-Indian" Mexican señoritas—and especially their half-Anglo children.

Nonetheless, before Texas rebelled, Anglo Texans had firmly established in their minds that Mexicans were more like Indians and black Americans than Germans or French. One Anglo Texan wrote that Mexicans were "the adulterate and degenerate brood of the once high-spirited Castilian." Sam Houston, in an address to rally support against Mexico, explained that the "vigor of the descendants of the sturdy north will never mix with the phlegm of the indolent Mexicans no matter how long we may live among them," and asked his fellow compatriots if they "would bow under the yoke of these half-Indians." A newcomer Anglo-Texan regarded Mexicans as "degraded and vile," whose "unfortunate race of Spaniard, Indian and African is so blended that the worst qualities of each predominate."⁴⁴

While the economy was in shambles and Mexico paralyzed by political infighting, the United States sent its first ambassador in 1824, Joel Poinsett, with instructions to purchase Texas and push the border with Mexico farther southwest to the Río Grande. The Mexican government refused repeated offers to sell California and New Mexico and finally asked for Poinsett's recall in 1829 because of his frequent interference in Mexican domestic politics, a pattern of diplomatic trespassing that foreshadowed the

"big stick" diplomacy—and military intervention—of the early twentieth century. Throughout the next two decades Mexico continued to suffer from military coups, bitter political antagonisms between conservatives and liberals, centralists, and federalists over the form and scope of national governance, including a sizable number of politicians who favored the establishment of a monarchy and closer ties to Spain. Meanwhile efforts continued in the United States to secure congressional approval for the acquisition of Texas.

Instead, as every student of American and Texas history knows, the settlers (including some Mexican *tejanos*) rose up in rebellion against the Mexican government in 1834. The principal Anglo colonizer of Texas, Stephen Austin, believed that it was the manifest destiny of Anglo Americans to "redeem Texas from the wilderness"—to "Americanize Texas."⁴⁵ The conflict between Texas and Mexico, Austin wrote, was nothing less than "a war of barbarism and of despotic principles, waged by the mongrel Spanish-Indian and Negro race, against civilization and the Anglo-American race."⁴⁶ The enterprise of Americanizing Texas was best expressed by William H. Wharton, one of the staunchest supporters of Anglo rule in Texas: "The justice and benevolence of God will forbid that the delightful region of Texas should again become a howling wilderness, trod only by savages, or that it should be permanently benighted by the ignorance and superstition, the anarchy and rapine of Mexican misrule. The Anglo-American race are destined to be forever the proprietors of this land of *promise* and *fulfillment*. Their laws will govern it, their learning will enlighten it, their enterprise will improve it."⁴⁷ Such sentiments did not bode well for the future of Anglo-Mexican or U.S.-Mexico relations.

Although the Mexican government had banned slavery, Anglo Americans were determined to exercise their constitutional rights (in a foreign country) to own them. Most Texas histories pay scant attention to the contentious issue of slavery in the Texas conflict with Mexico, preferring instead to view the conflict, whether implicitly or explicitly, in terms of liberty-loving defenders of the Alamo versus backward, despotic Mexico. This simple paradox lies at the heart of the Texas creation myth, celebrated by numerous Alamo movies and books. Henry Clay, for example, asked, "By what race should Texas be peopled?" and responded that only liberty-loving Anglo Americans could save Texas from becoming a "place of despotism and slaves."⁴⁸ Clay was clearly not opposed to Texas being a place of black American slaves. His concern was that white people would be equivalent to "slaves" under Mexican rule (which denied them their God-given right to own slaves). Shortly after Sam Houston's victory over the Mexican Army in

1836, Texas became the independent Lone Star republic that was the envy of the South, for it made the protection of slavery a central feature of its constitution.⁴⁹ Texas became officially “Americanized” nine years later when it was annexed to the United States as a slave state.

In 1845 a Democratic newspaper editor from New York, John L. O’Sullivan, coined the phrase “manifest destiny” to justify the absorption of northern Mexico and Oregon into the United States: “The American claim is by the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and . . . self-government entrusted to us.”⁵⁰ The providential basis of O’Sullivan’s “American claim” was less a matter of rational policy than religious faith. Expressions of the English settlers as God’s Chosen People, however, date back to the founding of the nation.⁵¹ Two years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the New England merchant and courier during the Revolutionary War Elkanah Watson rhapsodized over “the decrees of the Almighty, who has evidently raised up this nation to become a lamp to guide degraded and oppressed humanity.”⁵² In a speech in the House of Representatives a few years before the U.S.-Mexican War in 1846, Caleb Cushing celebrated the “spectacle of the Anglo-American stock extending itself into the heart of the Continent . . . advancing with . . . the preordination of inevitable progress, like the sun moving westerly in the heavens, or the ascending tide on the seashore, or . . . as a deluge of civilized men rising unabatedly and driven onwards by the hand of God.”⁵³ The gleam in the eye of the expansionist encompassed not just the northern territory of Mexico, but extended to the Pacific Northwest as far as the Arctic Ocean.⁵⁴

That Texas would enter the Union as a slave state complicated matters, but in the end the forces of expansion overshadowed the slavery question and Texas was annexed by joint resolution of the U.S. Congress in 1845 at the end of President John Tyler’s term in office. His successor, James Knox Polk, set his sights on acquiring California and was willing to risk war with Mexico. Taking advantage of Mexico’s endemic political infighting and the sorry state of its economy, Polk sent General Zachary Taylor to march from Corpus Christi on the Nueces River, which was the recognized southwestern border of Texas, to the mouth of the Río Grande near Matamoros, Mexico. There they clashed with the Mexican Army and lives were lost on both sides. President Polk claimed that Mexico “had shed American blood on American soil” and asked Congress to declare war on Mexico. Although many Americans, including Abraham Lincoln and Henry

David Thoreau, believed that the United States had provoked the war in order to acquire California, the voices of territorial expansion drowned out those of peace.⁵⁵

It was hardly an even match. At the time the population of the United States had reached 20 million compared to Mexico’s 7 million. Mexico’s bankrupt economy stood in sharp contrast to its neighbor’s dynamic and expanding one, and while the war dampened political factionalism between the North and the South in the United States, it crippled Mexico’s ability to govern, much less defend itself against attack.⁵⁶ In two years the war was over. Equipped with modern weaponry, advanced artillery, and abundant resources, U.S. troops attacked along four fronts: Colonel Stephen Kearny marched overland to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where the Mexican governor Manuel Armijo offered no resistance. General Zachary Taylor continued his march south to Monterrey and Saltillo, Mexico. Commodore Robert Stockton took Los Angeles, California, although shortly afterward he faced a revolt by the Californios. Seeking to force Mexico’s surrender as quickly as possible, President Polk sent General Winfield Scott with seventy troopships to Veracruz. After bombarding the port for a few days, his troops stormed the city and Veracruz surrendered. From Veracruz Scott marched his troops to Mexico City over essentially the same route taken by the conquistador Hernán Cortés to the Halls of Montezuma over 300 years earlier.

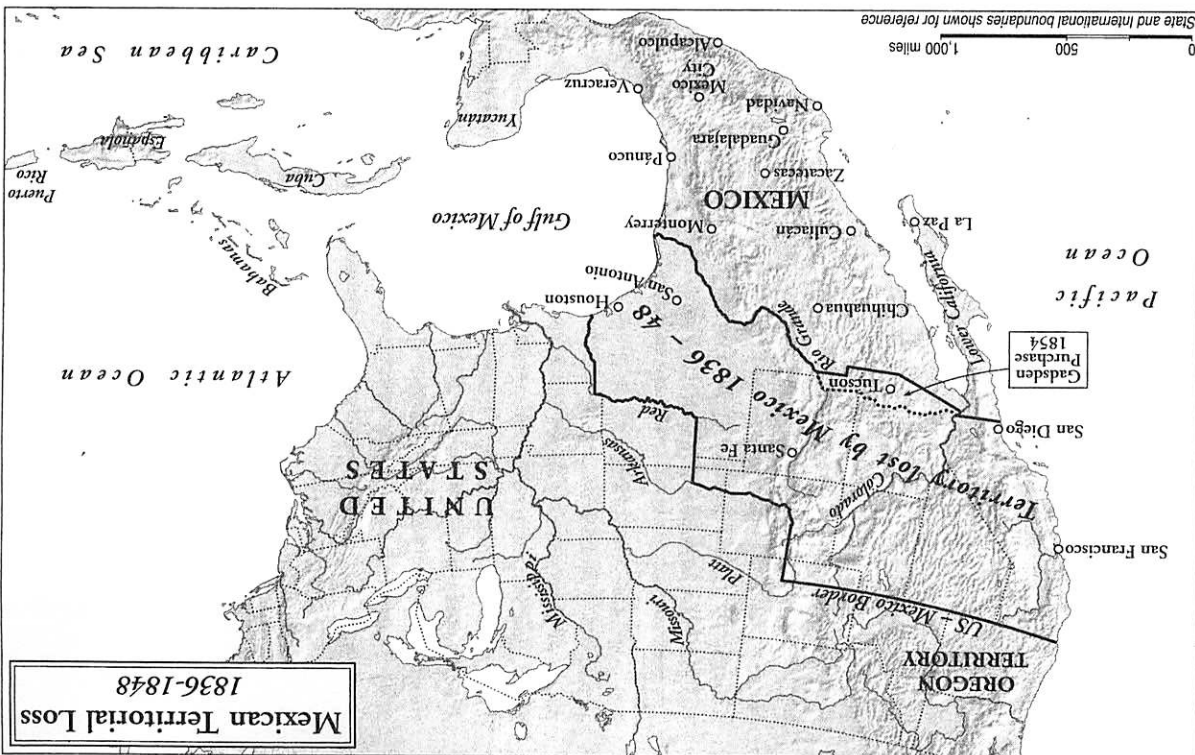
The Mexican Army was no match for Scott’s highly trained and equipped army. After a series of defensive battles, the city surrendered, although many civilians and even children—the revered *niños héroes*—joined in defense of the city. To the utter humiliation of the Mexicans, the American flag flew over the National Palace for the ten months that General Scott’s army occupied the city. With instructions from President Polk, the U.S. peace commissioner, Nicholas P. Trist, negotiated the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which formally concluded the war and ratified the loss of half of Mexico’s land, including Texas, whose independence in 1836 Mexico had refused to recognize. Trist undertook his assignment with anguish. When Mexican treaty commissioner Bernardo Couto remarked to him at the treaty’s conclusion, “This must be a proud moment for you; no less proud for you than it is humiliating for us,” Trist replied: “We are making peace, let that be our only thought.” Later Trist told his wife and others present: “Could those Mexicans have seen in my heart at that moment, they would have known my feeling of shame as an American was far stronger than theirs could be as Mexicans. . . . My objective throughout was not to obtain

all I could, but on the contrary to make the treaty as little exacting as possible for Mexico . . . In this I was governed by . . . the iniquity of the war, as an abuse of power on our part."⁵⁷

For many Mexicans the treaty dictated not only the humiliating loss of half the nation's territory, but also, as two historians of Mexico have noted, "an amputation, a painful surgery designed only to conserve what was left."⁵⁸ Perhaps this sad moment in the history of Mexico was what reputedly moved the late nineteenth-century dictator Porfirio Díaz to utter, "Poor Mexico, so far from God, so close to the United States."⁵⁹ On the other hand, in winning the war the United States could not have imagined that the new 2,000-mile border and the newly acquired territory—from California to Texas—would continue to be the destination of millions of Mexicans through the opening decades of the twenty-first century.

After the war with Mexico, the United States faced the challenge of incorporating the vast territory of northern Mexico, as well as the resident Mexicans, into the U.S. polity. Mexican residents who did not formally declare their intent to remain citizens of Mexico within one year after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo automatically became U.S. citizens. No doubt this must have come as a shock to many Mexican *pobladores* (settlers), who had lived in the region for centuries of Spanish and Mexican rule, in some cases going back to the founding of Santa Fe in 1609. But they did not number in the millions as their posterity would in the twentieth century. At the time of the U.S.-Mexican War, the population of Indian and mestizo Mexicans living in the vast territory ceded to the United States numbered between only eighty and one hundred thousand, most of whom lived on subsistence farms and small ranches in California, New Mexico, and Texas. Except for the most elite Californios, who often intermarried with Anglo Americans, the vast majority of Mexicans lived their lives apart from Anglo Americans in their own *colonias*, or Mexican neighborhoods. But that would soon change as Anglos flocked to the new territory in search of cheap land—and later cheap labor.⁶⁰

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century huge swaths of land were being parceled out to Anglo-American settlers and later the railroads. Mexican landowners struggled to hold on to their land in areas like South Texas and northern New Mexico where they still outnumbered Anglos. Articles VIII and IX of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo specifically guaranteed that Mexican property rights under U.S. rule would be "inviolably respected." In reality, Anglos' lust for land could no more be constrained by treaty obligations with a defeated neighbor than countless (broken) treaties guaranteeing Indian rights to their land. The territorial courts of New



The U.S.-Mexico border before the 1848 "War of the North American Invasion" and territory ceded to the United States after the war.

Mexico, for example, did not recognize “community property” and refused to uphold the property rights of land held in common by Mexicans. Even more devastating was the enactment of the federal Land Act of 1851, which required that all holders of land granted under the Spanish or Mexican governments prove their ownership of the land.⁶¹ Many Mexican landowners, however, could not produce titles to land grants issued under governments of Mexico or Spain, some of them hundreds of years old. Nor did they possess surveys of their land that would hold up in a U.S. court of law. Their “title” to the land was based on generations of communal knowledge of the geographical boundaries of each land grant, expressed in language that referenced a stream, or pile of rocks, or grove of trees as boundary markers. Mexican families knew the boundaries of the land they and other families owned, often for many generations, but Anglos demanded proof.

Under the American system of land ownership, Mexicans without titles had to hire surveyors and pay Anglo lawyers to draw up new titles and deeds of transfer. Many Mexican landowners were forced to pay lawyers with parcels of land rather than dollars, which most did not have. Over half a million square miles of Spanish and Mexican land grants were thus made available to Anglo-American settlers through laws like the Land Act. In New Mexico about 80 percent of all land grants eventually ended up in the hands of Anglo lawyers and settlers.⁶² One Texas historian, who acknowledged that some Mexican landowners were robbed of their land by “force, intimidation, or chicanery,” nevertheless claimed, without a trace of irony, that “what is usually ignored is the fact the [Mexican landowning] class was stripped of property perfectly legally, according to the highest traditions of U.S. law.”⁶³

After the loss of their land, and the economic status that accompanied ownership, resident Mexicans and Mexican immigrants became an indispensable component of the labor force in the burgeoning economy of the Southwest. They were recruited as unskilled laborers to work in the mines of Arizona and New Mexico, on large agribusiness farms in California and Texas, and on the railroads throughout the Southwest. Meanwhile, the Anglo-American race to the West continued unabated. To fill the vast expanse of the newly acquired land, developers and land speculators sent agents to Europe to recruit new immigrants, trumpeting cheap land and plentiful work. One historian argues that the “intimate tie between exterminating the Indians and dispossessing Mexicans, on the one hand, and bringing in Europeans on the other” represented a systematic attempt to transform

the West into a region of European-American farmers, a process he calls “racial replacement.”⁶⁴

Of the territory acquired from Mexico, California became a state in record time, mainly because the discovery of gold in 1849 attracted tens of thousands of Anglo-American settlers and prospectors, outnumbering their primary competitors from Mexico, China, and Chile.⁶⁵ Despite the arrival of about twenty thousand Mexicans from the silver-mining regions of Sonora and Zacatecas, many with mining experience, the demographic balance tipped in favor of Anglo Americans, and California became a state in 1850, only two years after U.S.-Mexican War.⁶⁶ In one of the saddest historical ironies in the history of North America, Mexico—whose Spanish founding fathers had devoted themselves to discovering cities of gold since Cortez first arrived in 1519—lost California to the United States in 1848, exactly one year before the conquering Yankees struck it rich.

Many Mexicans in the newly acquired U.S. territories rebelled against Anglo rule and legal machinations to deprive them of their land, but the vast majority of them simply withdrew from contact with Anglos as best they could. In New Mexico, Hispano insurgents staged a short-lived rebellion in 1847 and killed the newly appointed territorial governor. In California, Angelenos initially resisted invading U.S. troops, but were no match for the U.S. Army. Over the next half century or more, some Mexican “bandits” sought to defend the rights of Mexicans and exact what revenge they could for violations of their citizenship rights, including the outright murder of Mexicans by law enforcement officials like the notorious Texas Rangers. In Texas Juan Cortina, and in California the legendary Joaquín Murieta and Tiburcio Vasquez, became the subject of numerous *corridos*, or ballads, for their exploits and acts of revenge against Anglos, while Anglos offered large rewards for their capture, dead or alive.⁶⁷

Gregorio Cortez, who shot a Texas sheriff in self-defense in 1901, is perhaps one of the most celebrated Mexican “outlaws” of the Southwest as a result of a book-length study, *With His Pistol in His Hand*, by folklorist Américo Paredes. The Karnes County sheriff drew his pistol and shot Cortez’s brother, Romaldo, over a mistranslation involving a stolen horse. In the confusion that followed, Cortez escaped. It took ten days and hundreds of men, including the Texas Rangers, before Cortez was caught trying to escape into Mexico. Cortez served more than a decade of a life sentence before being pardoned. Fifty years later, shortly after publishing the book in 1958, Paredes received a death threat from a retired Texas Ranger for having the temerity to suggest that the real outlaws were the police, especially the Texas Rangers.⁶⁸

From the moments of first contact, even before the U.S.-Mexican War, Anglos regarded Mexicans as the bad guys—racially inferior, lazy, and criminal. But the era of Hispanophobia in the Southwest began gradually to wane as Anglo Americans consolidated their control over the area, and came to rely on Mexican labor for everything from clearing brush to building and maintaining railroads. In fact, Hispanophobia was giving way gradually to Hispanophilia, which included the Spanish colonizers but not Mexicans. Anglo writers began to celebrate the “Spanish heritage” of the Southwest, even though the English and their New World offspring had thought of the Spanish as inferior Europeans. For Anglo-Saxon Americans, the legacy of Spanish colonial rule was one of cruelty, barbarism, and superstition (i.e., Catholicism) and over time came to be called the *la leyenda negra* (the Black Legend). Ironically, the person most responsible for the evolution of this legend was a Spanish friar, Bartolomé de Las Casas, who published in 1552 the equivalent of an international bestseller, *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* (*Brief History of the Destruction of the Indies*), that revealed in agonizing detail the torture techniques of Spanish friars and soldiers in commanding the loyalty, both spiritual and political, of the Indians. But by the 1880s, writers like Helen Hunt Jackson, Bret Harte, and later Charles Fletcher Lummis waxed nostalgic over the carefree pastoral society of “Spanish America” with its haciendas, caballeros, dueñas, and demure señoritas.⁶⁹ Swashbuckling conquistadors, self-sacrificing friars, and rugged Spanish settlers were Europeans, they seemed to recall—white people like Anglo-Saxon Americans, only Catholic and Spanish-speaking. In a letter to Santa Fe’s leading citizens in 1883, Walt Whitman expressed his appreciation of the “splendor and sterling value” of Hispanic culture, which dressed up the “seething materialistic” ethos of the United States.⁷⁰

What exactly was it about colonial Spain in the Southwest that Anglo Americans and elite Californios and Nuevomexicanos gradually came to find so attractive—and so different from the Spaniards of Black Legend fame? David J. Weber, the preeminent historian of Spanish North America, reminds us that “Anglo Americans inherited the view that Spaniards were unusually cruel, avaricious, treacherous, fanatical, superstitious, cowardly, corrupt, decadent, indolent, and authoritarian.”⁷¹ But as the nineteenth century drew to a close, Spaniards and their callous conquest faded into distant historical memory, even to the Mexicans who defeated them in their war for independence in 1821. The Spanish “Fantasy Heritage,” writer and lawyer Carey McWilliams tells us, goes something like this:

Long, long ago the borderlands were settled by Spanish grandees and caballeros, a gentle people, accustomed to the luxurious softness of fine clothes, to well-trained servants, to all the amenities of civilized European living. Inured to suffering, kindly mission *padres* overcame the hostility of Indians by their saintly example and the force of a spiritual ideal, much in the manner of a gentle spring rain driving the harsh winds of winter from the skies. . . . There was none of the rough struggle for existence that beset the Puritans of New England. The climate was so mild, the soil so fertile, that Indians merely cast seeds on the ground, letting them fall where chance deposited them, and relaxed in the shade of the nearest tree while a provident and kindly nature took over. Occasionally one of the field hands would interrupt his siesta long enough to open one eye and lazily watch the corn stalks shooting up in the golden light.⁷²

The celebration of Spanish culture in the Southwest represented a serious injustice to the Indians and Mexicans through whom—“and only through whom,” McWilliams declares, “Spanish cultural influences survived in the region,” reinforced by constant immigration.⁷³

The Anglo-American rediscovery of Spanish America not only did not include Mexicans of Greater Mexico/the Southwest, it was never meant to. What did Mexicans have to do with the greatness of Spain and the exploits of its conquistadors, explorers, and missionaries—or the art, architecture, language, and culture that the Spanish and their descendants implanted in the New World from San Francisco to the southernmost tip of South America? The invention of Spanish America owed as much to Anglo-American desire for the exotic and picturesque—like Pueblo Indian culture—as it did to nostalgia for the pastoral community of “Spain-away-from-Spain” that the juggernaut of westward expansion helped extinguish. In his 1893 book, *Land of Poco Tiempo*, Charles Fletcher Lummis conjured an image of New Mexico that was both alluring and disquieting: “New Mexico . . . is a picture, a romance, a dream, all in one. . . . It is a land of quaint, swart faces, of Oriental dress and unspelled speech; a land where distance is lost, and the eye is a liar; a land of ineffable lights and sudden shadows; of polytheism and superstition, where the rattlesnake is demigod, and the cigarette a means of grace, and where Christians mangle and crucify themselves—the heart of Africa beating against the ribs of the Rockies.”⁷⁴ For Lummis, the bizarre religious practices of New Mexican *penitentes*, a confraternity of Hispano Catholic men who flogged themselves while reenacting the

scourging and crucifixion of Christ, evoked the primitiveness of Africa more than the high civilization of Spain. Despite the "mangled" culture the Spanish implanted in the New World, their pioneering of the Americas was, as Lummis exuberantly put it, the "largest and longest and most marvelous feat of manhood in all history."⁷⁵

Celebrating all things Spanish had its advantages for New Mexicans, whose deepest anxiety was that Anglo Americans viewed them less as racial equals than as mixed-race kin of the Indians. Light-skinned and English-speaking New Mexicans took advantage of the Spanish Fantasy Heritage to identify themselves as Hispanos, or Spanish Americans, who traced their lineage to Spain. In this way they could escape the stigma of being "Mexican"—poor, uneducated, and racially mixed. From this lumpen mestizo population thus emerged a class of Mexican elites who were accorded a certain measure of equality with Anglo Americans. Unlike in California and Texas, where the population of Anglo Americans far exceeded the native Mexican population, in New Mexico Anglo Americans represented a distinct minority. New Mexico's population included approximately 60,000 native Mexicans and 15,000 Pueblo Indians, compared to only about 1,000 Anglo American settlers, who maintained power and control in the territorial government after 1848 by co-opting the Mexican elites as an intermediate white group between Anglo Americans above them and Indians and African Americans below.⁷⁶

By the early twentieth century the transformation of many light-skinned Mexicans into Spanish Americans was largely complete. "These Spanish people of New Mexico," wrote a columnist for *Harper's Weekly* in 1914, "are not of the mixed breed one finds south of the Río Grande. . . . Indeed, it is probable that there is no purer Spanish stock in Old Spain itself."⁷⁷ That belief that the settlers of New Mexico were of "pure Spanish stock" attests to the power of the racial fantasy reimagined by Hispanos and Anglo Hispanophiles.⁷⁸

The city of Los Angeles was founded in 1781 by the Spanish governor Felipe de Neve under the official name "El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles de Porciúncula" (the Village of Our Lady, the Queen of the Angels of Porciúncula). Fueled by the mythology of its Spanish origin, parades and holidays celebrating the Spanish colonial heritage took place in many borderland cities, despite the fact that of the original settlers of Our Lady Queen of the Angels, only two were Spaniards. The rest were mixed-race *gente de color*, people of color. One was mestizo, two were afro-mestizos, eight were mulattos, and nine were Indians.⁷⁹ Although the vast majority of those who first settled the northern borderlands, including

California, were Indians and mestizos, the streets in Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, and other cities are named for prominent Californios with names like Sepúlveda, Pico, and Figueroa. As late as the 1940s, McWilliams notes, "Spanish" Californios occupied a social position in most communities that "might best be compared with that of the widow of a Confederate general in a small southern town."⁸⁰

Through the celebration of Spanish Americans, the Southwest elevated European culture over indigenous "Mexicanness," thereby providing a powerful incentive for Mexicans to pass as "Spanish" and lay claim to a European lineage. "Old Spanish Days" festivals proliferated throughout the Southwest to celebrate Spain's heritage in America while ignoring the historical role played by Mexicans and Mexico in the formation of Southwestern culture. City officials throughout the West built monuments to Spanish America for tourists to marvel at and re-created Spanish plazas, like Balboa Park in San Diego, while Mexicans and Indians as well as Africans and Asians, whose labor helped to build the West, were marginalized as racial primitives, inassimilable foreigners, and "wetbacks."⁸¹

Maintaining the Fantasy Heritage of the Southwest served two important purposes: to Europeanize cities like Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Santa Fe to make them more attractive for tourists and investors; and to provide an opportunity for some Mexicans to become "Spanish." The Californios themselves provided the essential insight into the difference between being Mexican and Spanish: "one who achieves success in the borderlands is 'Spanish'; one who doesn't is 'Mexican.'"⁸² Mexicans were "Mexicans" because they were too poor and too dark to become Spanish. Neither term identified one's nationality, but rather one's race and class position in the multiracial, mixed-race borderlands where Negroes, Japanese, Chinese, Indians, Filipinos, "Hindoos," and Mexicans found their social and economic niches in the Southwest—or were forced into them. Whites too fell along a racial continuum: at or near the top were the descendants of Protestant northern Europeans, and just below them the Irish and European Catholics; at the bottom, Indians, and not far above them, in ascending order, were the Chinese and Japanese, blacks, and Mexicans. Of these latter groups, only Mexicans had the remotest possibility of shedding the stigma of "color" by becoming "Spanish," which made them acceptable in small numbers to the Anglo ruling elites.⁸³

Anglo Americans thus reproduced the Spanish colonial practice of allowing certain light-skinned mestizos to become español, or white, and erased the mixed-race reality of Indian and mestizo Mexicans. Over the centuries, diverse peoples, voluntarily or not, had shaped a Mexican nation

whose borderlands extended deep into North America, but in 1848 the Mexican far north became the U.S. Southwest as a result of conquest. Despite the imposition of a border designed to separate them, in effect the two nations overlapped geographically and demographically, and subsequent relations between the two would continue to be problematic, and sometimes precarious, as Mexicans continued to move north across the border along well-trod corridors of migration. Mexicans and Mexican immigrants came to form a large reservoir of cheap labor for the development of agriculture and industries throughout the Southwest. Anglo efforts to curb massive Mexican immigration in the 1920s emerged as many Anglo Americans questioned whether dark-skinned Indian and mestizo Mexicans could ever become “true” Americans.

2

NO ESTÁS EN TU CASA

After 1848 Mexicans in the present-day states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas became strangers in their own land, foreigners who seemed not much different from the Indians of the Southwest. It was a bitter pill for Mexicans to contemplate maps of the northern half of their country lopped off by the United States in a war of aggression and the creation of a continent-wide border dividing Anglo North America from Mexican North America, the latter greatly reduced in size. What used to be the Mexican North had become the American Southwest, and successive generations of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans learned rather quickly that in the “Spanish” Southwest brown skin wasn’t much better than being black or red. Citizenship bestowed about as many rights and privileges on Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans as it had on black Americans in the South after the Civil War. These groups—as well as Jews, Slavs, Italians, Irish, Poles and other not-quite-white immigrant groups—faced many decades of struggle to transform America into the kaleidoscopically ethnic nation it is today, to feel that they too were “at home” in their own country.

In the opening decades of the twentieth century, the surging economy of the Southwest created a massive demand for Mexican labor at a time when controls and regulations for entry at the border were lax or nonexistent, a time when many Anglo Americans warned that Mexican immigrants could just as easily destroy America as build it up. Nevertheless, Mexicans continued to migrate to the north as “immigrants,” following the same paths their forebears took as migrant laborers, crossing and recrossing the border to work in mines, railroads, and agribusiness farms. While most returned to their homes in Mexico, many others stayed in El Otro Lado (the Other Side), joining many thousands of Mexican Americans and Mexican resident nationals in the border states.

"Mestizophilia to Biotypology: Racialization and Science in Mexico, 1920–1960," *ibid.*, 196–210.

29. The phrase is from Richard Rodríguez, *Brown: The Last Discovery of America* (New York: Viking, 2002), 112.

30. See, for example, Shannon K. O'Neil, *Two Nations Indivisible: Mexico, the United States, and the Road Ahead* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); and Peter H. Smith and Andrew Selee, eds., *Mexico and the United States: The Politics of Partnership* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2013).

1. The Genesis of Mexican America

1. See Tony Horwitz, "Immigration—and the Curse of the Black Legend," *New York Times*, July 9, 2006; and *idem*, *A Voyage Long and Strange: Rediscovering the New World* (New York: Henry Holt, 2008).

2. Alfred W. Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972), 165–207; D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America*, vol. 1, *Atlantic America, 1492–1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986); and John R. Chávez, *Beyond Nations: Evolving Homelands in the North Atlantic World, 1400–2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

3. Meinig, *Shaping of America*, 11.

4. *The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 326. The standard work on the Spanish exploration and settlement in the New World is David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

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11. Díaz del Castillo, *True History of the Conquest*, 130.

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13. Díaz del Castillo, *True History of the Conquest*, 133–137.

14. Crosby, *Columbian Exchange*, 35–63; Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 11, 28; and Suzanne Austin Alchon, *A Pest in the Land: New World Epidemics in a Global Perspective* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003); Nigel Worden, *Slavery in Dutch South Africa: Captive Labor on the Dutch Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 6–40.

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16. George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, eds. and trans., *Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, 1540–1542* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940). For a complete account of Spanish explorers, see Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 30–59.

17. Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 49.

18. *Ibid.*

19. P. J. Bakewell, *Silver Mining and Society in Colonial Mexico: Zacatecas, 1546–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971). On the creation of the viceroyalty and administration of the Spanish colonies, see Mark A. Burkhofer and Lyman L. Johnson, eds., *Colonial Latin America*, 8th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 91–104.

20. The formal municipality, Villa Real de Santa Fe, was founded a few years later, in 1610, by Oñate's successor, Pedro de Peralta, governor of New Mexico. Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 90. See also George P. Hammond and Agapito

Rey, eds. and trans., *Don Juan de Oñate: Colonizer of New Mexico, 1595–1628*, 2 vols. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1953); Herbert E. Bolton, ed., *Spanish Exploration in the Southwest: 1542–1706* (1908; reprint, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969), 199–200; Chávez, *Lost Land*, 16–19. On the settlement of El Paso, see Oakah L. Jones, Jr., *Los Paisanos: Spanish Settlers on the Northern Frontier of New Spain* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 111–12.

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22. Ramón Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 95–140; Andrew L. Knaut, *The Pueblo Revolt of 1680: Conquest and Resistance in the Seventeenth-Century New Mexico* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 133–139.

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26. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *La población negra de México: estudio etnohistórico* (México: Fondo de Cultural Económico, 1972); Colin A. Palmer, *Slaves of the White God: Blacks in Mexico, 1570–1650* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); Theodore G. Vincent, *The Legacy of Vicente Guerrero: Mexico's First Black Indian President* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001).

27. “Why Mexico Is Backwards,” *Atlantic*, July 1938, p. 9, in exp. 432.2/253–258, caja 438, Lázaro Cárdenas Papers, AGN (hereafter cited as Cárdenas Papers). For one of the earlier treatises on “whitening” and the caste system in Mexico, see Alexander Von Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, vol. 1 (New York: I. Riley, 1811), 153–198. A table of mixed-race categories from mestizo to “coyote” can be found in John M. Nieto-Phillips, *The Language of Blood: The Making of Spanish-American Identity in New Mexico, 1880s–1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 27. See also Magnus Mörner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967).

28. Douglas R. Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660–1720* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

29. Von Humboldt, *Political Essay*, 185–186 (italics in the original). On the granting of edicts of legitimation and the purchase of white racial status in New Spain, see Ann Twinam, “Pedro de Ayarza: The Purchase of Whiteness,” in *The Human Tradition in Colonial Latin America*, 2nd ed., ed. Kenneth I. Andrien (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2013), 221–237.

30. Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black, and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 154–157.

31. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came*, 149.

32. Chávez, *Lost Land*, 21; David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821–1846: The American Southwest under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982).

33. Thomas E. Chávez, *Spain and the Independence of the United States: An Intrinsic Gift* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002).

34. Quoted in W. J. Eccles, “The French Alliance and the American Victory,” in *The World Turned Upside Down: The American Victory in the War of Independence*, ed. John Ferling (Westport, CT, Praeger, 1988), 162.

35. Quoted in Dan E. Clark, “Manifest Destiny and the Pacific,” *Pacific Historical Review* 1 (March 1932), 5.

36. Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 292; and Josefina Z. Vásquez and Lorenzo Meyer, *The United States and Mexico* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

37. Quoted in Charles C. Cumberland, *Mexico: The Struggle for Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 134.

38. Cumberland, *Mexico*, 155.

39. Historian Richard White estimates that around 40 percent of Anglo Americans in Texas were “illegal aliens” who had crossed the border in violation of Mexican immigration laws. See Richard White, “It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”: *A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 65.

40. John Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, vol. 10 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1850–1856), 144–145.

41. Quotation from Genesis 1:26, *American Standard Version Bible* (1901).

42. White, “It’s Your Misfortune”; Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987); and Weber, *Spanish Frontier*.

43. J. C. Clopper, quoted in Arnaldo De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821–1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 10.

44. Quotations from De León, *They Called Them Greasers*, 7–9. For the racial ideology of the Anglo Americans during this period, see Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); and David J. Weber, “‘Scarce More Than Apes’: Historical Roots of Anglo-American Stereotypes of Mexicans,” in *New Spain’s Far Northern Frontier: Essays on Spain in the American West*, ed. David J. Weber (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979).

45. Quoted in De León, *They Called Them Greasers*, 3 (italics in the original). See also Gregg Cantrell, *Stephen F. Austin: Empresario of Texas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

46. Stephen F. Austin to L. F. Linn, New York, May 4, 1835, quoted in David J. Weber, “Refighting the Alamo,” in Weber, *Myth and the History of the*

Hispanic Southwest: Essays by David J. Weber (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 139.

47. Quoted in De León, *They Called Them Greasers*, 2–3. Emphasis in the original.

48. *Ibid.*, 3–4.

49. On the history of slavery in Texas from the Spanish colonial period to the Civil War, see Randolph Campbell, *An Empire for Slavery: The Peculiar Institution in Texas, 1821–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

50. *New York Morning News*, December 27, 1945, quoted in Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 31–32. See also “Annexation,” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17 (July 1845): 5–10; and White, “It’s Your Misfortune,” 73–75.

51. The attribution of the phrase to O’Sullivan has been disputed, but for a clear statement of his expansionist views and America’s providential destiny to become a great nation, see his essay, “The Great Nation of Futurity,” *United States Democratic Review* 6 (November 1839): 426–430, www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/osulliva.htm. See also Julius W. Pratt, “The Origin of ‘Manifest Destiny,’” *American Historical Review* 32 (July 1927): 795–798.

52. Quoted in Clark, “Manifest Destiny,” 1.

53. *Ibid.*, 5.

54. William Seward, who negotiated the purchase of Alaska in 1867, observed the Russian settlements in the far Northwest on “the verge of the continent” and mused: “Go on and build up your outposts all along the coast, up even to the Arctic Ocean—they will yet become the outposts of my own country—monuments of the civilization of the United States in the northwest.” Clark, “Manifest Destiny,” 10.

55. See Timothy J. Henderson, *Mexico and Its War with the United States* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); John S. D. Eisenhower, *So Far From God: The U.S. War with Mexico, 1846–1848* (New York: Random House, 1989); Richard V. Francaviglia and Douglas W. Richmond, eds., *Dueling Eagles: Reinterpreting the U.S.-Mexican War, 1846–1848* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 2000).

56. Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, “War and Peace with the United States,” in *The Oxford History of Mexico*, ed. Michael C. Meyer and William H. Beezley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 361–363.

57. Quoted in Zoraida Vázquez, “War and Peace,” 368–369.

58. Michael C. Meyer and William H. Beezley, eds., *The Oxford History of Mexico* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

59. See Eisenhower, *So Far from God*.

60. See Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846–1890* (Berkeley: University of California

Press, 1971); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836–1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); Chávez, *Lost Land*.

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62. Howard Roberts Lamar, *The Far Southwest, 1846–1912: A Territorial History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), 149; María E. Montoya, *Translating Property: The Maxwell Land Grant and the Conflict over Land in the American West, 1840 to 1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and Victor Westphall, *Mercedes Reales: Hispanic Land Grants of the Upper Río Grande Region* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983).

63. T. R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 510.

64. Paul R. Spickard, *Almost All Aliens: Immigration, Race, and Colonialism in American History and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 156–157.

65. Fernando Purcell, “Hanging Bodies, Slashed Ears and Bottled Heads: Lynching, Punishment and Race in the California Gold Rush, 1848–1853,” *Hagar: Studies in Culture, Polity, Identities* 6 (Fall 2006): 85–97.

66. Pitt, *Decline of the Californios*.

67. Bruce S. Thornton, *Searching for Joaquín: Myth, Murieta and History in California* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003); Charles William Goldsmith and J. T. Canales, *Juan N. Cortina: Two Interpretations* (New York: Arno Press, 1974); Pitt, *Decline of the Californios*, 215–216; Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (1949; reprint, New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 130.

68. Américo Paredes, *With His Pistol in His Hand* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958).

69. See, for example, Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1912); and Charles Fletcher Lummis, *Land of Poco Tiempo* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1893).

70. Quoted in Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 341. See also, Pitt, *Decline of the Californios*, 286–290. On the origins of the black legend, see Philip Wayne Powell, *The Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudices Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World* (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

71. Weber, *Spanish Frontier*, 336.

72. McWilliams, *North from Mexico*, 35.

73. *Ibid.*, 34. McWilliams was not just a prolific author and editor of progressive magazines. His books on Mexican Americans represent the first serious attempt to integrate the history of Mexicans into the broader history of the United States.

74. Lummis, *Land of Poco Tiempo*, 4–5.

75. Charles F. Lummis, *The Spanish Pioneers*, 8th ed. (Chicago: A. C. Motley, 1920), 18, quoted in John Nieto-Phillips, "When Tourists Came, the Mestizos Went Away: Hispanophilia and the Racial Whitening of New Mexico, 1880s–1940s," in *Interpreting Spanish Colonialism: Empires, Nations, and Legends*, ed. Christopher Schmidt-Nowara and John Nieto-Phillips (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 199. See also Charles Montgomery, *The Spanish Redemption: Heritage, Power, and Loss on New Mexico's Upper Rio Grande* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 20–88.

76. Laura E. Gómez, "Off-White in an Age of White Supremacy: Mexican Elites and the Rights of Indians and Blacks in Nineteenth-Century New Mexico," *Chicano-Latino Law Review* 25 (Spring 2005), 18, 21; idem, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), especially ch. 3.

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2. No Estás en Tu Casa

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151–188; Grace Peña Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 63–72.

3. For histories of labor conflicts that developed in the Sonora-Arizona border region, see Esteban B. Calderón, *Juicio sobre la guerra del Yaqui y génesis de la huelga de Cananea* (México: Centro de Estudios Históricos del Movimiento Obrero Mexicano, 1975); and Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

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