Crucible of Struggle

A History of Mexican Americans from Colonial Times to the Present Era

ZARAGOSA VARGAS
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
CHAPTER 6

Mexican Immigration, Work, Urbanization, and Americanization
1910–1929

The first three decades of the twentieth century witnessed the rapid growth of the Mexican population in the United States. Between 1910 and 1920, an estimated two hundred nineteen thousand Mexican immigrants entered the country, doubling the Spanish-speaking population in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas and quadrupling it in California. World War I shut off immigration from Europe and, along with the mobilization of the armed forces in 1917, exacerbated labor shortages. Tens of thousands of Mexicans were allowed into the United States as a war emergency measure. The demand for labor due to the economic boom in the Southwest facilitated the entrance of additional Mexicans into the United States. Immigration from Mexico also gained momentum because of unfolding events in Mexico, namely the spread of violence and the disruption of Mexico's economy by revolution. The United States offered the newcomers—overwhelmingly young, single, and of working age—not only freedom from revolutionary upheaval but work at wages almost six times higher than in their homeland.1

By the summer of 1920 the economic boom in the United States ended, triggering the highest rates of joblessness in America's history. Thousands of Mexicans who lost their jobs left for Mexico; others were repatriated. Following the 1920–1921 depression, Mexican immigration to the United States quadrupled, increasing to 486,408 in the peak decade of the 1920s.2

Mexicans had little difficulty crossing into the United States because border restrictions were minimal. Moreover, the United States government had not yet distinguished the beginnings of a major immigration influx from Mexico. It was an unusual range of movement involving temporary workers contracted by employers, undocumented border crossers, legal immigrants with visas, and commuters. That is, the Mexicans were both sojourners and settlers; some made multiple trips back and forth across the border, whereas others established themselves and sent for family members whom they had left behind until they could afford to bring them north. Most who settled in America did not intend to sever their connections with their homeland. The majority of Anglos who came into contact with Mexicans perceived them in racial terms, regardless of their backgrounds.
Mexicans became another group of workers exploited by employers. They were not only paid less than any other workers with the exception of blacks but also their wages never increased, irrespective of work experience. During these years when waves of strikes swept the United States, the workers responded to their exploitation, abuse, and discrepancy in wages by striking. There was much want and suffering among the coal miners and their families of southern Colorado. In 1914, no longer wanting to endure their exploitation and suffering, the coal miners struck the coalfields of southern Colorado. Mexican American miners were involved in this prolonged and violent dispute that climaxed as the Ludlow Massacre. Insisting that the capitalist system was at fault for their oppression, labor radicals rallied Mexicans against their employers. Some Mexicans such as Primo Tapia brought their radical ideologies to “Yankeeland” (the United States) and played important roles in strikes led notably by the Industrial Workers of the World. There were scenes of violence as employers put down the worker actions that they denounced.

One of the worst atrocities in American history occurred in 1915 in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Here, the Anglo influx was changing the social and economic balance of the region. The rapid collapse of Tejano ranch society under an expanding commercial agriculture that had a disastrous impact on Tejanos was accompanied by great racial violence against them. Tejanos resorted to the same form of violence by declaring war on the Anglo invaders with the Plan of San Diego. The Texas Rangers were called out to quell the mounting retaliatory violence, turning the revolt into a war of atrocities against the Tejanos.

Immigration from Mexico continued at a relatively high level. Migration chains drew on the mechanisms of family and kinship networks and linked the United States and Mexico. Information about work and where to live traveled back and forth between Mexico and the United States among relatives and friends. These contacts eventually replaced recruitment so that the movement of Mexicans became self-perpetuating. Family and ethnic ties were connected to the workplace because new arrivals secured their first jobs through these liaisons. Women played an important role in reconstituting families in America and in seeking opportunities for family betterment. Many women, before marriage and afterward, worked out of necessity. The sporadic and seasonal employment of male breadwinners required even children to contribute to the family economy. The immigrants lessened language barriers, their unfamiliarity with American customs, and discrimination by forming internal support networks among kin and neighbors. The strength of the Mexican communities was built not just on extended family and kinship support but also on voluntary organizations. Soon after arriving, the immigrants helped organize a variety of mutual benefit societies committed to social and cultural advancement that contributed to a rich array of community institutions. Mexican organizations urged their members to take pride in their heritage and culture. Mexican American organizations in Texas agitated for integration and equality in response to the different standard of justice for Mexicans. Following a policy of racial acquiescence, the League of United Latin American Citizens was concerned first and foremost with respectability, though it worked to improve inferior and inadequate schooling for Mexican American children.
CHAPTER 6 - Mexican Immigration, Work, Urbanization, and Americanization

MEXICAN LABOR STRIFE AND STRUGGLE

In the first decades of the twentieth century, Mexicans did many of the low-wage jobs performed in the Southwest as single men or as gangs of families. They lived in rural areas and in isolated labor camps, with minimal contact with the larger Anglo community. Struggling for security for themselves and their families, Mexicans participated in organizing efforts for higher wages and better living conditions. They faced immediate responses from employers who, on the local and national levels, moved to put down labor unrest and eradicate unions.

Mexicans were paid extremely low wages compared with white workers even in the same jobs, because since the nineteenth century much of the Southwest region had been under the so-called Mexican scale. Employers regularly used Mexican labor to hold down wages and also to break strikes and weaken unions. Along with being hostile to radical influences, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) restricted membership to skilled white workers. AFL union affiliates such as the railroad brotherhoods refused to accept Mexican skilled workers or else confined them to separate, albeit powerless, union locals. Defining class in racial terms, Anglo workers rarely felt solidarity with Mexican workers. As a result, Mexicans predisposed to unionism often pursued their goal of equality alone. Their demands were better pay and an end to job discrimination. They later added the demand of restricting the number of workers emigrating from Mexico so as not to undermine their union efforts.

The Magónista movement gave a political dimension to collective action on the part of Mexican workers to better their conditions and to protect themselves against oppression. The Socialist Party likewise imbued Mexicans with a conviction that their interests could be defended and advanced by a struggle against the "class enemy." The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) was the most militant labor organization that made a concerted effort to recruit Mexicans into its ranks on both sides of the border.

With industrial unionism as its foundation, the IWW introduced untold numbers of Mexicans such as Jesús González-Monroy of Los Angeles to the influence of its radical ideas regarding the unfair distribution of wealth and income. By 1908 the IWW was endeavoring to organize Mexicans into "One Big Union" with the objective of maintaining their wages. In 1910, the Wobblies came to the support of Mexican railroad and construction migratory workers in Fresno, California, and of the Mexican workers in Los Angeles who struck the Los Angeles Gas Works for higher wages. The IWW's anarcho-syndicalist orientation of direct action—"meeting force with force"—aroused the furor and hatred of employers, however. In 1913, in the Wheatland Strike, the IWW bridged ethnic and racial differences by stressing cooperation to advance common interests. On the huge Durst Ranch outside Wheatland, California, the workers were striking against intolerable living conditions; they were camping out in tattered makeshift tents and shanties alongside highly polluted drainage ditches. The Wheatland Strike became the largest farmworker strike in California. The IWW sent organizers to Wheatland to lead the strikers, and in one of the confrontations several people were killed. The California National Guard was called in and the strike ended. The so-called Hop-Fields Riot attracted national attention to the awful living and
working conditions of the workers on the Durst Ranch, leading to the creation of the California Commission on Immigration and Housing. The Commission made recommendations for regulation of the state's farm labor camps, but few improvements actually came about. Having carried out more than 150 strikes on the West Coast and in the Rocky Mountain and plains states, the IWW gained fame from their free-speech fights, for the Wobblies were outspoken in opposing America's involvement in World War I. This and the subsequent “red scare” contributed to the IWW's eventual demise.7

Mining dominated the economies of New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado. Reflecting the location of mineral deposits, most of the region's Mexican miners lived in rural isolation and endured harsh living and working conditions.8 Beginning in the 1870s, coal extraction took on importance in bringing industrialization to the Rocky Mountain region. The production techniques and other changes in coal production affected both working conditions and wages for the miners. Paid by the amount of coal they loaded, the coal diggers also had to reinforce the shafts with timber, lay track, and perform other tasks inside the mines. This was dead work, all of it unpaid. The men lived with the constant threat of death because of poor ventilation, rock falls, gas and coal-dust explosions, and fires underground. On October 22, 1913, an explosion at a coal mine outside Dawson in northern New Mexico owned by the Phelps Dodge Corporation killed more than 230 workers. The cause of the deadly explosion in the worst mining disaster in the western coalfields was methane gas ignited by a miner's lamp.

Wage scales were too low to feed a family. The frequent wage cuts, coupled with bouts of unemployment lasting two to four months per year, brought the coal miners and their families to the verge of starvation. These wretched working and living conditions fueled discontent. Miners formed organizations, but mining companies refused to consider any demands.9

In Colorado's coal districts, miners were separated along lines of occupation, race, and ethnicity. In Las Animas and Huerfano counties in southern Colorado, Mexicans made up one of thirty-two different nationalities struggling in a hostile environment. The mining companies enforced their own regulations through county sheriffs and deputies and company guards. Racism ran high against the miners and their families, “drawn from the lower classes of immigrants,” and their “primitive ideas of living and ignorance of hygienic laws.” The ethnically diverse coal diggers were mixed together in work units to hinder communication, and immigrants were brought in to be used as scabs. A stream of Mexicans were brought up to the Colorado coalfields from El Paso for this purpose. This did not curb the determination of the miners—they belonged to socialist-organized lodges and their strong bonds inside the coal pits, combined with the solidarity of the mining camp women's committees and the presence of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) strengthened their resolve.10

Coal miners employed by the Rockefeller-owned Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CFI) once more set out to gain some control over their work lives. In September 1913, the miners walked out to gain recognition for the UMWA. Negotiations turned increasingly hostile; the CFI rejected meetings even after the union waived its key demands. The men and women of the tent colonies staged
parades, circulated petitions, and, anticipating a confrontation, dug slit trenches and dugouts to protect themselves from the armed clashes that had become routine with Colorado National Guard troop and company guards. The subsequent "Great Coalfield War" through the harsh, long winter of 1913-1914 pitted the UMWA against the CFI. The sides had been drawn, and what resulted was the infamous Ludlow Massacre.11

On April 20, 1914, National Guard troops and company guards waging a war against striking coal miners attacked them and their families at the tent colony they established near Trinidad, Colorado, following their eviction from CFI’s coalfields. The soldiers raked the camp with rifle and machine-gun fire, killing twenty miners, two women, and twelve children, among them Mexican Americans. Three strikers were seized and executed on the spot. The troops then entered the tent colony, burning tents, shooting more people, and destroying the miners’ property. The senseless carnage of the Ludlow Massacre infuriated the miners and incited a full-scale miners’ war as the UMWA, the Colorado Federation of Miners, and the WFM leadership called their members to arms. The miner’s ranks were reinforced by the arrival of fellow miners from as far away as Thurber, Texas. The United States Army was later summoned to the southern Colorado coalfields. Disorganization and infighting diffused the protracted labor dispute, and it was called off on December 10, 1914. The UMWA gained no concessions from the coal operators. With their morale depleted, the miners wearily returned to the coalfields, where they came under a procompany representation plan.12

At this time, Mexican copper workers made attempts to organize in Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and El Paso, Texas. The men were subjected to harsh and dangerous working conditions and were poorly paid because of the notorious and humiliating Mexican wage scale. Moving from mining camp to mining camp, the state of the miners and their families was wretched; with no local alternatives, and as a condition of their employment, they lived in company-owned housing with exorbitant rents, and the high prices charged at company stores made living conditions more intolerable. Misery, poverty, and degradation were manifest everywhere in the copper mining region. In September 1915, copper mine workers at Clifton and Morenci, Arizona, went on strike as they had in earlier years against the mine companies.

The sixteen-week-long copper strike involved doing away with the Mexican pay scale and job discrimination. The miners requested help from the WFM, formerly unfriendly to Mexicans and a leading advocate of the anti-Mexican “80 Percent Law.” The latter stated that 80 percent of all of Arizona’s mining companies’ employees must be U.S. citizens. The WFM agreed to help organize the miners against the copper companies.13 Unlike most of the strikes during this time, the Clifton-Morenci walkout was not marred by violence and property destruction because organizers kept the miners in check. Furthermore, Arizona governor G. W. P. Hunt prevented the importation of strikebreakers by deploying the National Guard to Clifton-Morenci. The strike ended when the miners accepted the company's commitment to pay the same wage rate to both Anglo and Mexican workers.

In 1917, the mostly Mexican copper miners of the IWW at Bisbee in the Clifton-Morenci mining region walked out after the mine owners refused their
Morenci-Clifton Strike, 1916.


demands for higher wages, bringing production to a standstill. Mine owners vowed they would not give in to the miners. When the miners ignored patriotic appeals to increase production and not walk out, President Woodrow Wilson called in federal troops to quell the strikes. The strikes were broken by the Citizen’s Protective League and the Workmen’s Loyalty League through an antilabor offensive of propaganda, vigilantism, and expulsions, the so-called “Bisbee Deportations.” The strikebreakers manipulated the psychology of wartime hysteria by branding strikers as saboteurs and traitors (“yellow bellies”); 1,876 IWW strikers were arrested, put on El Paso and Southwest Railroad cattle cars, dumped in the desert outside the town of Hermanos, New Mexico, and told not to return. The strike was lost. A few months later, the massive nationwide arrests and show trials of IWW members charged with obstructing the war effort unfolded and led to the Palmer raids. Its energies absorbed in defending itself, the IWW never regained its prewar strength.
CHAPTER 6 • Mexican Immigration, Work, Urbanization, and Americanization 183

The spread of anarcho-syndicalism among Mexican workers and the unsettling effects on the Southwest labor market pushed President Wilson to support initiatives by the AFL and the Pan American Federation of Labor to restrain immigration from Mexico. One positive result of this action was that the Arizona and the Texas State Federations of Labor opened their union affiliates to Mexican workers.15

Meanwhile, Tejanos in the lower Río Grande Valley vented their rage and hostility at Anglos through a general uprising known as the Plan de San Diego. Anglos, as well as property, fell victim to the violent mayhem that unfolded as a series of reprisals and counterreprisals in this region.

TEJANO FREEDOM FIGHTERS:
THE PLAN DE SAN DIEGO

Mexicans were accepted by Anglos on terms that Anglos defined, and nowhere else were race relations so tense between Mexicans and Anglos than in Texas. In the lower Río Grande Valley Anglos rapidly reordered power and property in the region. Land ownership was equated with power and combined with racial status, increasingly relegating Tejanos to a permanently displaced class. Land grabbing, in combination with the racial violence of the Texas Rangers, once more ignited the long-standing animosities, triggering a brutal rampage against the Mexican population.16

Tejanos greatly feared Anglos but did not talk about it because they would be subject to Anglo violence if they spoke out. One Tejano civic leader who bravely raised his voice against the discrimination and organized violence against Tejanos was Nicasio Idar. The Tejano newspaperman was dedicated to Tejano civil rights and racial uplift and unity.

Born in Point Isabel, Texas, in 1855, Nicasio Idar moved to Laredo in 1880, where he quickly emerged as an influential activist and advocate of Tejano rights. He and his wife Jovita raised eight children. Three of them, Jovita, Clemente, and Eduardo, later helped their father publish La Crónica (The Chronicle) in the late 1890s. La Crónica became the mouthpiece of La Gran Concilio de la Orden Caballeros de Honor (Knights of Honor) founded by Nicasio Idar in 1910. The Idar family championed progressive national and local issues and were devoted to achieving social justice for Tejanos.17

Through their newspaper, the Idar family sounded off against separate and inferior housing and schools, the abysmal conditions faced by Tejano workers that took on the visage of peonage, and the gross violations of Tejano civil rights. Physical abuse, floggings, mutilations, and lynchings remained popular means of Tejano subjugation. In 1910, the Idar family took up the cause of twenty-one-year-old cowboy Antonio Rodríguez, one more victim of mob-led Anglo-Texan justice meted out to “bad Mexicans.” Unjustly accused of murdering an Anglo woman near Rock Springs, the Anglo horde took Rodriguez a mile out of town, tied him to a mesquite tree, doused him in kerosene, and burned him alive. There were immediate protests by Mexicans, but it provoked additional Anglo attacks on those displaying an “impudent attitude” rather than the Mexicans’ proper
submissive attitude toward their Anglo patróns. In Webb, Duval, LaSalle, Dimmitt, and Stark counties, Anglos attacked Mexicans who showed any reactions to the brutal lynching of Rodríguez that the Anglos considered threatening.\textsuperscript{18}

Violence meted out to Mexicans in the lower Río Grande Valley increased as Anglos drove them off their land and confiscated their property. The Texas Rangers lent organizational effectiveness to the sporadic terrorism and violence. Between 1907 and 1912, Texas Rangers, along with local peace officers, acting as “trial judge, jury, and executioners” killed more than a dozen Mexicans. In response to this increasing violence against Tejanos, in September 1911, Nicasio Idar and his family, assisted by other Tejanos, organized the conference \textit{El Primer Congreso Mexicanista} (The First Mexican Congress) in Laredo. The Congress drafted a plan of action to protect the lives and land rights of Tejanos. Through \textit{La Crónica} Idar appealed to mutual aid societies, fraternal lodges, and other organizations to send representatives to the landmark conference in Laredo. Four hundred Tejanos of various political persuasions took up the call. The conference participants established \textit{La Gran Liga Mexicanista de Beneficencia y Protección} (The Mexican League of Beneficence and Protection) whose motto was “por la raza y para la raza” (by the race, for the race). The assembly denounced the extralegal lynchings of Tejanos and exhorted them not to sell their lands to Anglos despite the tremendous pressure placed on them.\textsuperscript{19}

Many Tejanas in attendance were labor radicals, anarchists, and free thinkers in orientation. Those who identified themselves as feminists spoke for the rights of women, an end to educational discrimination, and other progressive reforms. Others who took an anarchist perspective believed in both women's liberation and revolutionary struggle. In order to gain mutual support, the women created networks of women anarchists. In October, these Tejanas formed the women's auxiliary \textit{La Liga Feminil Mexicanista} (the Mexican Feminist League). Promoting equal education for women, La Liga responded to the widespread illiteracy among Mexicans in South Texas by opening their own schools. They also distributed food and collected clothing for poor Tejanos and raised funds for charities and other projects. Jovita Idar, Nicasio's daughter, served as the league's first president.\textsuperscript{20}

Born in Laredo in 1885, Jovita Idar attended Laredo's Methodist Holding Institute, earned a teaching certificate in 1903, and began teaching at a small school in Ojuelos, Texas. However, the poor conditions at the school forced Jovita to resign. She returned to Laredo and became a writer for \textit{La Crónica}, adopting the pen name Astraea, the Greek goddess of justice and indignation.\textsuperscript{21}

Tejanos supported the revolution in Mexico against Porfirio Díaz and gave money, weapons, and other assistance to the rebels. Jovita Idar, a member of the Laredo chapter of \textit{La Junta Feminil Pacifista} (Feminist Pacifist Group), joined \textit{La Cruz Blanca} (White Cross) and, as a nurse, traveled with revolutionary forces in northern Mexico giving comfort to sick and wounded soldiers. The young Tejana returned to Laredo and joined the staff of the newspaper \textit{El Progreso} (Progress). She wrote editorials lambasting President Woodrow Wilson's dispatch of American army troops to the border. The Texas Rangers tried to shut down \textit{El Progreso}'s offices, but a defiant Jovita Idar blocked the doorway and prevented the Rangers from entering. When the Rangers finally closed down \textit{El Progreso}, Jovita Idar
returned to La Crónica. She took charge of the paper in 1914 on the death of her
father, Nicasio. Jovita Idar later moved to San Antonio, where she established a free
nursery school and worked as an interpreter at a county hospital and as an editor.
She became active in the Democratic Party, working on behalf of the drive to gain
women the vote in Texas primary elections.22

In 1915, Jovita Idar witnessed the collision between Anglos and Tejanos in the
lower Rio Grande Valley break out in open war. Bound together by sentiments of
self-interest and by common perceptions of themselves as Tejanos, the brave
insurrectionists paid for their convictions with their lives in the ensuing reign of
terror, counterterror, assassination, robbery, and arson.23

THE KILLING FIELDS OF SOUTH TEXAS

Between July and November of 1915, a bloody episode of racial violence broke out
in the lower Rio Grande Valley. It was triggered by El Plan de San Diego, a manifesto
announcing a revolution by Tejanos in the town of San Diego in Duval County. Led
by Aniceto Pizana to overcome the "Yankee tyranny" of race, the Plan's insurgents
called for a "Liberating Army for Races and Peoples" to reclaim Texas, New Mexico,
Arizona, Colorado, and California, lost from Mexico in 1848, and create an inde-
pendent republic. All Anglo males over the age of sixteen were to be executed,
including prisoners.24 The subsequent massacre of Tejanos put a stop to these efforts.

Tejanos and an untold number of African American and Indian sympathizers,
in guerrilla bands of from twenty-five to one hundred men, began attacking
area Anglo-Texans. The rebels, in more than two dozen raids in the lower Río Grande Valley, ran off livestock, robbed stores, burned train trestles, destroyed irrigation pumping plants, and killed several dozen Anglos. The Plan de San Diego provoked the governor of Texas to take a war footing. He ordered in the U.S. Army, but it was the Texas Rangers who did the actual fighting.25

Sixty Tejano raiders flying a red flag with the inscription: “igualidad e independencia” (equality and independence) assaulted a symbol of Anglo power: the King Ranch. This triggered retaliation by Texas Rangers. Aided by local peace officers and vigilantes, the Rangers launched a counteroffensive and killed three hundred Tejanos. Executions became commonplace, and many Tejanos were shot in the back while allegedly trying to “escape.” The Plan de San Diego served as an excuse for wholesale murder, and the Tejano death toll rose precipitously. Raising the cry “We have to make this a white man’s country,” the Texas Rangers, some with reputations as Angels of Death because they had the power of life and death over many Tejanos, scorched the earth, massacring hundreds, perhaps as many as five thousand Tejano men, women, and children in reprisals against the insurrection. The Rangers took possession of Tejano land by forcing Tejanos to sign bills of sale “at the point of a gun.” The Mexicans were disarmed and moved into town so they could be better controlled. Many of the Tejanos whom the blood-crazed Rangers hunted down and shot were innocent victims. More than thirty-five thousand residents fled the lower Río Grande Valley to avoid the retaliations. About fifty thousand men, members of militias from ten states, were ordered to combat duty along the Río Grande River.26
CHAPTER 6 • Mexican Immigration, Work, Urbanization, and Americanization 187

Contemporary observers speculated that the Plan de San Diego was invented by Germany to distract the United States from the world war raging in Europe. Another speculation was that Mexico may have also devised the Plan to create a border crisis so that President Venustiano Carranza could offer support in exchange for recognition by the United States. Nevertheless, the Plan de San Diego would generate controversy for years to come.27

Clashes between Anglo-Texans and Tejanos continued. White lynch mobs routinely victimized Tejanos in reprisals for attacks by Mexican “bandits” on Anglos or their property. However, many of the instances of violence continued to be over land. In 1918, news came out of Presidio County in West Texas of the murder of fifteen unarmed Mexicans by Texas Rangers. It became known as the Porvenir Massacre, and Anglos would attempt to suppress inquiry into the atrocity.28

There were bad feelings between local Anglo sheep and cattle ranchers and the Mexican subsistence farmers of Porvenir. In November 1917, Texas Ranger Captain J. M. Fox reported an outbreak of cattle and horse rustling raids in northwest Presidio County, fifteen miles from the U.S.-Mexico border. Fox suspected it was the work of Mexican thieves. The Ranger captain focused on the Mexicans who lived in Porvenir, who had a “bad reputation.” On Christmas Day outlaws raided the huge Brite Ranch near the town of Porvenir, killing several men. Several days later, Captain Fox, at the head of Company B of the Texas Rangers, and local Anglo ranchers rode onto the ranch of Manuel Morales and brandished firearms. The Anglos seized fifteen Mexicans, who were then marched barefoot to a small rock bluff a half mile from Porvenir. The captives were ordered to kneel down and on Fox’s orders all of them were shot so many times they were nearly unrecognizable. The youngest victim was sixteen years old. The dead included two landowners in possession of deeds to their land.

Captain Fox waited almost two months to report what had taken place at Porvenir to the adjutant general of Texas. According to Fox, the Texas Rangers found property from the Brite Ranch on the dead Mexicans, implicating them in the raid. One of them told Fox before he was killed that he had “sent word” nine months earlier that a raid would be made on “Texas gringos” and would involve looting and burning. The testimony of other witnesses revealed another story: around 1:00 a.m. on January 24, 1918, forty Anglos surrounded Porvenir and rounded up the residents at gunpoint, while Rangers searched their houses. The Rangers took fifteen Mexican men into custody and then executed them in cold blood. The Brite Ranch had been raided for livestock by an Anglo rancher, who later told the Texas Rangers that “Mexican bandits” had raided the ranch, hoping that the subsequent killings would cover up his own crime.29

In 1919, Texas state representative José Tomas Canales, great-nephew of Juan Cortina, called hearings to investigate the Texas Rangers’ role in the Porvenir massacre and in other acts of crime committed against Tejanos. Federal authorities also launched an investigation.30 Despite threats to his life by Texas Rangers, Canales completed his inquiries, resulting in Texas Governor William P. Hobby disbanding Company B and dismissing five Rangers for gross misconduct. Fearing for their lives, Porvenir’s residents abandoned their homes and fled to Mexico. The community of Porvenir ceased to exist.31
By now the immigration of Mexicans to the United States had increased rapidly and generated its own momentum. Seeking opportunities better than they had in Mexico, the immigrants poured across the border to wherever jobs could be found.

**IMMIGRATION FROM MEXICO**
**DURING THE YEARS 1910–1920**

The Mexican Revolution, the subsequent labor shortages caused by World War I, and the cutoff of immigration from Europe brought another wave of large-scale immigration from Mexico to the United States. Chain migration and chain occupations directed the immigrants to specific places in the United States. Once Mexicans were settled and secured employment, family members and friends followed. The immigrants often married people from their villages and towns, as loyalty to the same region in Mexico was strong. Many Mexicans immigrated to the United States intent on accumulating money to send or take back to Mexico. Others came to seek change in their own lives and stayed. Three-fourths of the Mexican population was concentrated in the southwestern states of Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, with the remainder of the population scattered throughout the Midwest and the plains states.

Among the cities offering new employment opportunities, El Paso, Texas, represented the premier point of entry and destination for Mexican immigrants. The development of railroad transportation around 1888 had transformed El Paso into a bustling trading center and border metropolis that attracted agricultural supply, smelting, and other mining support services. Easily accessible via the Mexican rail connection that stretched southward into Mexico, El Paso made possible a plentiful flow of immigrants into the United States. The Mexican immigrants used the border city as a base from which they undertook seasonal work. Labor contracting in El Paso became an important service industry as the economic development of the Southwest stimulated the constant demand for labor.

After San Antonio and Los Angeles, El Paso had the nation's third largest Mexican population, and most were immigrants. They were segregated and restricted to unskilled jobs as day laborers and became the targets of anti-alien sentiment prevalent in working-class circles. Mexicans were concentrated in El Paso's Eastside and Southside, where the overcrowding was a serious problem, made worse by the lack of municipal services, poor sanitation, severe poverty, and high mortality rates from disease. Because of economic hardship, Mexican women worked in commercial laundries, though private household work became the mainstay of their employment. A host of mutual-aid societies and fraternal organizations sprang into existence, providing insurance benefits and vitalizing community life, while Spanish-language newspapers, stores, and clubs expanded and bonded the unity of interests of the Mexican enclaves.

Mexicans made up almost half the population of San Antonio. The city's Spanish-speaking residents had arrived in the United States between 1911 and 1930. The men were employed on a seasonal basis in manufacturing, trade, and transportation as unskilled labor. Nearly three-fourths of the city's Mexican
service in the war. In southern Colorado the Mexican American volunteer rates exceeded that of Anglos. Many Mexican Americans were cited for their valor and bravery on the battlefields of Europe.86

A member of Company B of the 355th Infantry Regiment, Private Marcelino Serna of Albuquerque, New Mexico, single-handedly charged and captured twenty-four Germans on September 12, 1918. For this and other acts of bravery and courage under fire, Serna was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the French Croix de Guerre, the Victory Medal with three bars, and two Purple Hearts. David B. Cantú of Laredo enlisted in the U.S. Army using his Anglo father's name Barkley to avoid being segregated into a noncombat unit. Barkley-Cantú served
with Company A, 356th Infantry, 89th Division, in France. In November 1918, his unit was engaged in pushing the Germans out of the Argonne Forest and across the Meuse River. The Tejano drowned crossing the river after going behind German lines to gather information about troop strength and deployments. For his actions, Barkley-Cantú was awarded the Medal of Honor, the French Croix de Guerre, and the Italian Croce al Merito di Guerra. Fellow native Texan José de la Luz Sáenz served with the 360th Regiment Infantry of the 90th Division in France and Germany. Sáenz kept a diary, which was published in 1933. In recounting his wartime service, Sáenz linked the American World War I "rhetoric of democracy" with the Mexican American struggle for civil rights. On his return from the war, Sáenz translated his sacrifices and those of the many other American soldiers of Mexican descent fighting for democracy into a movement for civil rights in Texas.49

The labor strife of 1919, the Red Scare after the war, and the brief economic recession of 1920–1921 contributed to the revival of immigration restriction in the United States. As the economic depression set in, Mexicans experienced more unemployment, because they were discharged in favor of U.S. citizens. As an unemployed Mexican worker noted: "The good work lasted about a year and a half. Then came 'la crisis' and I was laid off. So were many, many Mexicans ... but they kept the Americans. It made some of us mad but what could we do? Nothing."48 Tens of thousands of Mexicans found themselves on their way home to their own country because of government expulsions.

Countless Mexicans had crossed into the United States surreptitiously without paying the visa fee. As a result, the U.S. Immigration Bureau began apprehending and deporting Mexicans suspected of breaking their 1917 labor contracts or those who could not prove legal entry prior to 1921. The nationwide dragnet began in New York City and Chicago. The male detainees were first sent to New Orleans and then to the Mexican border for deportation. Federal agents continued apprehending Mexicans along the border, swinging up to San Francisco and then back again to the border. Overall, more than one hundred fifty thousand Mexicans were repatriated to Mexico.41

The expulsions caused an atmosphere of fear among Mexicans but won favor from nativists and labor unions. The latter hated Mexicans because they were used as strikebreakers and brought down wages for all American workers. Moreover, the 1920–1921 national economic crisis wiped out the limited advances Mexicans had made up to 1920, hindering as well overall opportunities for assimilation and citizenship by this immigrant group.40 The campaign of repatriation did not entirely set back the flow of Mexicans to the United States as jobs once more beckoned them north. In fact, Mexican immigration to America reached major proportions at this time.

MEXICAN IMMIGRATION FROM 1920 TO 1929

About half a million Mexicans entered the United States in the 1920s, representing 11 percent of total immigration. Mexicans became more distributed throughout the country, though most remained concentrated in the Southwest. Most areas of
this rapidly developing region had become heavily dependent on Mexicans for low-wage and often dirty and dangerous jobs in agriculture, railroad, construction, mines, and factory work. Despite the strengthening of border controls in 1924, unauthorized immigration reached large dimensions through the work of "coyotes," or professional alien smugglers. American employers willingly hired the aliens, knowing they were illegal, because they coveted the cheap labor.43

Reflecting the growing dependence on Mexican labor by employers, Mexicans made up three-fourths of the workforce of the six major western railroads; three-fourths of construction workers and 80 percent of migrant farm workers in Texas; three-fourths of the agricultural workforce in California, and nearly two-thirds of the workers in this state's construction, food processing, textiles, automobile and steel production, and utilities industries. In the industrial heartland of the Midwest, railroads and steel, meatpacking, and auto manufacturing firms with their standardized working conditions and wages came to rely increasingly on Mexican labor along with that of blacks.44 Most Mexicans struggled to survive on their wages; therefore, women and even children worked to make ends meet. Women operated boardinghouses or procured work as domestics, waitresses, cooks, hotel maids, nannies, and factory workers. In addition to their paid labor, which made a significant difference to their families' survival, women ran the households and raised children.

The railroad industry was a significant source of employment for Mexicans. As previously noted, Mexicans constructed many of the trunk lines of the southwestern railroads in the late nineteenth century. Once these were completed, and with incentives such as free transportation and housing, the railroads hired tens of thousands of Mexicans to build auxiliary lines and to maintain and repair the tracks.45

Gangs of Mexican workers under Spanish-speaking straw bosses unloaded rails; prepared roadbeds; laid switches, ties and tracks; and tramped, lined, and later replaced ties for the railroads.46 Mexicans were restricted to unskilled tasks; the railroad companies hired them as general laborers in shops, engine houses, and power plants. Construction and maintenance drew Mexicans to the street railway systems of southern California and Texas cities.47

As the pace of recruitment by the railroads accelerated, Mexican boxcar communities situated on almost all the railroad lines began to dot the American landscape from California to the Canadian border. With the pull of higher paying jobs and expectations for a better life, with such advantages as running water and electricity and school for their children, families made collective decisions to head for urban centers. The desire for economic betterment and a generally increased standard of living likewise motivated Mexican farm workers to search for work in the cities.48

Mexican migration continued flowing to San Antonio, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, and other large cities because of the availability of work and the newcomers' collective desire for material betterment. Those in Mexico contemplating immigration gained a wealth of information from family members or friends already in the United States. Chain migration linked specific towns and villages in Mexico with settlements in the United States. Males who came north without families continued to dominate the migration.
The migrants formed new colonies adjacent to agricultural, railroad, and mining camps, as newly arrived families tended to live near their places of employment and moved together whenever possible. Fellow Mexicans were next in importance in the support networks. The dramatic increase in Mexican immigration affected residential patterns. Thousands settled in older and established Spanish-speaking working-class communities, adding to the overcrowding and generating construction of cheap housing to meet the increased demand.

Immigrants from Mexico outnumbered Mexican Americans by two to one, and the result was a layering of generations in which identity took on many distinct forms. This was reflected in the workplace, schools, churches, neighborhoods, and community organizations. As Ruth D. Tuck noted of the Mexicans of San Bernardino, California, in her book *Not with the Fist*: "There is a street . . . on which three families live side by side. The head of one family is a naturalized citizen, who arrived eighteen years ago; the head of the second is an alien who came . . . in 1905; the head of the third is the descendant of people who came . . . in 1843. All of them, with their families, live in poor housing; earn approximately $150 a month as unskilled laborers; send their children to 'Mexican' schools; and encounter the same sort of discriminatory practices."49

**MEXICAN LOS ANGELES**

From the 1920s on, Los Angeles was a magnet for Mexican immigrants. The 134,300 Mexicans who peopled and energized Los Angeles in 1928 represented 10 percent of the city's total population and its largest single minority group. Mexican Los Angeles was an aggregate of numerous subcommunities, all of which helped define the city. Some of the city's Mexican colonies dated from the ranches of the Spanish and Mexican periods, whereas others grew out of the boxcar camps, company towns, and agricultural sites established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The neighborhood and housing patterns of the Mexican colonies were marked by social problems. Racial discrimination confined the Mexicans to the city's polyglot working-class zones, though most lived in the "Mexican" sections with the highest rents and the poorest and most unhealthful homes. Infant mortality rates here were three times higher than for Anglos, and the areas contributed a third of the city's tuberculosis cases. Regarded unfavorably by Anglos, the city's Mexicans likewise experienced discrimination in public services and recreational facilities, and children generally received a poor education.50

Mexicans settled in the Plaza area located downtown, where housing was affordable but overcrowded due to the constant arrival of great numbers of immigrants from Mexico. Many escaped the overcrowded downtown by moving to areas east of the Los Angeles River, settling around Stephenson Avenue, in the South Boyle Heights section, and in the Belvedere area. Rail service provided by Los Angeles Pacific Electric Railway enabled Mexican community formation in this section that became known as East Los Angeles. These working-class colonies were not singularly Mexican but ethnically mixed from the onset. The growing Mexican colonies fostered the expansion of merchants and other businesses such as grocery and dry goods stores, restaurants, barbershops, tailor shops, and other
small commercial enterprises. These thriving businesses, like the five restaurant-bakeries owned by Rudy and Guadalupe Moreno, were owned and operated by a small middle class oriented toward serving the surrounding Spanish-speaking population. Other Mexican-owned businesses reached out to a wider clientele. In 1930, the U.S. Census noted that the Mexican and Mexican American population of Los Angeles had surpassed San Antonio as the largest in the United States.51

For Los Angeles Mexicans, familial interdependence was the key to economic survival. Kinship networks formed an integral part of work life and contributed to a collective identity shaped by the respective work culture. Los Angeles County remained a major agricultural producing and processing center. Drawing on networks of family and kin, employers recruited Mexican women to work in clothing and needle trades, other light industries, and the commercial laundries. Many women operated boardinghouses, where they prepared meals for boarders and washed their clothing. Others worked as domestics.52

Paralleling the growth of Mexican Los Angeles, newcomers who were citrus workers settled in “citrus villages” in Orange County and in the Inland Empire of southern California. These outlying Mexican colonies, such as Arbol Verde, with their own cultural and institutional life, were plagued by discrimination. In addition to inadequate housing and schooling, Mexicans who settled in rural areas in many instances were expelled from local communities at the end of the harvest season.53

By the second half of the 1920s, California contained more than a third of all large-scale farms in the western states. With the proximity of the border ensuring a steady infusion of workers, Mexicans became the foundation of the industrialized labor relations in California crop production. Of the two hundred thousand farm laborers in California, three-fourths were Mexican. In addition, employers recruited Mexican women, some of them young girls, to do piecework in the canneries and packing sheds. Employers believed the Mexican females were cheaper to hire and easier to control than native-born women.54

The climate of labor unrest spread in agriculture, triggered by worsening working and living conditions. Discontented Mexicans organized against grower exploitation and substandard housing and, soon, competition with fellow Mexicans crossing the border. Burdened by poverty and racism, the farm workers organized themselves into unions that dealt with a specific labor issue. Once the issue was resolved, workers abandoned the organization, and it ceased to exist. Solidarity was weakened by the constant wandering of Mexican farmworkers from city to countryside and back again. Moreover, the strike actions were quickly put down by violent grower repression, with the aid of sheriffs and vigilante groups. Because of the farmworkers’ desperate condition, California’s farms remained hotbeds of unrest.

MEXICANS IN THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN AND PLAINS STATES

With sugar beet work wages rising by 50 percent, Mexican Americans and Mexicans replaced Russian Germans in the beet farms of Colorado and the plains states. Reliance on Mexican farmworkers became great. In Colorado, Mexicans made up
90 percent of the labor used in planting and harvesting sugar beets. Using dozens of labor recruiters and Spanish-language advertisements, Great Western Sugar by 1920 was recruiting thirteen thousand Mexicans annually to work in the beet fields in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, and Nebraska. Seven years later, the sweat labor of about fifty-eight thousand Mexicans provided for the continued expansion of beet acreage as far as Ohio. Defined by family and kin, Mexicans formed a virtual army of field hands that harvested 7.5 million tons of sugar beets worth between 60 and 65 million dollars. A large number of the beet workers were children. Believing Mexican children did not need an education, locally governed school systems removed Mexican children from school to help farmers harvest their beet crops.

The Mexican workers in Colorado’s South Platte and Arkansas River Valleys had been recruited by labor agencies in Eagle Pass, Texas. The remainder were from New Mexico’s upper Rio Grande Valley. Immigration had doubled New Mexico’s Spanish-speaking population and increased that of Colorado fivefold. Eight thousand Mexicans lived in Denver, and three-fourths left this city each spring for the beet fields. Owing to widespread discrimination, the Mexicans of Colorado organized to defend themselves. Those with IWW affiliation formed La Liga Obrera de Habla Español (Spanish-Speaking Workers’ League) and its influence extended throughout Colorado and New Mexico.

Migration took Mexicans to railroad construction and maintenance jobs in Nebraska with the Union Pacific, Burlington Northern, and the Santa Fe Railroads. Many went to Omaha for the stockyard and meatpacking jobs. One thousand lived in South Omaha in mixed ethnic neighborhoods adjoined the foul-smelling slaughterhouses and meatpacking plants. A Mexican community developed in the city of Scottsbluff near the Great Western Sugar refinery on land families purchased from the factory.

The burgeoning presence of Mexicans in Kansas occurred because significant numbers got jobs with the railroads and sugar beet growers. Kansas was a major transfer point and railroad hub for the Midwest and the eastern states. Kansas Mexicans worked for the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad and in the state’s meat processing plants, salt mines, and sugar beet fields. Some Mexicans left their families in Mexico while they worked from spring to fall and returned home in the winter months. Those in Topeka formed a camp in the Santa Fe rail yards, crowded housing that was a mix of dismounted boxcars and hand-built shacks.

Because of hostility against Mexican immigrants, the Spanish-speaking communities of Kansas remained separate from the larger Anglo society in every town and city. Mexicans were unwelcome in movie theaters and in parks and other public facilities, in the schools, and in Catholic churches, all reserved for whites. Kansas’s Mexican population was large enough to support a broad range of institutions that assisted them in their adaptation to American society. The Benito Juárez Mutual Aid Society was the largest, with chapters throughout the state. Topeka’s Mexicans sponsored baseball and football teams, held dances, and instituted classes in English, Spanish, and arithmetic. Other Mexicans in the state founded their own parishes and organized church-centered social events. To combat discrimination, in 1915 Mexicans in Kansas City founded the Spanish-language
newspaper *El Cosmopolita* (*The Cosmopolitan*) that catered to their needs and worked to keep the public informed about Mexicans.58

Kansas's Mexican population in 1920 totaled 13,770. More and more new arrivals brought their families with them, leading to the formation of permanent communities. Because the men were confined to low-wage work, women sought jobs outside the home to supplement family incomes. On the eve of the Great Depression, Mexicans constituted the second largest immigrant group in Kansas, with the most colonies established in Kansas City, Topeka, Emporia, Wichita, and Garden City.59 In their quest for greater job opportunities, Mexican migration shifted in direction as they began hearing about new openings in the North.

**MEXICANS IN THE URBAN INDUSTRIAL HEARTLAND OF THE MIDWEST**

Sugar beet work initially spurred the Mexican migration to the Midwest. More than fifty-eight thousand Mexicans started life in the industrial and manufacturing cities of America's heartland. Their importance in the Midwest was their transformation into the first Mexican industrial working class, as blue-collar jobs beckoned in railroads, meat packinghouses, steel mills, foundries, and auto factories. These early arrivals provided assistance to immigrants who came later. Information about jobs and where to live traveled through family and friendship networks that extended to the Southwest and into Mexico. These networks determined the migration paths, as well as decisions about work and settlement patterns in the urban manufacturing environment of the Midwest. Discrimination, which shaped work and housing, was heightened by employment fluctuations, job competition, and housing shortages. Anti-immigrant sentiment and the racism produced by the Great Black Migration contributed to the hostile reception of Mexicans.60

Chicago was a favorite destination for immigrants from Mexico. Mexicans went to Chicago to work in the rail yards, mills, and packinghouses. By 1920, more than five thousand Mexicans were employed by twenty railroads with terminals in Chicago and composed 21 percent of the track workforce, which doubled to 42 percent eight years later. Along with blacks, Mexicans took “dirty work” that most white workers shunned in the unhealthy and dangerous meatpacking plants of Wilson and Company, Swift and Company, and Armour, Hammond, and Omaha.61

The massive worker unrest at the end of World War I brought Mexicans, many as strikebreakers, north to Chicago's big, noisy steel mills, where they encountered unsafe work environments. After the 1920–1921 depression, the steel companies expanded their recruiting efforts as the mills shifted to the eight-hour, three-shift schedule. Mexicans constituted 14 percent of the overall workforce in steel production.62

The United States Steel Corporation became the largest employer of Mexicans, hiring thousands for its plants in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and New York. Mexicans also worked for the Carnegie Steel Corporation, Bethlehem Steel, Jones and Laughlin, and National Tube. In Indiana Harbor, Indiana, more than two thousand Mexicans accounted for a fourth of Inland Steel's hourly employees.
In nearby Gary, more than one thousand Mexicans found jobs at the Illinois Steel plant, constituting almost 8 percent of the workforce. Mexicans readily accepted the hard, low-paying work and embraced the factory regimen, becoming efficient steelworkers who worked according to an enforced routine. As one observer noted, "the men showed great endurance at work, sometimes working continuously without a day off in a year . . . where others would not stay a month."63

The high rents and living costs in the northern cities made it necessary for Mexican women to work in order to supplement the family's income. The men opposed entrance of women into the labor force but grudgingly accepted it because additional income was needed. Providing lodging permitted many women to earn money while remaining home with their children. Others did domestic work in private homes or broadened their job options by turning to the city's factories, all of it low-wage work. As with the men, opportunities for Mexican women varied in each city.64 Elsewhere, small numbers of Mexican women gained access to nonindustrial occupations as office clerks or secretaries or in retailing. Unmarried women remained in the labor force because of their wish for both personal and financial independence. Taking jobs open to females, the women embraced the emerging mass consumer culture of the 1920s that contributed to shaping their identity. Others adopted the ideal of American domesticity because of their exposure to corporate welfare programs that provided various amenities such as medical care and profit-sharing plans by which employers fostered and gained the loyalty of their immigrant and black workers.65

Overcrowded working-class tenements underscored life for Mexicans in industrial Chicago. Mexicans rented houses, apartments, and flats in the city's deteriorated neighborhoods, where nearly half the households took in lodgers to help meet payments. The noise from the rail yards, the noxious fumes from the steel mills, and the foul air of the stockyards was constant and unbearable. A Mexican woman from Back of the Yards, a neighborhood adjoining the meatpacking plants, told an observer: "the smell and stench here are bad . . . it makes me sick and it makes me vomit at times . . . Some of the other Mexican women around here feel the same way. It is very bad but what can we do? Our husbands work near here, the rent is cheaper, and we have to live." Living conditions for Gary's 2,500 Mexicans were no better. Overcrowding endured by Mexicans in the United States was particularly acute in Indiana Harbor, where the housing was deplorable. The nearly 5,000 Mexicans clustered in this mill town lived in ramshackle houses concentrated in less than a square mile abutting the Inland Steel plant.66

By the end of the 1920s, approximately twenty thousand Mexicans were in Chicago, representing the greatest concentration of Mexicans outside the Southwest. Women and children made up a third of the newcomer population. Many of the city's industrial firms turned to Mexican labor. Over 80 percent of the men toiled in freight yards, steel mills and iron foundries, and the meatpacking plants. They endured frequent layoffs and dangerous working conditions. Washing, cooking, and cleaning for boarders, as well as jobs open to females in the Windy City, allowed women to earn extra cash. Mexicans experienced a limited supply of working-class housing, but kin and community helped them with the problem of finding shelter. Taking in relatives, friends, and former townspeople as lodgers strengthened
kinship and community ties. Mexicans established colonies near their place of employment. Religious and settlement house reformers aided adjustment to the new environment by offering Mexicans educational and cultural programs and material assistance. Political, religious, and cultural institutions developed by Chicago's Mexican colonies enlivened community life and nourished working-class culture. The settlements took on unique identities that embraced the urban and industrial ethos of the Windy City. Like other immigrants, Chicago Mexicans maintained strong ties to their homeland, conveyed in newspapers, political rallies, and through celebrations of Mexican holidays.67

Thousands of Mexicans were drawn to Michigan because of the growth of jobs in the auto industry. During World War I Mexicans began working in the auto factories of Detroit, Pontiac, Flint, and Saginaw, Michigan. Most came to Detroit, the nation's fastest growing metropolitan area because of the high wages offered by the Ford Motor Company, the world's largest car, truck, and tractor manufacturer. By the mid-1920s, four thousand Mexicans worked for Ford Motors at its Highland Park, Fordson, and River Rouge plants, and two hundred were enrolled in the Henry Ford Service School. In the Ford auto plants, Mexicans encountered standardization and division of work tasks, strict shop floor supervision, and bureaucratic personnel policies. Fifteen thousand Mexicans eventually settled in Detroit, representing the second largest population of Mexicans in the Midwest. Most lived on the city's southwest side and contributed to the distinct ethnic character of the Motor City's highly diverse working-class districts. Kinship and community were
vital to the newcomers' adjustment to life in Detroit. They provided an essential link to family members who made the trek north and settled in the Motor City and who now helped them secure jobs and find housing.68

The urban and industrial Midwest became a magnet of opportunity for Mexicans seeking a new way of life. In 1927, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that almost thirty-one thousand Mexicans held industrial employment in northern urban centers extending from St. Paul, Minnesota, to Pennsylvania's Monongahela Valley.69 Midwestern Mexicans came together as self-identifiable communities centered on immigrant institutions. Mutual aid and fraternal organizations shaped by ethnicity and class fostered group identity and solidarity. Moreover, based on the new circumstances, Mexicans built their communities as members of the industrial working classes with specific identities, lifestyles, and aspirations.

Mexicans in the industrial heartland were exposed to an industrial form of time that demanded adaptation to a faster work pace and strict work rules to enforce discipline. As industrial employers expanded their vast power of domination over workers, Mexicans were influenced as well by various components of corporate welfare capitalism's efforts to inculcate worker loyalty, tractability, and efficiency. Through wage incentives, insurance and pension plans, and recreational programs, industry sought to undercut the Mexicans' reliance on both unions and community-based services. Included in this corporate scheme for the loyalties of Mexican workers were religious institutions, most of them antiunion, which helped the newcomers from Mexico adjust to new conditions in the United States. Faced with the rise of nativist sentiment, the Mexican immigrant working classes retreated to the sanctuary of their ethnic communities.

**MEXICANS AND SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE AND AMERICANIZATION**

The Catholic Church was the principal church of Mexican immigrants. Church-sponsored social events brought cohesion to the Mexican communities, and the Church played an important role as a community center. For some women, church services were one of the few acceptable social outings. The Church's assistance to the Mexicans was plagued by a shortage of funds and Spanish-speaking priests. After 1926, Mexican immigrants entered the United States from west central Mexico, the site of the Cristero Revolution, an uprising by persecuted Catholics against the Mexican government's anti-clericalism. Dissension flared in the Mexican colonies as pro-Cristeros and anti-Cristeros clashed over ideological differences originating in the homeland. A larger threat than the pro-Cristeros were the missionary efforts of evangelical Protestant ministers, who proselytized among the immigrants to get them to convert and join Christian churches. Many won new church members; other immigrants had either converted to or been exposed to Protestant sects in Mexico.70

Revivalism was a way evangelical churches gained many converts to "born-again Christianity." Along with settlement house workers, Protestant missionaries felt it was their duty to protect Mexican newcomers against atheistic,
radical influences as an important goal. "The thousands of Mexican immigrants...are...in a state of transition, and the forces of evil are at work among them. The question...is whether they are to be won over to...Bolshevism or to Democracy; to Trotsky or to Christ." Doing their best to battle against the "new religion" of Bolshevism, various Americanization programs aided in the socialization of Mexican immigrants into "100 percent Americans" through civic classes, language instruction, and home economics.  

Nativist anxieties about the nation's "alien problem" and the fear of the worldwide conspiracy of Bolshevism fueled the public and private drive for Americanization work among immigrants. U.S. government agencies conducted nationwide surveys of immigrants, and state and local governments, religious groups, and private social service organizations collaborated in a program of Americanization. These efforts targeted the men to become U.S. citizens. Women were seen as the ones who would pass on American culture to their families, so programs for women focused on birth control, child rearing, and domesticity. Settlement houses Americanized Mexicans by encouraging political conformity and a single set of domestic habits. Americanization projects for Mexicans such as those run by the YMCA grew throughout the Southwest and Midwest, promoting literacy and instruction in the English language, American culture, and job skills training.  

The Americanization movement involved employer participation. Manufacturing companies required their immigrant employees to attend English and
CHAPTER 6 • Mexican Immigration, Work, Urbanization, and Americanization

201

citizenship classes to install American values and habits and, more so, to acquaint them with factory discipline. More important, employers saw Americanization as an effective antiunion device, just as employers maintained an ethnic mix in the workplace to perpetuate mutual distrust among their workers.

Public education was a training ground for U.S. citizenship. Educational theories emphasized English usage, American values, and work as vehicles for acculturation to American language and society. However, these theories also embraced the prevailing racist stereotypes of the Mexican's innate intellectual inferiority. Bolstered by biased tests and surveys, Anglo teachers and administrators believed that Mexican students, because of their intellectual limitations, had few aspirations and limited abilities beyond manual or domestic work. Consequently, the vocational curricula in "Mexican" schools served to funnel youth into low-wage work. Schooling for Mexicans essentially trained them for the menial roles they would play in American society.73

The efforts to Americanize Mexicans were thwarted because of Mexico's proximity, which made visits and permanent return possible. This homeward orientation resulted in low naturalization rates. In addition, the Mexicans' relative isolation at railroad, mining, agricultural, and similar work campsites enabled them to retain their native culture and language while limiting opportunities to gain familiarity with American society. Moreover, the everyday reality of racism made the Mexicans resist Americanization.74

Various conservative groups loyal to Americanization worked hard politically to curb Mexican immigration. They condemned the immutable foreignness and "inferiority" of Mexican life and deemed this alien menace a threat to the health and morals of the nation. Various forms of outright racial discrimination set Mexicans apart. These included limited job advancement, restrictive housing covenants, separate days in churches, inferior "Mexican schools," separate entrances and Mexican sections in theaters, and special "colored" days in public swimming pools.75

MEXICAN MUTUALISM AND FRATERNALISM

Mexicans created numerous mutual aid and fraternal organizations in the United States. Membership in each varied, reflecting a cross-section of occupations and wealth. Some Mexicans engaged in political activities related to Mexico, whereas labor issues were a matter of concern for many others because of their working-class composition that reflected the backgrounds of the Mexican population as a whole.76 Individuals to whom members could go for help emerged as leaders and became spokesmen for the Mexican community without a public voice.

The mutual aid and fraternal organizations assisted their members in time of need with small emergency loans; medical, life, and burial insurance; and legal services. Some voluntary associations reinforced the customs, language, and traditions of its members through a host of cultural activities, such as the commemoration of Mexican holidays. Others ran schools because of the inferior education Mexican children received in the segregated public schools. Mexican consuls often served as honorary members of the voluntary associations. In the cause of employer
antionism, the consuls exerted significant effort in censoring or containing subversive ideas and social unrest and generally maintaining control over Mexican workers.

Few voluntary associations subscribed to American assimilation. Instead, they promoted Mexican nationalism and encouraged members to maintain close ties to their homeland. Other organizations, open to the wider issues of class consciousness, encouraged labor activism among its membership. For example, in 1928, numerous Mexican working-class organizations joined millions of people in the United States and around the world protesting on behalf of the ordeal of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, the two Italian immigrants and anarchists convicted of murder in 1921 in an atmosphere poisoned by antiradical and racial hysteria. Class solidarity, however, was sometimes impeded by the ethnic chauvinism of members.

In the years following World War I, Mexican labor activism increased and became a recognizable fixture in the Southwest. Overall, Mexicans recognized the benefits of involvement in unions for protection at a time when great numbers of them were unorganized. In November 1927, the Federation of Mexican Societies in Los Angeles persuaded a number of Mexican local unions to organize into the Confederación de Uniones Campesinos y Obreros Mexicanos or CUOM (Confederation of Mexican Workers and Peasants Unions). With its three thousand members organized into twenty affiliated locals, CUOM's goals included wage and job equality and protecting the members against unjust deportation practices. CUOM understood that it would fail so long as growers had a surplus labor pool; therefore, it called for the United States and Mexico to restrict immigration from Mexico. CUOM declined, but its objective of organizing Mexican workers to strengthen and improve their position was important in establishing the roots of Mexican trade unionism in southern California.

In the following year, during the Imperial Valley cantaloupe strike, a high-profile work stoppage by Mexican farmworkers that was marred by vigilantism and strikebreaking, La Unión de Trabajadores del Valle Imperial (Imperial Valley Workers Union) was formed from two mutual-aid societies. Changing its name to the Mexican Mutual Aid Society of the Imperial Valley (MMAS), its members demanded recognition of their union and better housing conditions for workers.

The Liga Protectora Latina (Latin Protective League) was founded in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1914. With its motto, "One for all. All for one," it protected the interests of its working-class membership, including their civil rights. Although anti-IWW, it fought against House Bill 54, the Claypool-Kinney Bill, restricting the employment of aliens (Mexicans) in mine work, and it later fought Law No. 23 that called for the exclusion of Mexicans from skilled railroad and mining work. The Sociedad Protección Mutual de Trabajadores Unidos (the Mutual Protection Society of Mexican Workers) similarly advanced the interests of Mexican workers in the Rocky Mountain states against discrimination. It was founded in 1900 in Antoñito, Colorado, as an alternative to the exclusive and racist American Federation of Labor (AFL) that declared that Mexicans were unorganizable and a threat to white workers. The Sociedad expanded; its members organized additional lodges in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico, and its influence was also felt in Utah.
Mexicans who were leaders and established members of their communities, with links to established groups and institutions, took on issues on its behalf. Tejano attorney Manuel C. Gonzales, through his law practice, was in contact with Mexican workers from San Antonio to the lower Rio Grande Valley and understood the problems they encountered. In 1917, Gonzales created *La Liga Protectora Mexicana* (the Mexican Protective League) to provide Mexicans legal advice on such matters as alien residents' rights, workers' compensation, and tenant farmer contracts and due process.

The Mexican Protective League lobbied the Texas State Legislature to halt the exploitation of Tejano tenant farmers by unscrupulous Anglo-Texan landowners who regularly defrauded them. In 1918, the league pushed for a state law requiring landlords to have a court order when law officials accompanied them onto a tenants' rented land. Maintaining Mexican labor in a cycle of indebtedness ensured worker stability. Two years later, in 1920, the league supported legislation to protect tenants' crops on shares. In addition, the league produced a bilingual handbook on landlord-tenant rights, workers' compensation, and on the penal code; it published a weekly legal-aid advice column in the San Antonio newspaper *El Imparcial de Texas* (*The Texas Impartial*); and it helped the Democratic Party defeat pro-Ku Klux Klan Republican gubernatorial candidate Joseph W. Bailey. In the same year, the Mexican Protective League founded *La Liga Instructiva Mexicana* (the Mexican Instructive League) to prepare Mexicans for U.S. citizenship.

The *Alianza Hispano-Americana* (Hispanic-American Alliance) was the largest Mexican American fraternal organization in the Southwest. It was formed in 1894 in Tucson, Arizona, in response to the escalation of discrimination and racism against Mexicans. As an ally to Mexican workers in the copper mining region, Alianza founded chapters in Florence, Clifton, Bisbee, Globe, Tempe, Nogales, Yuma, and Metcalf. Alianza members expanded their organization into the Imperial Valley of California, Texas, and other parts of the Southwest. The Alianza spoke out on a wide range of issues, and the right to vote was an important message. Aware of the various ways Anglos kept Mexicans from voting, the Alianza supported the woman suffrage movement and expanded their membership to women in 1913.

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) signaled the emergence of new leadership in the Mexican community of the United States. LULAC embraced a conservative point of view in matters of civil rights and race relations. Its goals were "to develop within the members of our race, the best . . . loyal citizens of the United States of America."

On August 24, 1927, several dozen Mexican Americans convened a meeting in Harlingen, Texas, to form a new organization based on a coalition with the Sons of America, founded six years earlier in San Antonio. The Sons of America, promoters of loyalty to America, refused to participate as a group, though some members would join with the Tejanos to form the League of United Latin American Citizens. World War I veteran, foreign service officer, and San Antonio attorney Alonzo Perales was one of LULAC's founders and an important figure. In its early
form, LULAC epitomized Mexican American middle-class concerns about maintaining respectability, as well as allaying the tensions and divisions within the Mexican American community over immigration.85

LULAC was an organization driven by the goal of creating a new Mexican American sense of self. It limited membership to American citizens and made English its official language. The founding of LULAC reflected the larger changes transforming Mexican American life in the United States, particularly the struggle to reverse the disenfranchisement that began in the late nineteenth century limiting Mexican Americans’ rights as citizens with regard to the use of public facilities, voting, and serving on juries. A chief concern was the growing social restrictions placed on Mexican Americans resulting from the significant increase in the Spanish-speaking population through immigration from Mexico.86

Mexican immigrants in unprecedented numbers introduced new conflicts in American society already rife with racial unrest and embroiled in debates about immigrants. To many Mexican Americans, the Mexican immigrants who established enclaves in their communities accentuated differences between Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. Specifically, their presence challenged notions of identity.87

Much like northern African Americans responding to the Great Black Migration, LULAC’s members feared that racial discrimination would force their social
life inward toward the larger Mexican immigrant community rather than outward as they hoped. This is one important reason why LULAC’s leadership strongly embraced an identity as Americans. They called attention to the contributions Mexican Americans had made to the United States. LULAC’s constitution specified that English was its official language. The organization, moreover, encouraged cooperation with Anglos toward the goal of extolling and attaining the benefits of U.S. citizenship for Mexican Americans and, faced with the influx of laborers from Mexico, pushed for restrictive immigration legislation for that country.88

Through its national office and local branches, LULAC endeavored to be the voice of the Mexican American community. Education became a subject of urgent debate, and the organization took the lead in attempting to better schools for Mexican American children, many of whom attended inferior Mexican schools. In many areas of the Southwest, local primary schools were widely unavailable, or else Mexican American children were enrolled in school for only part of the year due to the demands of the job market on their parents and the need for children’s labor. In its campaign for better education, LULAC formed the School Improvement League. Set in place by custom and local treatment rather than state statute, the school desegregation of Mexican children was left up to the discretion of local officials, the majority overwhelmingly Anglo. Seeking acceptance of Mexican Americans as Caucasian, LULAC began the unusual precedent of using the “legal whiteness” argument.89

Mexican American and Anglo attorneys worked on a pro bono basis to assist LULAC in its legal struggle to desegregate hundreds of local schools in Texas. In 1930, LULAC brought the first class-action lawsuit against segregation of Mexicans in Texas public schools. The Salvatierra v. Del Rio Independent School District case ended the designation of “Mexican schools” in Texas. However, mechanisms for enforcement of school integration were never realized beyond the demand on local school systems. In the same year, LULAC also campaigned for the U.S. Bureau of Census to reclassify persons of Mexican descent as “white.” This was done so Anglos would distinguish them from blacks and to blur distinctions between Mexican Americans and Anglos.90 Until the 1930s, when it was overshadowed by progressive class-based organizations, LULAC remained the most influential Mexican American organization in the United States.

CONCLUSION

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, as World War I cut off the supply of immigrant labor from Europe, Mexican immigrants arrived daily in the United States in larger numbers. They found work wherever they could at whatever rate of pay was offered them. As the newest group of workers, Mexicans were often hired for the dirtiest jobs. Together with Mexican Americans, they organized to gain security as workers. Revolutionary politics reflected the era’s global wars and revolutions. The IWW, with its inclusiveness and its tradition of leadership, spread industrial unionism among Mexican workers, and many embraced it. Countless Spanish-speaking workers were followers of anarcho-syndicalism or were sympathizers with the socialist movement. All faced repression by police, judicial, and
military agencies as employers unleashed violent repression against them and used deportations to defeat them.

In the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas what remained of the old Tejano ranching society disappeared, destroyed by Anglos drawn to the region by new opportunities for profit. Tejanas, among them Laredo's Jovita Idar and sisters Andrea and Teresa Villarreal of San Antonio, eloquently addressed class, race, and gender inequities at this time in speeches and through newspapers they established for this purpose. In response to the explosion of race hatred in this region, local Tejanos rose up against the repression under the banner of the Plan de San Diego and were mercilessly defeated.

Immigration from Mexico proceeded apace during World War I as the first large wave of Mexican immigrants came to the United States. This immigration was a product of chain migration. Meanwhile, unauthorized immigration from Mexico was sustained by the recruiting efforts of greedy American employers and the pressure they placed on their congressional allies to relax border restrictions. Mexican immigration from this point on would present challenges to those concerned with the absorption, assimilation, and control of this group.91

Mexican Americans volunteered for service overseas with the American Expeditionary Force and fought in the Great War. To show their citizenship, and despite discrimination, Mexican American women volunteered for patriotic service at home, such as buying and selling Liberty Bonds and working for the Red Cross. Though their ability was doubted, Mexican American soldiers conducted themselves with bravery and courage. Little tribute was paid to the valor of Mexican American soldiers who fought for the flag of the United States in Europe.

The immigrants responded directly to the impact of industrialization and modern American values and adjusted to living in the United States, though they retained an attachment to their homeland. Women ran boardinghouses or procured work as domestics, waitresses, cooks, hotel maids, nannies, and factory workers. Mexicans recreated the familiar aspects of their home country in the United States. They lived and worked together, established their own Catholic parishes and other formal institutions, and possessed an elite, many of whom became community leaders. Mexicans, largely from the working classes, created the mutual-aid and fraternal organizations that gave voice to their myriad needs.

Anglos did not distinguish between the newcomers from Mexico and Mexican Americans. Both were perceived as foreigners, even though the latter's ancestors had been in the United States for generations or had become Americans with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Mexican immigration reinforced and intensified both the external Anglo hostility and the internal pressures within the Mexican communities. As evidenced by the rising tide of class and political polarization, Mexicans were divided between American-born citizens and immigrants. The persistent curse of racism dominated the lives of Mexicans and Mexican Americans alike, however. Some employers refused to hire Mexicans or utilized mandatory language tests to weed out non-English-speaking immigrants. State and municipal laws segregated the races. Whether as migratory farmworkers who moved their camps with the changing agricultural seasons or as factory workers
who turned their efforts to a mechanized and subdivided process, Mexicans became the dregs of twentieth-century America.

The Great Depression forced Mexicans further into austerity and marginalization as their traditional institutions proved unable to give assistance and collapsed. As the economic crisis unfolded, controls were implemented on Mexican immigration. Nativist sentiment against them intensified, and additional numbers departed for their homelands.

Through the practice of mutual alliance that helped them develop their communities, Mexicans now turned to developing unions and methods of resisting employers. Leaders helped generate new forms of worker protest and association as Mexicans now turned to building an inclusive democratic union movement in the United States.

NOTES

4. Montgomery, Fall of the House of Labor, 332.
5. Ibid., 36–37.
7. An important document bearing on the subject of farm labor was Carleton H. Parker’s The Casual Laborer and Other Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920).
8. Grebler, Moore, and Guzman, Mexican American People, 10.
10. Montgomery, Fall of the House of Labor, 333, 344.
11. Ibid., 346.
12. Ibid., 346–351.
13. The United States Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional in December 1915.
14. Truett, Fugitive Landscapes, 174–175; George Soule, “The Law of Necessity in Bisbee,” Nation 113 (1921): 21–23; Colleen O’Neill, “Domesticity Deployed: Gender, Race, and the Construction of Class Struggle in the Bisbee Deportation,” Labor History 34 (Spring 1993): 256–273. Columbus officials refused to take charge of the prisoners, and the Mexican strikers were taken out to the desert, where they were released and left to make their own way back home. McWilliams, North from Mexico, 197.
15. Gregory Andrews, Shoulder to Shoulder?: The American Federation of Labor, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution, 1910–1924 (Berkeley: University of California Press,
208 CRUCIBLE OF STRUGGLE


17. La Crónica’s commitment to social justice was reflected in its masthead: “We work for the progress and the industrial, moral, and intellectual development of the Mexican inhabitants of Texas.” Nicasio Idar also published *La Revista*. He helped found the Caballeros de Honor and the Sociedad Hijos de Juárez and was active in all of the Tejano fraternal organizations in Laredo. Nicasio Idar also served as a justice of the peace and as Laredo’s assistant city marshal. Campbell, *Gone to Texas*, 328.


25. Campbell, *Gone to Texas*, 328.


29. The Rangers spared the lives of several old Mexican men, women, and children and a lone Anglo.

30. A native of Nueces County and a graduate of the University of Michigan Law School, the Tejano Brownsville attorney and state legislator (1905–1910 and 1917–1920) was later influential in founding the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). Canales helped write LULAC’s first constitution and served as its president (1932–33).

31. *Proceedings of the Joint Committee of the Senate and House in the Investigation of the Texas State Ranger Force*, 36th Legislature, Regular Session, Legislative Papers, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas; Henry Warren Papers, Archives of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University. The father-in-law of one of the men killed by the Rangers owned a newspaper in Piñales, Chihuahua, Mexico. He asked the Mexican government for assistance, and Mexican ambassador Ygnacio Bonilla called for an official investigation.
CHAPTER 6 • Mexican Immigration, Work, Urbanization, and Americanization 209


34. Zamora, World of the Mexican Worker, 50; Campbell, Gone to Texas, 364; Chávez-Leyva, "Faithful Hard-Working Mexican Hands," 52–53.

35. Those employed as farmworkers helped American growers produce more than 5 billion dollars’ worth of fruits and vegetables. Reisler, By the Sweat of Their Brow, 12.


37. Deutsch, No Separate Refuge, 111.

38. Ibid., 112, 114.

39. It was published as Los méxico-americanos en la Gran Guerra y su contingente en pro de la democracia, la humanidad, y la justicia (San Antonio, TX: Artes Gráficas, 1933). See also Emilio Zamora, "Fighting on Two Fronts: José de la Luz Saenz and the Language of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement," in Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Past, Vol. 4, ed. José F Aranda Jr. and Silvio Torres-Saillant (Houston, TX: Arte Público Press, 2002).


41. Vargas, Proletarians of the North, 83.

42. Deutsch, No Separate Refuge, 121–122; Grebler, Guzman, and Moore, Mexican American People, 85.

43. Grebler, Guzman, and Moore, Mexican American People, 66. The immigration was stimulated partly by the Cristero Revolution (1926–1929) in Mexico.


46. Vargas, Proletarians of the North, 37–38.


48. Vargas, Proletarians of the North, 40.


51. Estrada, Los Angeles Plaza, 118, 129–131; Sánchez, Becoming Mexican American, 195.


53. Garcia, A World of Its Own, 71.


55. Deutsch, No Separate Refuge, 115–116, 119–120. The sugar beet industry lauded its boom years as the "Mexican Harvest." Vargas, Proletarians of the North, 30; Grebler, Moore, and Guzman, Mexican American People, 94.

56. Vargas, Proletarians of the North, 156–157; Deutsch, No Separate Refuge, 129, 133–134, 137–139; Schwartz, Seasonal Farm Labor in the United States, 115.

57. Vargas, Proletarians of the North, 50.


60. Vargas, Proletarians of the North, 1, 21, 29. Mexicans constituted a third of Michigan’s sugar beet workers in 1922, and five years later about twenty thousand worked for sugar companies.


62. Mexicans made up a third of the mill hands of Wisconsin Steel and Illinois Steel, representing 12.2 and 21.8 percent, respectively, of all the hourly employees. Ibid, 91.

63. Ibid., 92–94.

64. Mexican women in the Midwest earned money by cooking and taking in laundry, as boardinghouse operators, and as domestics. Those who held factory jobs worked as inspectors, packers, markers, sorters, box washers, candy dippers, or machine operators. Others worked as elevator operators, store cashiers, secretaries, office managers, and nurses. Ibid., 133–138.


CHAPTER 6 • Mexican Immigration, Work, Urbanization, and Americanization

67. Vargas, Proletarians of the North, 47.
68. Ibid., 50–51, 124, 126. In addition, nearly two thousand Mexicans worked for General Motors, Dodge Motors, Fisher Body, and Buick Motors and at Chevrolet's plants in Detroit, Pontiac, Flint, and Saginaw.
69. Over half (53.6 percent) of the Mexicans in the Midwest worked in manufacturing. Ibid., 86.
70. Ibid., 143–144; Manuel Gamio, Mexican Immigration to the United States (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), 117–118.
72. Monroy, Rebirth, 129; Ruiz, From Out of the Shadows, 33. The concept of Americanization dates back to the early twentieth century. The Americanization movement passed through three phases. The first phase began around the turn of the century and ran through 1914, the second during World War I, and the third covered the immediate post-World War I years.
74. Monroy, Rebirth, 140–146; Vargas, Proletarians of the North, 85.
75. Sánchez, Becoming Mexican American, 71.
76. Monroy, Rebirth, 61–62. Coalitions of Mexican organizations were established, such as La Liga Protectora Latina (Latin Protective League) in Arizona and El Confederación de Sociedad Mexicanas (Confederation of Mexican Societies) of Los Angeles. Sánchez, Becoming Mexican American, 242; Corwin, Immigrants—and Immigrants, 235.
77. Monroy, Rebirth, 227–229. The Mexican consulate in Los Angeles had helped form CUOM to halt the influence of radical organizers among Mexican workers.
78. The two Mexican mutual-aid societies were La Sociedad Mutualista Benito Juárez El Centro and La Sociedad Mutualista Hidalgo El Brawley. Although the cantaloupe strike was broken, unionization efforts increased in the Imperial Valley. More important, the strike resulted in the formulation of the harvest contract by the California Department of Industrial Relations. The harvest contract recommended the elimination of abusive grower practices, made the growers rather than the labor contractors responsible for wages, and eliminated the withholding of a fourth of the workers' wages until the harvest season ended. A bonus served as an incentive to workers to complete the harvest. Charles Wollenberg, "Huelga, 1928 Style: The Imperial Valley Cantaloupe Workers’ Strike," Pacific Historical Review 38, no. 1 (1969): 45.
80. Zamora, World of the Mexican Worker, 76; Campbell, Gone to Texas, 349.
81. Zamora, World of the Mexican Worker, 76; Campbell, Gone to Texas, 349.
1929): 260. See also Benjamin Marquez, LULAC: The Evolution of a Mexican American Political Organization (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993).

85. Kaplowitz, LULAC, 20–21; David G. Gutiérrez, Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 75–77. During World War I, Perales served in the U.S. Army. Following his discharge, Perales moved to Washington, DC, where he worked for the U.S. Commerce Department. He earned a B.A. and received his law degree in 1926. Perales wrote the LULAC constitution with fellow Tejanos José Tomás Canales and Eduardo Idar. Perales rose rapidly within LULAC and won election as its second president. During his term Perales helped establish twenty-four new LULAC councils.

86. Kaplowitz, LULAC, 20–21; Gutiérrez, Walls and Mirrors, 74.


91. Grebler, Moore, and Guzman, Mexican American People, 36.