

TRANSNATIONAL IMMIGRATION POLITICS IN MEXICO, 1850-1920

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2013

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This academic adventure began for me in 1996, and along this long journey I have received tremendous support from many people, who encouraged me to not give up on my goal of earning a doctorate degree in history; despite coming across faculty that tried to dissuade me from going to graduate school, remarking that it would be too expensive and not worth it. Nonetheless, putting that negativity aside, from the University of California, San Diego, I thank Eric Van Young for believing in me and encouraging me not to listen to people who doubted my potential. At San Diego State University, the many letters of recommendation given to me by Paula De Vos and Elizabeth Colwill allowed me to continue to pursue a Ph.D.

At the University of Arizona, I have to begin by first thanking my doctoral committee, Kevin Gosner and Martha Few for not only having to read a 260 page first draft version of this dissertation, but my advisor William H. Beezley, for promptly giving me back valuable feedback and suggestions throughout the summer to make the manuscript even better. During my graduate school experience at Arizona, I learned to have a more open mind and to not hesitate to share my ideas. Prior to going to Tucson, I had read an article in *U.S. News and World Report's* annual report on the best graduate schools in America, and it cautioned incoming graduate students not to openly discuss their research ideas, as dissertation topics had been known to be “stolen.” Thus, while in my first research seminar at the university, which happened to be with professor Gosner in the fall of 2006, I explained my research topic to my classmate, Stephen Neufeld, and as a result, only a couple of days later, he informed me that he had come across a U.S. Congressional hearing on a black colonization scheme in Mexico from 1895, saying

“Ricardo, I thought you might be interested in that government hearing, here is the link to the database....” Not long after that, walking through the halls of the Department of History, I came across Michael Matthews, another graduate student, who told me, “Stephen told me you are working on black colonies in Mexico, I have access to a pay subscription newspaper archive database that you can use since it includes many nineteenth century Mexican newspapers, so here is my password....” Experiences such as those that I had with Stephen and Michael, among many others, epitomized the positive ambiance I encountered at the University of Arizona’s Department of History.

For the research in Mexico City, I am completely indebted to Hugo Gomez and his family for welcoming me into their home. Hugo showed me Mexico City and took me from one archive to another, providing me the luxury of never having to get on a *microbus*, taxi, or *metro*, as he became my personal guide.

Lastly, I must thank my entire family for their never ending financial support. The cost of a graduate education can easily discourage many people from pursuing their goal; fortunately for me, since the first day I arrived at U.C. San Diego in September of 1996 through the culmination of this endeavor at University of Arizona, my mother, Belen, always encouraged me to study the subject that would make me the happiest, regardless of the cost of tuition or living expenses. Thus, my mother gave me a sense of security and peace of mind that I cannot put into words—so thank you, mom, this work is dedicated to you.

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ABSTRACT

From the short-lived Mexican Empire of Iturbide to the immediate years following the Mexican Revolution, politicians, from all sides of the political spectrum, tirelessly attempted to recruit foreign immigrants to populate the country's most desolate areas, as the constant Indian raids and filibuster attempts, had impeded the country from entering the world stage as a modern nation full of tremendous economic potential for anyone willing to come.

The desperation manifested by government officials to attract immigrants, which at times border on a xenophilia mentality, I argue, had roots in the fact that several decades after the inception of the country; many Mexicans, but especially the large Indian population, could not comprehend what it meant to be part of a nation—national spirit and cohesiveness had not been cemented. People throughout the country, but especially on the northern frontier, paid allegiance to their local *municipio*, or in the words of historian Eric Van Young, to their “*Patria Chica*,” and not necessarily the country as a whole.

Under such circumstances, Mexican soldiers during the U.S.—Mexican War tried to get U.S. soldiers to switch sides by offering them a piece of land in exchange for turning on their own government. Black slaves along the Rio Grande River, were offered freedom if they came to Mexico. During the French intervention, President Juárez through several surrogates working in the U.S. attempted to recruit former U.S. Civil War veterans to come to the country and not only assist militarily but to also establish colonies on the northern frontier, so as to prevent another Texas fiasco or another war with the U.S. Matías Romero, the Mexican Minister to the U.S. in the 1860s, received several requests from both American government officials and capitalists about relocating thousands, and in one particular case, one million, recently freed

black slaves, to some tropical region of Mexico and help alleviate the country's desperate need for workers in agriculture and railroad construction while also solving the race issue in the U.S.

This dissertation looks at the experience of those foreigners that came to Mexico between 1850 and 1930 seeking a better life; while also understanding the reaction that local, state, and federal officials, as well as the public in general had when they realized the foreign colonies had failed to live up to the promises made. A lot of the physical confrontations between locals and foreigners that garnered the newspaper headlines of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not motivated, for the most part, out of racial hostility; on the contrary, I contend that Mexicans and their government provided liberal immigration policies to all newcomers. Furthermore, I argue that the political, social, and cultural fluidity on the borderlands, only led to transnational migration, which to the detriment of Mexico only added further instability as the newcomers had no real intention of making the country their permanent home.

The public's anger and resentment did not arise out of racial prejudice, but instead, these foreigners served as the perfect scapegoats for the government's social and economic failures, as it knew that the masses would not dare raise their machetes and guns against the iron fist rule of President Díaz. Taking full advantage of the incentives Presidents Juárez, Díaz, and Obregón, had set aside for potential immigrants, African Americans joyfully boasted that they were leaving the U.S.; a land full of racial hatred and lynchings that went unpunished, and instead heading for the "Land of God and Liberty."

INTRODUCTION

Why I got Interested in this Topic

I got interested in this topic of immigration and race relations because in the spring of 2006, I watched millions of Americans protest in the streets of major U.S. cities for a comprehensive immigration reform bill. When some counter-protesters, which included many African-Americans, were interviewed by news reporters, they gave the typical conservative speech about how illegal immigrants were taking away American jobs and that these people should actually go back to Mexico, since they had broken the law in the first place. What stood out to me was the vile rhetoric coming from these minute men, as they called themselves. Unfortunately, these type of protests have become all too common in our recent history.

In 1994, on the eve of the November elections, in California, voters had to decide whether to stop providing basic health care services and public education to illegal immigrants, as these law breakers, as argued by the people who drafted Proposition 187, had now become a tremendous financial and social burden on the tax payers of California that it needed to stop. In similar fashion as in 2006, when supporters of Proposition 187 were interviewed, beyond the racist language employed by these individuals, what struck me was when a man of Caucasian descent said that all the illegal Mexicans protesting on the streets of California, had a bigger ulterior motive than simply taking a government check, what they actually wanted was to retake the U.S. southwestern states that Mexico had lost to the U.S. in 1848. The white man told the news reporter to just look at the constant miscegenation taking place between Mexicans and whites as evidence that something terrible was to taking place in California's culture; not to mention the

fact that Spanish was spoken as often as English in many public schools. Many state government offices offered assistance to anyone who did not speak English, such as government forms printed in Spanish.

Then not long after those protests, I came across an article in *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, in which Ted Vincent, the author, pointed out that in the late 1910s and early 1920s, African Americans from southern California, after years of racial prejudice in the United States, had reached a breaking point, and had decided to relocate to Baja California, Mexico, in search of a better life. Theodore Troy, the colony's founder said that,

I am going to a land where freedom and opportunity beckon me as well as every man, woman and child of dark skin. In this land there are no Jim Crow laws to fetter me; I am not denied opportunity because of the color of my skin, and wonderful undeveloped resources of a country smiled upon by God beckon my genius on to their development.¹

Troy's enthusiasm received further assurance that his followers would not be harass by Mexican authorities when he heard President Álvaro Obregón make the following remark:

I am not accustomed to writing on behalf of specific races, and the fewer comments I have expressed on the race issue have always been in regard to all men and all races, for I am of the opinion that we should discard the erroneous attitude that has argued for differences between peoples because of their origins or their color. I believe...that we ought to abolish for ever the prejudices that judge people by racial group and judgment only on issues of culture and morality of the actions of men and peoples.²

That statement by President Obregón made me reflect on those immigration protests, because I taught to myself, how ironic is it that in these chaotic political times, there are people dying along the border for a chance to enter the U.S. in order to have the simple possibility for a better

¹ *California Eagle* (Los Angeles, California), 6 December 1919.

² *The New York Negro World* (New York City, New York), 24 December, 1921.

future for their families; and yet, in the not too distant past of this country's history, American citizens, were eager to go to Mexico in search of opportunities that had not been accorded to them by their own government. In fact, prior to 1862, many runaway black slaves died as they attempted to make their way to Mexico, where freedom and opportunity awaited them. So I taught to myself, how sad is it that the many contemporary African-Americans that participated in the counter-protest to the pro-immigration reform rallies, are not aware that the "brown people" they have demonized, at one point, extended their arm to assist them crossing the Rio Grande to escape famed slave catchers such as Callahan and general Carvajal from Texas. It goes without saying that a tremendous amount of educational work still needs to take place in the U.S., as the history of both the U.S. and Mexico is more intrinsically connected to each other than what the average white or black conservative is aware of.

So what follows is an in-depth analysis of this understudied topic of reverse migration to Mexico by U.S. citizens. While I, as well as many readers of this work, are aware that many Americans ventured into Mexico between 1850 and 1920 seeking financial gain, these were usually white Americans working for mining and railroad companies, but this work is going to look at the lives of those forgotten Americans, as well as that of other immigrants, that decided to call Mexico home.

The Central Premise of the Work

The central premise of this work is simple, as it seeks to analyze the experience of immigrants to Mexico beginning in the mid nineteenth century through the first two decades of

the twentieth century. Upon reading President Obregón's 1921 statement to the *New York Negro World*, I set out to find what degree of truth, if any, existed in that liberal immigration policy manifested by one of the leaders of the Revolution. Furthermore, a subsequent question that came to mind forced me to focus not only the research on President Obregón but to expand the line of inquiry and see if past presidents adhered to the message expressed by Obregón during the early 1920s. Following this line of research allows the essay to be placed within a larger historical context that brings to the fore further questions. For instance, how did the post-colonial government, in which symbolically speaking, Mexico City played the role of the Spanish King, while the *rancherías* functioned as a series of *patrias chicas*; a role unfortunately impressed in the minds of the mostly rural population, handicapped the central government's effort to forge a national identity?

Consequently, is it possible that because the government found itself in a state of desperation as a result of its lack of population, the constant filibuster threats, and not to mention the Indian raids that never seemed to end on its northern frontier, that government officials had no choice but to overlook the race of the immigrants that showed interest in coming to the country? While it is impossible to get into the minds of every official so as to answer the question in a satisfactory manner, in the chapters that follow, the reader will see firsthand accounts from officials that highlight the political and social patterns that existed so as to draw more definitive conclusions on the official political stance of the government when it came to its immigration policies.

Thus, what differentiates this work from works that have attempted a similar approach is that while they might focus specifically on the politics taken by the government or on the other hand,

the reaction of the public to incoming immigrants, such as the many excellent dissertations that have been written on the case of the Chinese in northern Mexico, this essay attempts the bold move of trying to provide the reader with both approaches, citing, for instance, the reaction local residents had when hundreds of black immigrants came to the states of Coahuila and Durango with that of the government. In other words, this essay attempts to provide the reader with the reaction of Mexico, as a whole, so that it can be shown why in many instances, some immigrants, such as the Chinese in Baja California and Sonora, received a warm welcome from state officials, while at the same time, the residents detested their new neighbors and actually went to the extreme of attacking them. The reception of the immigrants varied so widely that when these immigrants wrote back to their respective families, it became difficult for potential immigrants back in Europe, as will be shown in the case of the Italian colonies established in central Mexico, to ascertain the social, economic, and cultural conditions that they would face if they decide to come to the country.

Subsequent chapters will show that adding to the confusion as to realities that newly arrived immigrants faced arose from the fact that the government since the days of President Benito Juárez launched aggressive recruiting tactics that included propaganda campaigns through paid European surrogates to entice those highly desirable European immigrants. So on the one hand, potential immigrants in either Europe or the United States, they not only had to consider the suggestions they had received in letters from their family members or friends already living in the country, but on the other hand, how did these interested parties reconcile what they read in the letters they received with the wonderful incentives the government had promised to new immigrants in the many newspapers that published the propaganda messages? I should add that

the previous question was not a hypothetical scenario faced by interested immigrants wanting to go; the essay demonstrates that in the 1860s, amid the French Intervention, many former Union and Confederate soldiers, read and heard wonderful promises to be had on behalf of the Mexican government, while at the same time, southern newspapers, urged its readers not to be fooled by what President Juárez promised to give U.S. immigrants if they decided to assist him in his efforts to rid his country of the French. The recruiting efforts employed by the government to bring immigrants in order to alleviate what they deemed a social and economic crisis that left it vulnerable to encroachment from either the United States or a European power, has been a topic neglected by the historiography.

The historiography on immigration in Mexico has focused, for the most part, on specific case studies, case in point, some of the aforementioned ethnic groups. In addition, the dissertations that make up most of the literature on this topic also tend to analyze the politics of immigration of just one president. As already noted, this dissertation seeks to find the overarching general trends in the way that several presidencies approached what many politicians at the time called the biggest problem that Mexico faced. In taking this method of analysis, the essay hopes to provide the reader with a better understanding as to why, for instance, Mexico still in the 1920s struggled to find national cohesion, amid the labor strikes, religious upheaval in central Mexico between 1926 and 1929, or the *indigenismo* movement spearheaded through the muralist movement of Diego Rivera or David Siqueiros. The essay will follow a line of argument employed by José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo, a Mexican anthropologist, who astutely argued that “The hatred toward foreigners became an essential part of the process

for the development of a community conscious for Mexicans...repudiating foreigners is how we discovered ourselves as Mexicans.”³

Moreover, I believe that much of the political, social and economic chaos that hampered the country's early years arose out of the fluidity of an undefined international border between the U.S. and Mexico. Despite the fact that after 1853 both governments had agreed to establish an international border that separated countries, the analysis that follows, will show that in many instances, transnationalism migration only added to the instability of Mexico's northern frontier. Applying the theory of transnationalism, which essentially argues that immigrants coming to a new country, while creating new social, political, cultural, and economic ties with their host nation, still maintained strong bonds with their country of origin.⁴ Thus, the fluidity in which

³ José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo, *El Movimiento Antichino en México, 1871-1934: Problemas del Racismo y del Nacionalismo Durante la Revolución Mexicana*, (México D.F., México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1991), pp.84-85.

⁴ For a more complete analysis on transnationalism theory see the following works: Robert Chao Romero, *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882-1940* (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2010). Romero argues that the Chinese in Mexico became transnational migrants because they maintained strong economic ties to China while also beginning the process of assimilation, as in the case of some of the men he studies, who actually married Mexican women, only to send them back to China with their children, while they remained in Mexico operating successful businesses. See Jenifer S. Hirsch “*En el Norte la Mujer Manda: Gender, Generation, and Geography in a Mexican Transnational Community*,” in *Immigration Research for a New Century: Multidisciplinary Perspectives* edited by Nancy Foner, Ruben G. Rumbaut, and Steven J. Gold (New York City, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000), pp.369-389. See Peri L. Fletcher, *La Casa de Mis Sueños: Dreams of Home in a Transnational Mexican Community* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999), where she makes that case that transnationalism theory needs to account for the fact that in many instances transnational migrants do not necessarily assimilate into their new host nation's culture or maintain ties to their country of origin, but rather, that transnationalism creates a “new space in between the two spaces,” in which these migrants experience something different that warrants further research and perhaps a new term and modification to our current understanding of transnationalism. Furthermore, see Sheila Croucher, *The Other Side of the Fence: American Migrants in Mexico* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2009), who in similar fashion as Fletcher, wants to challenge the conventional understanding of transnationalism, by arguing that this theory needs to account for what she calls reverse migration. Whereas in transnationalism theory, immigrants leave a country that is supposedly economically, socially, culturally, and politically inferior, for a new country that has better institutions and opportunities abound, Croucher, asserts in her case study of Americans leaving the U.S. to live in the small town of San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico, that a new term or theory needs to address this phenomenon in which the reverse is taking place. Why would well off Americans leave the U.S. for a small town in Mexico that by their own admission lacks many of the comforts they enjoyed in the U.S.?

these immigrants lived, allowed them to move back and forth between the U.S. and Mexico and so the need to remain loyal to one particular nation is not there, as transnationalism theory maintains, this back and forth movement creates a new and separate space. While this theory cannot apply completely to some of the immigrant groups that I will discuss later, for others, such as the black colonists that went to Baja California in 1919, this theory fits perfectly, because they were part of a much larger phenomenon taking place during this time period in the U.S., which were called the “back to Africa” movement. So in the case of the Baja California colony, it was referred to as the “Little Ethiopia,” in many of the newspaper headlines. So living in this colony allowed the black colonists to work their large plots of land, and then return to southern California to sell many of their agricultural products, this is obviously similar to the cotemporary illegal Mexican immigrant that comes to the U.S. works for a certain period of time, only to return to Mexico to spend the money she or he earned in *el norte*.

Delia Salazar Anaya’s work on immigration in Mexico between 1880 and 1914, suggests that the theory of transnationalism should not just apply to those Americans and Mexicans that came and went at will from one country to another, as this theory has been strongly associated with these two groups in the context of the borderlands fluidity. Anaya argues that transnationalism theory should also apply to those European families, especially the French, Germans, and Spanish, that often times sent an older son to Mexico in order to familiarize himself with the layout of the country, establish a business, and then report back to his family about the prospects of relocating as an entire group. Thus, Anaya emphasizes the role of the

family in transnationalism and how that heavily influenced whether a particular ethnic group succeeded or failed in Mexico.⁵

Nonetheless, the idea of using the borderland region for political or economic opportunities did not arise in the early twentieth century, as will be analyzed later, since the mid-1850s many filibuster attempts occurred on the northern frontier. These Anglos and *Tejanos* wanted to create a separate republic within Mexico that would border the U.S. Creating a successful republic between the U.S. and Mexico would have allowed famed filibusters such as Carvajal or Callahan and its new immigrants to move between these two nations without having to assimilate to either one, but still take advantage of the economic and social opportunities that both bordering countries offered to the citizens of *La Republica de la Sierra Madre*, as the new country was

⁵ Delia Salazar Anaya, *Las Cuentas de los Sueños: La Presencia Extranjera en México a través de las Estadísticas Nacionales, 1880-1914* (México D.F., México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2010), pp.94-97. I should also note here that for the reader interested in getting access to some census data regarding the number of immigrants that came and left Mexico for the period under consideration in this study, this work by Anaya almost exclusively dedicates itself to analyzing the census numbers. For an even more critical analysis of the immigrant numbers, see Anaya's other work: *La Población Extranjera en México, 1895-1990: Un Recuento con Base en los Censos Generales de Población* (México D.F., México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1996). The statistical numbers that Anaya analyzes come from her study of the *Dirección General de Estadística Nacional*, created in 1882, which was under the direction of the *Secretaría de Fomento*, had the arduous task of conducting the first national census in 1895. From 1821 through 1895, most statistical data regarding the number of immigrants that came to Mexico are estimates at best. Not until 1895, it was reported that Mexico had a total population of 12,577,690 million, of which 54,737, were immigrants. Thus only .44 percent of the total population had not been born in Mexico and were subsequently classified as immigrants. Of the total number of immigrants in 1895, only 17,511 were immigrant women or roughly 32 percent; hence the rise in the xenophobia rhetoric about immigrant men engaging in miscegenation with Mexican women. By 1921, after the third national census was conducted, the total national population had reached 14,226,700 million people of which 108,080 were immigrants and only 33,532, were women or 31 percent. The census report also supports the argument that I and other scholars make and that is that most of the immigrants, regardless of the country of origin that they came from, concentrated themselves on the northern frontier, coastal lands, and in Mexico City. For example, of the total 54,737 immigrants in the country in 1895, nearly 29,000 of them resided in Chiapas (14,000), Veracruz (5,200), and Mexico City (9,500), with the rest of them mostly on the northern frontier. In her meticulous work, which also includes many maps, Anaya breaks down the numbers by tracing each particular ethnic group and to which of the 31 Mexican states they went to from 1895 through 1990. These numbers have also been corroborated by famed historian Moisés González Navarro in several of his works dealing with immigration, as well as by other historians. For the purposes of this dissertation, I do not concern myself much with the analysis of the census data regarding immigrants, but rather with their experience in the country, which Anaya's works do not, regardless of their small number or location within the country. So again, I reiterate that for the reader interested in that aspect of the topic of immigrants in Mexico, see any of the aforementioned works as they provide excellent statistical analysis.

going to be called. This envisioned utopian idealism for the borderlands bore out of transnationalism and its effects on the entire region. As one U.S. general testifying before congress on the Texas border troubles in the early 1870s mentioned, no one was in charge in that region.

It seems sadistic in many ways to think that Mexicans could only envisioned themselves as a unified nation by causing pain to immigrants that had just arrived. I make the case in the chapters that follow that it seems evident that at least in some instances, the immigrants, regardless of their ethnicity, served as the perfect scapegoat for the failures of the federal government. In other words, the public, knowing well or perhaps fearful that they could not manifest their anger and frustrations against the government, they instead lashed out angrily at the immigrants that had just relocated as a way to expressed their disapproval with government policies. Interestingly, an argument could be made that perhaps the federal government purposefully brought the immigrants so that they could serve as the nation's safety valve for the failures of government, this in turn deviated attention from the real problems facing the country.

At mid nineteenth-century the country lacked a sense of national spirit that could help it fight off new threats constantly at its door step, especially from the United States. In other words, Gómez Izquierdo's provocative statement "repudiating foreigners is how we discovered ourselves as Mexicans" makes sense in that as an unintended consequence of the federal government's relentless pursuit of European immigrants, the masses would eventually learn to find a sense of national unity when they began to see these new immigrants competing with them for the same jobs or as direct business competitors. Only months after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had been signed, in an attempt to foster national unity and spirit, the government tried to

serve as a catalyst for such an uphill battle. For example, to honor the brave national guardsmen that died in their defense of Mexico City against the invading U.S. army, officials believed that the names of those young men should be celebrated every year on the anniversary of Mexican Independence. To the disappointment of the government, few people attended the celebration of the *Polkos*. The editor of *El Siglo XIX*, José María Iglesias, blamed the country's recent military defeat on society as a whole, and lamented that the public had not celebrated or praised the efforts of the young national guardsmen.⁶ In a desperate attempt to bolster national spirit, General Mariano Arista, the Minister of War, ordered that the cadavers of four regular army officers be disinterred, so that the public could come to the cemetery and celebrate their valiant efforts against the U.S. The president of the *Consejo de Salubridad*, José Ignacio Durán, opposed Mariano Arista's radical move because of the threat of a possible disease outbreak.⁷ Despite the efforts by Mariano Arista, five years after this ceremony began, 60 individuals came to the festivity in 1853, most of whom were veterans of the U.S.-Mexico War.⁸ The civic ceremonies failed to provide the national unity intended and so the quest for national identity continued. Thus, because the arrival of immigrants during the mid-nineteenth century was painfully slow for those liberal politicians that desired large waves of Europeans, their arrival and the troubles they brought with them, nonetheless, had to be viewed as a blessing in disguise. On the one hand, the immigrants did caused havoc, but on the other hand, the labor and capital they brought helped a nation still trying to understand why it had lost half of its national territory and why its millions of citizens had not formed a national defense front.

⁶ *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) 17 September 1848.

⁷ *El Siglo XIX* (Mexico City) 22 August 1848; 12 September 1848.

⁸ *El Universal* (Mexico City) 2 October 1853.

Another analysis that is included in this essay that separates it from the majority of works in the historiography on this topic is a significant discussion on the presence of the black immigrant in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The majority of the literature that mentions blacks almost exclusively analyzes their role during Mexico's colonial period, specifically focusing on their lives as slaves or *curanderos*, as their exoticism added an aura of mystery that in many ways allowed them to survive the colonial era. Yet, when the country won its independence from Spain in 1821, any serious talk on the presence of blacks and how the infant nation would address that segment of the population has been omitted from the historiography. Fundamental questions, such as, when the country's first politicians drafted its constitution, did they believe the black segment of the population needed to be accorded full citizenship rights? In the words of Marco Polo Hernández, "The Mexican official discourse asserts that the Africaness of Mexico has been nearly washed away by *mestizaje* or racial interbreeding."⁹

Echoing Hernández's frustration with the current state of contemporary black studies in Mexico, Ben Vinson asserts that an obvious abundant amount of sources on the colonial period from both ecclesiastical and government archives does exist, but for the period concerning the first years of the country as an independent nation, there is a noticeable absence of information.¹⁰ He remarked that nineteenth-century intellectuals began to acknowledge that indeed people of African descent lived in the country, but emphasized that their presence did not form an essential part of the national fabric.¹¹ At best, during the mid to late nineteenth-century, the Afro-Mexican

⁹ Marco Polo Hernández, *The Africanization of Mexico from the Sixteenth Century Onward: A Review of the Evidence*, (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), p.2.

¹⁰ Ben Vinson III, "La Historia del Estudio de los Negros en México," in *Afroméxico: El Pulso de la Población Negra en México, Una Historia Recordada, Olvidada y Vuelta a Recordar*, Ben Vinson III and Bobby Vaughn (México D.F., México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004), pp.34-35.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.42.

received attention from historians, such as Vicente Riva Palacio's *Los 33 Negros y otros Episodios Nacionales*, but written in a novel format. Vinson points out that Palacio's work tended to romanticize the African slave in Mexico's colonial period as an individual with agency and the ability to not only resist but even thrive under Spanish rule, a case a point, the story of Yanga in 1609 Veracruz. Nonetheless, as had been the case with the Indians during most of the Porfiriato, the nineteenth-century Afro-Mexicans living on the Costa Chica or in Veracruz were forgotten in preference for the nostalgic brave Africans of New Spain. In the immediate years following the 1910 Revolution, when a strong sense of nationalism began to emerge and a social and academic interest in the Indian reached fetish levels, Vinson remarks that the Afro-Mexicans were once again left out of the national conversation.

Even Mexico's foremost authority on the African presence in Mexico, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, in his 1946 landmark work *La Población Negra de México*, only analyzed blacks during the colonial period, emphasizing that in the years leading up to the independence war, the black population had become almost non-existent because of miscegenation. Moreover, during the 1920s through the 1940s, both Aguirre Beltrán and famed anthropologist Manuel Gamio, point out that as a result of a renewed effort by the revolutionary government to focus on the ideology of *mestizaje*, consequently, scholarship began to study the Indian, relegating to the fringes of scholarship the role of blacks in the country's history.¹² It only seems logical to conclude that scholars, along with the population in general, had no interest for studying blacks and assigning them their proper role in Mexico's colonial period, let alone trying to find a proper role for them

¹² Ibid. p.54. Vinson adds that when Aguirre Beltrán published his book *La Población Negra en México* in 1946, it did not receive high praise in Mexico noting that the book only got a slight interest.

in revolutionary Mexico. Despite the tremendous archival research by Aguirre Beltrán, his works did not receive interest from the country's intellectual community from the 1940s through 1990. In fact, his second major work on blacks, *Cuijla: Esbozo Etnográfico de un Pueblo Negro*, completed in 1948, was not published until 1957 because the topic had not garnered any interest.

In the words of Vinson:

Despite the powerful message of the book, the remote location of the towns described in Cuijla only served to reinforce the stereotype of the black population in Mexico, which categorized them as marginal, inaccessible and of inconsequential importance for the modern nation. The Mexican readers could conclude that the towns analyzed in the book were folkloric and interesting, but in essence, they were trapped and frozen in time.¹³

After 1990 more works on the presence of blacks did arise as historians in the U.S. began to take a serious interest in the study of runaway slaves into northern Mexico during the nineteenth-century. The African diaspora in relation to blacks in Mexico has been another topic that has found new territory in the historiography; thus, new micro-history studies on regions outside Veracruz and the Costa Chica have been added to this still small body of literature. Still, the usual focal points of analyses tend to dominate these new works. To begin with, the overwhelming majority of these works, such as Herman L. Bennett's 2003 *Africans in Colonial Mexico* and Joan Cameron Bristol's 2007, *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches*, analyze slaves in the colonial period and their ability to negotiate Spanish rule through the court system, the power of religious ritual and their role in introducing new methods in healing. Mexican historians, on the other hand, while gaining a new interest in studying Afro-Mexico, their central theme still centered on understanding the mestizo and the role that *mestizaje* played in the

¹³ Ibid, p.55.

formation of the modern Mexican; hence blacks are only mentioned as a subtheme, denying this sector of the population their own history. Beltran's work had the tendency to see the history of blacks as that of assimilation and integration; and in the end, it seems that the main objective of his study was that through the anthropological research, his readers had a better understanding of the development of the mestizo in the history of Mexico.¹⁴ Unfortunately for nineteenth-century Afro-Mexicans it is evident that historians, on either side of the border have not taken an interest in understanding their role in society, whether during the Porfiriato or Mexican Revolution.

Nonetheless, as minimal as the historiography on blacks in post-colonial Mexico is, the few works that focus on blacks since 1821, tend to focus on the Costa Chica in the state of Guerrero or at best, on the few Afro—Mexicans in the state of Veracruz. This essay departs from what I deem the traditional body of literature by not focusing on the Afro—Mexicans mentioned above, but instead on those neglected black immigrants, which some conservative estimates put their numbers in the thousands, considering that many African-Americans prior to 1862 ran away from the South to escape the cruelties of slavery. The fundamental question as to why both U.S. and Mexican scholars have neglected to study the presence of blacks remains a mystery, but some hypotheses do exist as to why this has been the case. Chege Githiora, a man born in Kenya but who lived in Mexico for six years, in trying to understand the Mexican psyche as to why it denies its black past, he remarked that when he asked locals about blacks, they responded by saying, "There are no people of color here."¹⁵ Githiora emphasized in his work that people of African descent do not see themselves as having any affinity with black people, citing often that

¹⁴ Ibid, p.56.

¹⁵ Chege Githiora, *Afro-Mexicans: Discourse of Race and Identity in the African Diaspora* (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2008), p.xi.

they are Mexican and not Afro-Mexicans.¹⁶ Simply put, Mexicans, according to Githiora, have a strong belief that Afro-Mexicans have disappeared and that white racism is considered a United States phenomenon; therefore, contemporary Afro-Mexico is not a subject for study.¹⁷ Neither I nor Githiora assert that contemporary Mexico has a large black population, as obviously centuries of miscegenation have almost rendered Afro-Mexicans extinct. Despite the small number of blacks in the country, their stories deserve to be told, and in the words of Marco Polo Hernández, “Mexico cannot deny its third root.” Even Vinson points out that since the mid-1990s the government has launched efforts under a sponsored program called *Nuestra Tercera Raíz*, to begin the arduous task of essentially getting to know the other Mexican citizens that have long been forgotten. Unfortunately, it appears that the only social scientists interested in heeding the government’s call for a better understanding of Afro-Mexicans have been anthropologists and sociologists; as it is evident thus far, historians are still too enamored with the colonial black slave.

The Structure of the Essay

The dissertation begins with chapter one dedicated exclusively to the analysis of the experience of African-Americans in Mexico beginning in the 1850s through the 1920s. This chapter proves the central argument that this dissertation has tries to make in different forms, and that is simple, that the nation did indeed provide liberal immigration policies to all foreigners,

¹⁶ Ibid, p.218.

¹⁷ Ibid, p.207.

including blacks. Moreover, once black immigrants arrived, for the most part, they all experienced a receptive population and government response as well. This long chapter is broken up into three sections; the first deals with the arrival of several hundred black immigrants accompanied by Seminole Indians in the state of Coahuila in 1851. The second focuses on the arrival of over 800 African-Americans in the state of Durango, who had been hired by William H. Ellis to work on the Tlahualilo hacienda in the cotton industry. The official U.S. report on the matter is analyzed and compared to the personal accounts from the black colonists as they described their ordeal to local newspapers from Texas, Alabama, and Louisiana. Many of the colonists claimed that in Durango they were held in bondage; yet, others stated that they loved Mexico and had nothing but great things to say about the people, so the evidence is presented to the reader.

The third subsection looks at the 1920 Baja California black colony near Ensenada formed by Theodore W. Troy. Troy, along with some business partners from southern California purchased over 20,000 acres with the full the intention of developing a large scale agricultural industry in order to sell their products in southern California markets. Troy remarked many times that he had grown tired of the racial prejudice in the United States and had finally decided to relocate to a place he called the “Land of God and Liberty;” and as the reader will see that statement by Troy embodied the sentiment of many blacks going to Mexico. Within this last section, the reader will see the story of Henry O. Flipper, West Point’s first black graduate and his negative view of the population as he traveled there in the early twentieth century. Flipper’s story is compared with that of Jack Johnson, heavyweight boxing champion in the 1910s and his remarkable experience, as he too, just like Troy, loved Mexico.

Thus, this first chapter provides the reader with more than just stories of black immigrants that felt a sense of freedom and deep admiration for the country, but instead, with the stories all of the black immigrants, even those that did not find “God and Liberty” south of the Rio Grande. Nonetheless, in providing both sides of the experience of the black immigrants, I want the reader to see that a general consensus, after much research in both the United States and Mexico, it does appear that both President Obregón and Troy, along with many other black immigrants, were correct in their assessment of the liberal immigration policy that clearly stated that no special privileges were accorded to anyone because of their race; everyone had equal rights before the law.

Chapter two looks at the early struggles of a young nation trying to find a sense of nationhood while at the same time, Agustín de Iturbide, the country’s first emperor, attempted to attract the nation’s first immigrants. The discussion then shifts to the years between 1836 and 1850, in which officials tried to lure both former slaves and recent runaways who had relocated to Texas along the border to come so that they could serve as a buffer zone against further encroachment from the Anglos, after all, the government did not want the Texas fiasco to repeat itself. In this chapter, the reader will get a look as to how some government officials, especially members of the army, such as a glimpse at the diary of Captain José Enrique de la Peña, felt about the presence of black immigrants.

Moreover, this part of the essay also highlights the challenge that the federal government faced when the U.S. invaded Mexico in 1846, and its inability to recruit people to fight them, hence why the government pleaded for immigrants to come and assist this poor nation in its military efforts offering many incentives, such as land and tax exemptions, in return for their

service. As one official put it, absolutely nothing could be expected to come from our people. In fact, through extensive use of diaries, the chapter points out that in many instances, people pleaded with the U.S. soldiers to stay and to help them break lingering colonial bonds as they still felt that the Catholic Church wielded too much power, not to mention that the U.S. presence had brought a sense of stability to a country that appeared to be on the verge of collapsing.

Chapter three takes the conversion from the Reform War through the French intervention. In this part of the essay, the reader will see the desperate measures taken by both President Juárez and Emperor Maximilian to attract immigrants. Both Juárez and Maximilian showed no hesitation in recruiting former U.S. Confederate soldiers in exchange for Mexican citizenship, premium federal lands, freedom of religion, and exemption from future military service. Prior to the end of the U.S. Civil War, Maximilian even suggested to southerners that after relocating to the Empire, they would be allowed to bring their slaves, but they now had to negotiate new labor contracts with their black workers. In essence the debt peonage system allowed slavery to continue, thus, Maximilian knew that he could circumvent national law, which had abolished slavery in 1829, to lure southern whites.

Following Maximilian's blueprint, President Juárez, while living in Paso del Norte as he had been forced out of Mexico City, also tried to recruit Americans to join his republican army to force the French out. President Juárez employed Matías Romero, his minister to the United States, General Placido Vega, General Gaspar Sanchez Ochoa, and General José María Jesús Carvajal to go on a mission to the United States and secure three essential things, first, military assistance by recruiting former Civil War veterans to join the republican army, secondly, the three generals had to secure arms and ammunition, and third, they had also been entrusted with

the equally important task of enticing Americans to establish immigrant colonies. The arduous work performed by Romero, Vega, Ochoa, Carvajal and the challenges they encountered as well as their success encompasses most of this chapter.

Chapter four specifically analyzes the many efforts exerted by President Porfirio Díaz in order to attract immigrants. A discussion as to the rise of what many Mexican scholars called xenophilia and xenophobic politics and how that affected the Indian as he now became, once again, the victim of an onslaught of harsh criticism as to his proper place in a fast changing modernizing nation receives attention. For example, rhetoric such as the one espoused by Matías Romero and Carlos Dufoo equating four Indians only worth what one white immigrant could produce in one day dominated the political and social discourse of the Porfiriato.¹⁸ In addition, the chapter dedicates a significant discussion as to the role the nineteenth century newspaper press played in helping shape the political discourse, with regard to the proper role that the federal government should and should not play in determining whether to spend tax payer money in trying to recruit certain immigrants by providing them with the many aforementioned incentives at the obvious expense of the poor citizens.

As the reader will see, newspapers advocated that the Díaz administration needed to more aggressively recruit the European immigrant, insisting that such immigrants, through miscegenation, could yield a new breed infused with the proper work ethic, not to mention the more desirable physiological characteristics, which seemed to dominate a significant portion of the discourse of immigration politics. On the other hand, the chapter also highlights the many

¹⁸ Moisés González Navarro, "Las Ideas Raciales de los Científicos, 1890-1910," *Historia Mexicana* vol.37 no.4 (April-June, 1988): p.572.

newspaper reports that insisted that the federal government should stay out of the colonization schemes, as they had been an utter failure and that such expensive endeavors should be relegated to the private sector, which in many instances, had been more successful than the Díaz administration. In this chapter, extensive references to *El Monitor Republicano*, *El Siglo XIX*, *El Tiempo*, *La Voz de México*, *El País*, among other newspapers, have been made to provide the best assessment possible as to the public sentiment regarding immigrants.

Following a similar line of argument, chapter five looks at the development of Italian colonies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and the fury that their presence unleashed as the reaction by both government officials and the general public. Moreover, the sentiment of many *hacendados* who pleaded with Díaz for assistance in providing them with quality immigrant workers is also analyzed. Many of the letters come from the Porfirio Díaz collection at the Universidad Iberoamericana. The next subsection sheds light on what many scholars call *La Conquista Pacífica* by U.S. citizens. With Díaz, according to his critics, giving land and government concessions, such as rights to rich mines, not to mention entering into contracts with U.S. companies for the construction of railroad tracts, they felt that U.S. entrepreneurs, once again, had a plan to take over more territory without picking up a single rifle as their substantial investment capital now did the fighting for them, hence why this new era received the name *La Conquista Pacífica*. What further infuriated the public, as opposed to the mid nineteenth century, when newspapers called for the masses to arm themselves and fight off the Americans, toward the end of the Porfiriato, many newspapers, such as *El Tiempo*, now frequently printed stories advocating that the United States wished nothing more than the wellbeing for the country.

As a result of this change in tone with regard to the invasion of U.S. capital and immigrants, a call for a renewed sense of patriotism began to appear, unfortunately for the immigrants during this period, this new patriotism appeared more as a form of racist rhetoric which included physical attacks on Chinese, Italian, Mormon and U.S. immigrants just to mention a few. This chapter introduces the argument that people did not necessarily hate the immigrants; in fact, I point out several examples in which local residents who lived near foreign colonies, such as those of the Mormons in Chihuahua or those of the Russians in Baja California, actually worked as laborers for these prosperous immigrants and allowed their children to attend the schools these colonists had erected within their government land grants. In other words, the racist rhetoric, I argue, might have been hiding the anger people felt toward their own government but unleashed it against the immigrants knowing they could not do so against the iron fist of Díaz.

Chapter six focuses on the end of the Porfiriato and the rising social and political tensions. By the early 1900s, amid the many labor strikes taking place in the north, and with a rebirth in patriotism, people did show in some instances compassion for many of the abuses that Chinese immigrants had suffered at the hands of company managers and government officials. In the chapter, for example, it is pointed out that when a ship full of Chinese immigrants bound for San Francisco, California, had to be deviated for the port city of Mazatlan, as U.S. customs no longer admitted them, the town residents came to their assistance as many of them were dying of hunger.

Furthermore, the Indian question, once again is revisited, but this time, the political turmoil is highlighted as some newspapers, such as *El Universal* argued that the regeneration of the Indians had no chance of ever succeeding. On the other hand, *El Tiempo* made the case that

Indians did not have a savage character. *El Tiempo* remarked on the impressive achievements of the Indians by citing that many intellectuals, such as Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, a writer, had begun to push for an *indigenismo* movement that attempted to give the Indians their proper role in the country's history, while also advocating Díaz stop his "*extranjerismo desmesurado*." The favoritism that had been allocated for foreign immigrants not only hurt the Indians but also the mestizo population, which made up most of the country's population that had suffered; hence the birth of the Mexican Revolution. This chapter concludes with a discussion on the attempts by the federal government to do what it termed *autocolonización*, a plan in which the country's northern frontier *baldíes* were to be populated by migrants relocating from the center of the country to that region. The failure of *autocolonización* receives attention in that latter half of the chapter.

Concluding with the long tenure of the Díaz administration; chapter seven looks at the ambiguity manifested by the revolutionary government on future immigration policies. On the one hand, a new call for stricter immigration policies dominated the 1920s and early 1930s. Ramón Beteta, the *Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores*, made the argument that although he did not advocate for the federal government to close completely its borders to future immigrants, he insisted that officials only admit immigrants that did not hold racist views toward people of dark skin, which obviously included Mexicans. Andres Molina Enríquez rallied behind the popular slogan of *¡No More Spaniards!* Luis Morones, head of the largest labor union CROM, proposed a policy in which factories had to be composed of a labor force of at least eighty percent Mexicans, severely restricting the opportunities available for new foreign immigrants. On the other hand, many politicians, knowing well that the country had just come out of a devastating

decade long revolution, which had left the country's coffers empty, still insisted that the best way out of the financial crisis involved bringing the right type of immigrants to help alleviate the nation's financial woes. However, just as important as the capital these immigrants brought, officials believed that the newcomers could also assist in helping bring the masses out of their supposed backward mentality and into the more progressive modern era. For example, in the early 1930s, President Abelardo Rodríguez came to the conclusion that the nation would remain stagnant because it did not have a nationally defined social character. Echoing the sentiment of President Rodríguez, *El Imparcial* also insisted on bringing new immigrants. The political debate as to the direction the country should take with regards to the possible admission of future immigrants makes up the bulk of the discussion in this concluding chapter.

Lastly, in the concluding remarks section of the dissertation, I will reiterate the main points stressed throughout the chapters and make some suggestions as to where this field of transnationalism immigration politics from the mid nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries should go. I will also discuss where I believe my work fits within the current body of literature.

A Word on the Sources:

Since this dissertation does not exclusively focus on one particular immigrant group or region, the primary sources consulted come from a variety of locations across both Mexico and the United States. My first stop was at the *Archivo General de la Nación* in Mexico City, where no single *galería* provided me with most of the sources that I was looking for. For example, in

galería 2, under the *fondo* DGIPS (*Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales*), there was extensive reference to the “activities by foreigners,” especially those of Chinese, Lebanese, Japanese, French, and Germans. *Galería 5* under the *fondos* of *Relaciones Exteriores* and *Secretaría de Justicia*, primarily focusing on the years between 1860 and 1900, highlighted the criminal activities of foreigners of all nationalities, and the need by the federal government and state governments to implement effective policies with regard to the various colonization projects that had been contemplated under the Díaz administration. Moreover, under this same *fondo*, I found a lot of correspondence between officials in the country and the heads of Mexican consulate offices from across the world, but especially from the United States. The correspondence highlighted the heated political debates as to the possibility of allowing former Confederate soldiers from entering the country, as discussed by José Fernando Ramírez, the *Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores*, 1866, with Luis Arroyo, head of the consulate office in New Orleans. I should add that a lot of these subtopics relating to immigration overlapped from one *galería* to another, such as *Relaciones Exteriores* in *galería 5* with the *fondo* “*Correspondencia de Diversas Autoridades*” in *galería 4*. For the post-revolutionary years, the Ramo Obregón—Calles was very helpful, as it allowed me to see if any immigration policies had changed since the Díaz regime.

At the Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, under the supervision of the *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*, I found most of the correspondence of Matías Romero, Mexican Minister to the United States, under President Benito Juárez, with officials back home and the many heated exchanges he had with the United States Secretary of State, William H. Seward, during the 1860s. Secretary Seward had advocated for the United States to search for Latin American

countries willing to take freed blacks who had decided to form colonies abroad. When Romero heard of the intentions both President Lincoln and Seward had, he warned the Secretary not to even consider Mexico as an option. This particular archive included many newspaper clippings from the United States that Romero sighted as evidence that Seward was planning on sending the recently freed blacks to Mexico. Furthermore, I found in this archive the actual colonization plan as crafted by Emperor Maximilian in order to attract immigrants.

Also in Mexico City, the Colección Porfirio Díaz, located within the Universidad Iberoamericana, provided me many newspaper clippings from *El Siglo XIX*, *El Monitor Republicano*, *El Tiempo*, *La Libertad*, *El País*, and *La Voz de México*, among others. The many complaints that the masses had about all the concessions Díaz had given to foreigners are included in this large archive. His correspondence with the officials in charge of running the official government established colonies throughout the northern frontier also contributed to my research project. For example, throughout the late 1800s, many attempts had been made by filibusters, often times disguised as legitimate colonizing agents, to take over the country's northern frontier, in particular the territory of Baja California Norte; so the many letters he exchanged with Luis E. Torres, the official responsible for Baja California Norte, are included in this archive.

In the state of Baja California, I went to the Archivo Histórico del Estado de Baja California, in Mexicali, and the Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas located on the campus of the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Tijuana, in order to find information on the African American colony that developed in that region in the early 1920s. At the UABC, I received valuable information from Jorge Martínez Zepeda who helped me navigate their archive. As a

matter of fact, Zepeda actually took me to Ensenada and showed me a hotel that had been built by these black colonists. According to Zepeda, the hotel had been sold by the black family which owned it through the 1960s. The sources dealing with immigration at these two small archives mostly deal with the arrival of Chinese, Japanese, and Russian immigrants. The complaints that the local residents had against these immigrants abound at these two sites.

At the University of California Berkeley, the Placido Vega Papers, Charles James Papers and Jesús Ortega Papers, within the Bancroft Library, contained a wealth of information on the constant requests that generals Vega and Ortega received from U.S. citizens, especially former Union and Confederate soldiers who had shown interest in going to Mexico in order to assist President Juárez in his military efforts to rid his country of the French occupation in the mid-1860s.

For the discussion on Henry O. Flipper in chapter 7, I consulted the Albert Fall Papers at the Center for Southwest Research in the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, the Rio Grande Historical Collections at New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, and the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives in Santa Fe. Interestingly enough, many of Senator Fall's papers were actually located at the Huntington Library in San Marino, California. At the Huntington Library I want to thank Dixie Dillon, the library assistant and Peter Blodgett who found for me seven letters that Henry O. Flipper wrote to Senator Fall in the 1910s. For a small fee, Dillon photocopied the letters and sent them to me; saving me time and money. I took the same approach with several other private collections, such as the Theodore Draper Papers at the Hoover Institution: On War, Revolution, and Peace, located at Stanford University; and so I thank Ronald M. Bulatoff for sending me some papers that I requested. For some interviews

with former Mormon colonists on Mexico's northern frontier, I received tremendous help from Stephanie George, Collections Curator at the Center for Oral and Public History at California State University Fullerton. The San Diego Historical Society assisted me in finding primary sources on the constant filibuster movements near the border between California and Baja California. I have to add that these filibuster movements, contrary to popular belief that they were simply initiated by Anglos subscribing to the Manifest Destiny ideology is somewhat wrong, as these agitation movements often included many African Americans and Mexicans wishing to take over Baja California Norte and creating a new country.

When researching any aspect of Mexican history, a stop at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection Library at the University of Texas Austin is almost as mandatory as going to the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City and so I made a stop at this important research center. In Austin I also visited the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, where I got access to the *San Antonio Daily Express*, which consistently reported on the 1895 African American colony that developed in the state of Durango to work in the cotton fields of the hacienda Tlahualilo. The man responsible for transporting the 800 colonists that left their homes in Alabama and Georgia was William H. Ellis. After the fiasco that resulted from this colonization scheme, Ellis gave the *San Antonio Daily Express* an interview about his side of the story as he had been accused of defrauding these poor colonists; as far as I am aware, this was the only interview he gave, thus the need to consult this newspaper. Moreover, within the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, I found the official medical report submitted by Dr. A.H. Evans to the governor of Texas, Charles A. Culberson, in 1895, as he requested to know the facts as to actual number of colonists who had returned from Tlahualilo to Eagle Pass, Texas,

and had been ordered by federal and state officials to relocate to a military camp set up to quarantine them from smallpox disease.

In the state of Arizona, the Arizona Historical Society's library provided me with Frederick Law Olmsted's 1857 diary that he wrote as he traveled through Texas and into northern Mexico and vividly described seeing runaway slaves making their way south across the Rio Grande River. The Special Collections at the University of Arizona Library, among many of its original primary source manuscripts that I consulted there, the José María Arana Papers, gave me valuable insight as to the degree of hatred many Sonorenses espoused, often times with physical attacks, toward the Chinese immigrants in their state. Within the microfilm section of the library, I consulted the U.S. government records relating to the internal affairs of Mexico, as well as the consular correspondence between those offices located on the northern frontier with Washington D.C. Lastly, through online databases, such as ProQuest's congressional database, I accessed many of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate hearings on the constant border troubles because of the filibuster and Indian raids; as well as hearings relating to the practicality of sending African Americans to certain parts of Mexico to work and live as colonists officially sponsored by the U.S. government.

I have just briefly described many of the archives and libraries I consulted for this massive research project; nonetheless, many other institutions and libraries were part of this process, as you can see from the bibliography. Because of the constraints that are presented in this monograph, suffice it to say that many other individuals aided me in finding additional government documents, books, diaries, newspapers, and other primary sources to strengthen my argument. Like any other research project of this scope, not all visits to every location yielded

the results that I had hoped for, but even under these circumstances, I still received valuable assistance from staff at these locations. For example, prior to me deciding to go to the Archivo Historico de Ensenada, I contacted Francisco Alberto Nuñez Tapia, the director, and asked him if the archive had any reference to the black colonists in Baja California. Within a couple of days, Tapia contacted me and informed me that the archive in Ensenada did not have the information I requested. Upon hearing the news, I had mixed emotions, on the one hand I was disappointed as I had hoped that this archive would provide me with a wealth of primary sources, but it did not. On the other hand, after some reflection, I realized that Tapia had actually done me a favor, as he had gone out of his way to assist me, by obviously saving me a long trip and the expenses that are associated with travel. In the end, I have to admit that I came across several people such as Tapia, and I can only say that I am thankful for their service.

CHAPTER 1

Finding the Elusive Freedom in the Land of God and Liberty:
The Case of the African American Colonies in Northern Mexico

While thus far in this work the focus has been on the immigrant experience of Europeans, Americans, and Chinese, this particular chapter looks at the stories of the African-Americans that decided to seek fortune in a land that they believed and hoped would provide them with all the advantages that had not been accorded to them in the United States for the simple fact that their skin color supposedly deemed them an inferior race. From the rise of liberal politicians in the nineteenth century, Mexico appeared to be a modern nation that did not discriminate an individual on the basis of the person's skin color alone; on the contrary, it seems that Mexico rejoiced in welcoming any immigrant wanting to work or seek freedom from an oppressor, as the many thousands of run-away black slaves that escaped the U.S. South had done since the 1830s.

Therefore, when many black men requested to know if the government would welcome their presence as newly established colonists, it did not surprised me to read many first-hand accounts stating that the Mexican held no reservation in admitting black colonists, despite the racist rhetoric that had been publically espoused by many liberal politicians that had been advocating since the 1850s that Mexico only grant admission to white immigrants. Liberal politicians maintained that white immigrants were the only individuals capable of assisting an ailing nation in desperate need of not only foreign capital, but just as important, a need to populate its northern frontier amid constant threats from possible filibuster attempts. So when I read a statement given by President Álvaro Obregón in which he stated that his country welcomed any immigrant

regardless of his or her skin color, I kept wondering which political faction was telling the truth as to the actual conditions any possible immigrant would face when they arrive in the country. President Obregón gave the following statement to a group of African-Americans interested in relocating to the state of Baja California Norte in 1922:

Please be informed now without waiting for formal answers, that no such law need to be passed as the structure of our Constitution and Laws, forbids race distinction and whenever they become citizens they will enjoy the same privileges accorded to all citizens with no regard to color, creed, physical condition or degree of wealth.¹⁹

The president's statement came amid a concern by a group of African-Americans seeking reassurance from the government that their desire to settle in the country would not be impeded by officials on the mere fact they were black. Upon reading that statement by President Obregón, I kept wondering what degree of truth, if any, existed in the various speeches made not only by Obregón but even by many other politicians since the days of President Juárez that their country held no racial prejudice against anyone wanting to come to work and make this new country their home, so long as they abide by all laws.

With that being said, the analysis that follows in this chapter looks at the experience of various African Americans that went to Mexico in search of a better life. As to be expected, the experience of each of African American obviously varied; but I am trying to see, given the primary sources consulted, if the variation in the positive or negative experience is so great from the colony that went to Coahuila in 1851 versus the colony that had been erected in Tlahualilo, Durango in 1895, differed so much that a pattern cannot be determine so as to draw definitive conclusions. The historical context in which each particular colony developed obviously played

¹⁹ *California Eagle* (Los Angeles), 1 July 1922.

a big role as to how each of the three African American colonies under consideration responded to the criticism they received. For instance, the colony that came to Coahuila in 1851 arrived amid rising political tensions between conservative and liberal factions, keeping in mind that it had only been three years since the country had lost nearly half of its national territory to the United States. So inevitably these African Americans in 1851 Coahuila encountered a more weary government, to say the least, than those black immigrants faced under a Díaz administration, or than those black investors that relocated to Mexico from southern California when President Álvaro Obregón so openly welcomed their presence in the early 1920s. Thus, the political variation, or some may argue, the instability from the 1850s through the 1920s, played a definitive role, as to not only how African Americans experienced Mexico, but for the entire purposes of this essay, how different immigrants from around the world viewed their stayed in the country.

It should also be noted, that the experience that each African American immigrant endured in Mexico also varied because of the political context from which they were leaving the U.S. For example, those black immigrants coming to Coahuila in the early 1850s are not referred to as “African-Americans” in the primary sources since many are referred to as run-away slaves. The black immigrants that went to Tlahualilo, Durango, in the mid-1890s are known as colonists because after 1865 in the U.S. they are no longer held in bondage. The African Americans seeking to find fortune in Baja California Norte in the 1920s are going as investors, relocating to a large tract of land that they hope to turn into an agricultural enterprise citing in their request that the prejudice they constantly endure in the United States prevents them from achieving a better life. Having just described briefly the different circumstances by which each group of

African Americans decided to go to Mexico, it is easier to better understand why each particular group manifested itself in a positive or negative way toward the Mexican government.

The chapter that follows is divided up in the following manner. First, a discussion of the arrival of the first large wave of black immigrants beginning in the 1850s to northern Mexico begins the chapter; follow by an analysis of the detail conversations Mexican minister to the United States Matías Romero had with the U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward with regards to the various colonization schemes that had been proposed by both private investors and several government officials that saw the need to relocate the large black population to other countries that suited them best. The conversations between Romero and Seward centered on providing a tropical type of environment that would enable the black colonists to thrive while working in cotton, sugar cane, and tobacco industries. Following the analysis of Romero and Seward's discussions, the chapter looks at the story of the 800 African Americans that left the state of Alabama in 1895 to go work for *The Agricultural Industrial and Colonization Company of Tlahualilo* in a large hacienda in the state of Durango. At the end, a short discussion on the African Americans that left Los Angeles in 1920 to erect a colony near Ensenada concludes the chapter. Lastly, while the primary focus in this section of the essay had been designated for the three aforementioned colonies, the chapter will also include the individual stories of some prominent African Americans, such as that of Henry O. Flipper, West Point's first black graduate, and Jack Johnson, heavyweight boxing champion, who traveled and lived in Mexico at the beginning of the twentieth century and their remarks about what they endured in that country made headlines on both sides of the international border.

Seeking Refuge South of the Border, 1850-1862:

During the 1830s and 1840s intense fighting among the Creeks, Seminoles, and Kickapoos in the state of Florida forced the Seminole Nation, led by Wild Cat, to seek a more stable region outside Florida to relocate. The Creek Nation wanted to incorporate the Seminoles and Kickapoos into their nation, but fearing a loss of their culture, the Seminoles abandoned Florida in 1850. Along with Wild Cat, a group of black people, led by John Horse, decided to join the Seminole leader. The Creek Nation had grown notorious for enslaving African Americans and often times selling them to plantation owners in the Carolinas. The route taken by the Seminoles and John Horse had many stumbling blocks along the way, as some slave owners attempted to recapture their black people leaving with the expedition. Wild Cat had no clear plan as to where he wanted to settle with his people; all he knew is that he wanted to get to Indian Territory as quickly as possible. Once in Indian Territory, Wild Cat traveled to Mexico in order to secure a safe travel pass through the border and to see if the government there would allow him and his people to settle on the country's northern frontier. Having secured a large tract of land, over 70,000 acres of land to be exact, Wild Cat and John Horse settled in the state of Coahuila in 1851.

The government, however, prior to granting Wild Cat the 70,000 acres of land it required the incoming settlers to go on military expeditions to rid the northern frontier of the constant raids unleashed in that region by Indians who had not come under submission since the country's

Independence victory over Spain.²⁰ Immediately upon their arrival, the government ordered one hundred Seminoles and blacks to accompany a group of seventy colonists living nearby to go after a group of Indians that had just crossed the Rio Grande from the U.S. side of the border and had only caused trouble for Mexican border towns.²¹ Suspicious of the blacks now living near the border, the United States War Department sent Colonels Samuel Cooper and Robert Temple to Eagle Pass so that they could talk to Wild Cat and find out his true motives for relocating his people to Mexico. Wild Cat informed the Colonels that he had left the United States because he desired a better life for his people as he had grown tired of constant battles with the Creek Nation, and that his move south of the border was only temporary as he wished to negotiate with the U.S. government for a piece of land in the state of Texas.²² The Seminole leader also informed Colonels Cooper and Temple that he had no interest in becoming the black immigrant's leader or in assisting future runaway slaves from joining him and John Horse in Coahuila; a statement which only helped fueled the already strong suspicion among many blacks that Wild Cat secretly planned to sell them at a later date to Texas slaveholders. Mexico attracted large numbers of runaways and presented a series of problems for slaveholders. Since 1850, United States officials had been attempting to negotiate an extradition treaty that would include such runaways, but the Mexican government would not consider such a stipulation.

²⁰ *El Siglo XIX* (Mexico City) , 3 September 1852; Múzquiz Records, Box 9, Folder 93, August 18, 1852; Múzquiz, Coahuila, México Collection; Yale Collection of Western Americana; Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; *Informe de la Comisión Pesquisidora de la Frontera del Norte* (México D.F., México: Imprenta del Gobierno en Palacio, 1877) , pp.260-62.

²¹ *La Patria* (Mexico City) , 22 March 1851.

²² *Memorandum of a Conversation Between Wild Cat and Colonels Cooper and Temple, Eagle Pass, Texas, 27 March, 1851, Sent to the Secretary of War Charles M. Conrad*; Box 32, vol.65, pp.601-608; Grant Foreman Papers, Manuscript Division, Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art; Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Government officials also provided bonuses in the form of money and goods to the Seminoles and *Mascogos* (the name given to the blacks that accompanied Wild Cat by the government) for their extraordinary military service rendered on behalf of the nation. Despite the fact that the Seminoles, Kickapoos, and the *Mascogos* lived on the same land grant, which eventually became known as the *Hacienda de Nacimiento*, a true sense of community unity did not exist among the colonists. On the one hand, both the Seminoles and Kickapoos did not intend to stay in the country for a long period of time, as they hoped that soon the United States would recognize their tribes as nations and grant them a large piece of land in which they could reside without being bothered. On the other hand, the couple of hundred blacks that entered Coahuila in 1851 had no intention of going back to the southern United States as they feared possible re-enslavement. Consequently, the *Mascogos* upon settling in the hacienda, they immediately began their new life by erecting homes and planting various staple crops; and in turn, they no longer wanted to accompany the army and Seminoles on military expeditions in pursuit of nomad Indians arguing that they had families and homes to look after and could no longer afford to abandon their most valuable possessions. The decision taken by John Horse and his people to abstain from warfare created a strong resentment from both government officials and the Seminoles.

Despite the *Mascogos*'s decision to remain neutral in the country's internal affairs, when they first arrived in Coahuila government officials had nothing but praises to say about their valiant military efforts on behalf of the nation. For example, when in 1851, José María Jesús Carvajal attempted to take the state of Coahuila and create a separate republic, the Seminoles and

blacks fought bravely, inflicting heavy losses and forcing Carvajal to retreat to Texas.²³ In order to repel the invading forces of Carvajal, Col. Emil Langberg, a man born in Denmark who had decided to relocate to Mexico in search of adventure, had quickly moved up the military hierarchy and by the 1850s, commanded the forces in Chihuahua and Coahuila that had the responsibility of stopping further *aventureros* from entering the country in search of runaway slaves.²⁴ Langberg reported that he had received notification that some 200 blacks living in Monclova el Viejo, Chihuahua, were interested in joining his army in order to stop the Texan filibusters from recapturing some of their fellow black neighbors.²⁵ Noteworthy here is the intensity with which the government fought the invading forces from not just taking further national territory, but also its tenacity to vigorously defend runaway black slaves from being captured and taken back to the United States. This dedication, which required both manpower and money, demonstrated the sincerity that officials had when they espoused harsh criticism toward the system of slavery.

I have to argue that the efforts exerted by the federal and state government to protect the rights and lives of its black colonists, did not arise out of a simple sympathetic feeling toward the

²³ Vicente E. Manero, *Documentos Interesantes, Sobre Colonización: Los ha Reunido, Puesto en Orden Cronológico y los Pública* (México D.F., México: Imprenta de Hijos de Murguía, 1878) , p.31; *Report of Committee of Investigation Sent in 1873 by the Mexican Government to the Frontier of Texas* (New York City, New York: Baker and Godwin Printers, 1875) , pp.188-190 and p.331; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Mexico* vol.5 (San Francisco, California: History Company, 1886) , pp.603-6.

²⁴ Major Jefferson Van Horn to Asst. Adj. Gen., October 1, 1849; Record Group 98, National Archives, Department of New Mexico, Quartermaster General Records, Commissary General Records, 1848-1861, Microfilm Roll 1; State of New Mexico Records Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Archivo Historico de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Expediente 6-7-146. I should state that besides the military expeditions that Langberg had been ordered to carry out from Mexico City, he had also been entrusted to establish three colonies along the northern frontier to prevent further encroachment. Therefore, Langberg reported that he tried to attract Mexican settlers living in Texas to relocate back to Mexico with the promise that they would receive plenty of fertile lands and a monthly stipend of eighteen pesos a month. Whether he succeeded in attracting Mexicans in Texas into coming back to Mexico, Langberg does not disclose that in his diary.

²⁵ Comisario Municipal de Múzquiz, October 25, 1855, Box 8; Luis Alberto Guajardo Papers, Western Americana Division, Beinecke Library of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

suffering these colonists had endured in the United States; these individuals had earned the respect of officials for their tremendous dedication to work in their government land grants and to defend their new found freedom in Mexico. These black colonists had so much passion and desire to remain in Mexico that when José María Carvajal entered Coahuila with an army of over 300 men, which included many blacks, the Seminoles and black colonists bravely fought the invaders.²⁶ Thus, this battle for control of the northern frontier, pitted black colonists from Mexico against blacks from the United States. None of the sources consulted mention whether any of the black soldiers that accompanied Carvajal deserted once they entered Mexico. Moreover, the sources do not disclose whether Carvajal's black soldiers were actually slaves forced to join the military expedition or if they had already earned their freedom. Nonetheless, what is remarkable was the willingness of both groups of blacks to do what it took to impress their respective authority. Federal officials and Governor Vidaurri had to be pleased that they now had black colonists willing to fight for their new country, at a time when the nation's army generals had a difficult task in putting together a respectable number of men to fend off Indian raids and filibusters. Not surprisingly then, Emil Langberg in 1860, expressed disappointment when he was ordered to lead a military expedition, only to have his soldiers run away at the first sight of enemy forces.

The Seminoles and blacks worked arduously on behalf of the government. Between January and May of 1852, the Seminoles and blacks had to go after *Comanches* and *Lipans* into the state of Chihuahua, for which that particular state government paid them \$18,000 dollars for 74 scalps

²⁶ Ibid., Coronel D. Emilio Langberg, "*Itinerario de la Expedición desde San Carlos a Monclova El Viejo hecho por el Coronel D. Emilio Langberg, 1851.*"

and several prisoners taken during the battle. Beyond just the monetary compensation, the government decided to build a school for the children and a small chapel for the brave colonists. Furthermore, in the spring of 1856, the government also provided the necessary funding for salaried instructors in religion, agriculture, reading, and writing.²⁷ I should note here that not all of the primary sources consulted make the distinction as to which level of government (local, state, or federal) at times ordered the Seminoles and blacks to go into battle against *Comanches*, as well as which government agency rewarded them for their efforts. In similar fashion as the government, the residents of the town of Múzquiz also provided the black colonists with agricultural equipment and seed so that their new neighbors could succeed in their endeavor.²⁸ In their new home they built cabins, planted gardens and crops, hunted and fished, and raised livestock.²⁹

Amid the personal success the black colonists had begun to achieve in their new country early on, internal turmoil with their Seminole neighbors made their lives in the country difficult as they had to constantly keep proving their loyalty to the government. Wild Cat's role as leader of both colonies caused great conflict among the black immigrants because they strongly

²⁷ *Report of Committee of Investigation Sent in 1873 by the Mexican Government to the Frontier of Texas* (New York City, New York: Baker and Godwin Printers, 1875), p.410.

²⁸ William H. Emory, *Report on the United States and Mexican Survey* (Washington D.C.: Cornelius Wendell Printers, 1857), p.43.

²⁹ U.S. House. *Depredations on the Frontiers of Texas*. 43rd Congress., 1st Session., House Executive Doc. 257., Deposition 545, John Kibbets., p.22; Text from Congressional Documents; Available from: ProQuest; Accessed: 06/12/2012; It should be noted here that Jane Cazneau, who traveled through Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras during the early 1850s attest to the fact that she witnessed the relationship between the Seminoles and black colonists to resemble the one they had in Florida during the 1830s; meaning, the blacks tended to still be submissive to the Seminoles. Cazneau's account, nonetheless, should be read with some degree of bias, since it is known that during this time period she had strongly advocated for economic development along this border region citing the many advantages that awaited investors. Thus, Cazneau, attempted to reassure potential investors that blacks living in Mexico and near the border would not be a cause for concern because they still submitted to the will of the Seminoles.

suspected that Wild Cat threatened their freedom. For instance, Thomas Cuffy, a respected leader among the black colonists, accused Wild Cat of deception by requesting that he accompany him on a trip from Coahuila to San Antonio, Texas, so that he could serve him as a Spanish interpreter. Once in San Antonio, Cuffy stated that Wild Cat sold him to an American slaveholder for eighty pesos and when his new owner took him home, he met another black man who also said that Wild Cat had sold him into slavery. Thomas Cuffy retold this story because he escaped from his new owner's home and made his way back to his colony in Coahuila.³⁰ Though Wild Cat gave many black colonists in Coahuila legitimate reason for them to be worry, as Thomas Cuffy's experience served as evidence; John Horse, pointed out that Wild Cat had personally saved him from the hands of slave raiders in the fall of 1852.

While John Horse attended a dance in Piedras Negras, he became involved in a brawl with a Texan who shot him and took him back to Texas in handcuffs. Wild Cat succeeded in securing John Horse's release by actually paying the slaveholder five hundred dollars. In addition, Wild Cat had promised Warren Adams, the famous runaway catcher, not only the money mentioned above, but to give him many young runaway blacks in return for John Horse; and as reported by the *San Antonio Western Texas*, the Seminole leader never gave Adams any black men, women, or children.³¹ The efforts undertaken by Wild Cat to save John Horse proved to some black

³⁰ *Contra Gato del Monte de la Nación Extranjera Seminole por Haber Vendido unos Negros Libres de los Inmigrados al Territorio Mexicano*; Legajo 45, 1853, Número 1719; Archivo de la Secretaría de Gobierno, Saltillo, Coahuila, 1848-1876, vol.44, pp.185-91; Manuscript Division, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; Berkeley, California. Amid the allegations leveled against Wild Cat from many black colonists, the governor of Coahuila Santiago Vidaurri asked John Horse to control his people and order them to submit to the overall colony leader Wild Cat, and when John Horse succeeded in doing so, the governor rewarded the black colonists' leader with many goods. See: Letter from Jesús Garza González, May 24 and November 1856; Múzquiz Records, Box 10, Folder 107, May-June, 1856; Box 10, Folder 108, July-December, 1856; Múzquiz, Coahuila, México Collection; Yale Collection of Western Americana; Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

³¹ *San Antonio Western Texas* (San Antonio, Texas) 18 November and 2 December, 1852.

colonists that he had their best interest at heart. So the actions by Wild Cat in regards to his feelings toward the black colonists, ambiguous at best, only fueled the turmoil among them which prompted them to ask the government to relocate them to a new location further from the border, to which the government happily responded by moving them some three hundred miles further south.³²

It should be mention that although most of the primary sources note that both Coahuilenses and black colonists lived in fear from slave catchers and filibusters on Mexico's border states along the Rio Grande River; residents living along the border on the U.S. side also pointed out that they to feared the constant raids that Seminoles, blacks, and Mexicans conducted on Texas border towns. In one particular instance in 1854, Wild Cat and John Horse, along with several of their fellow colonists, went into the town of Eagle Pass, and brought back to Piedras Negras several horses and cattle head, which they alleged had been stolen by American cattle rustlers. A Texan followed Wild Cat and John Horse back into Coahuila where he complained to local authorities that the Indians and blacks had stolen cattle and horses from Texas ranchers; but Wild Cat responded by saying that half of the horses and cattle he had brought back belonged to the governor of Coahuila. Local authorities sided with Wild Cat and allowed him to keep the animals; a Múzquiz resident remarked at the bravery displayed by his black neighbors and their willingness to put their lives at risk in order to meet their obligation with the governor of Coahuila.³³ Thus, because of the success attained³³ by the black colonists in Coahuila, American traveler Frederick Law Olmsted remarked that in a three month period alone, he witnessed at

³² Letter from Ramón, March 31, 1859; Múzquiz Records, Box 10, Folder 116, January-March, 1859; Múzquiz, Coahuila, México Collection; Yale Collection of Western Americana; Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

³³ *Texas State Times* 5 October, 1855.

least forty runaway slaves entered into Piedras Negras.³⁴ Concerned, Texas slaveholders assembled public meetings in West Texas to formulate measures to restrain their blacks and capture runaways, even if it meant crossing into Mexico.³⁵ Adhering to the pleas of the Texas slaveholders, Captain James Hughes Callahan in late 1855 entered into Piedras Negras with several armed men only to be defeated by black and Seminole fighters, but before returning to Texas, Callahan burned the town of Piedras Negras.³⁶ Constant conflict along the border led James Gadsden to notify his counterparts in Mexico that the recently signed Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo could not be enforced if the Mexican government did not do its part to control its side of the border.³⁷

Only weeks after Callahan had been defeated, he tried for a second time to retake runaway slaves under the pretext that he was going after rebel Indians; however, this second time, he failed to win support among Texans for this second military endeavor. What is noteworthy about this second expedition that never materialized for Captain Callahan is that when authorities heard of Callahan's second attempt, they again called upon the Seminoles, blacks, and some Coahuilenses to form another defense militia. To the disappointment of government officials, this second time, the black colonists refused to join the armed expedition and this in turn forced authorities to threatened them with expulsion if they did not participate in the defense effort.

³⁴ Frederick Law Olmsted, *Journey through Texas: A Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (New York City, New York: Dix, Edwards and Co., 1857), p.200.

³⁵ *Texas State Gazette* 2, 23, June 1855; *Texas State Times* 2 June 1855.

³⁶ P.F. Smith to C.S. Cooper, October 10, 1855; *Claims of the State of Texas*; Senate. United States, 45th Congress, 2nd Session. Senate Executive. Doc. 19 and 111; *El Siglo XIX* (Mexico City) 13 November 1855; *San Antonio Herald* (San Antonio, Texas) 16 October 1855; *Texas State Gazette* 13 and 20 October 1855; *Texas State Times* 11 and 17 November 1855.

³⁷ James Gadsden to M.M. Arrijoja, November 29, 1855; in *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860*, vol.9; edited by William R. Manning (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1932-1939) , pp.800-3.

Fortunately for the black colonists, their participation was not needed as the second effort by Callahan did not come to fruition; nonetheless, this episode of defiance on the part of the black colonists put them in a very precarious situation with their Mexican and Seminole neighbors not to mention state and federal authorities.³⁸ Despite the defiance displayed by the black colonists, by the end of 1855, in an assessment conducted by the government, it maintained that the black colonists had given no cause for complaint and were industrious, war like, and desirous of education and religious instruction; hence, as previously mentioned, part of the reason as to why the government erected a school and chapel for the colony.³⁹ Ignacio Galindo and Jesús Garza González, two residents of the town of Múzquiz also attested to the good moral character of their new black neighbors.⁴⁰

The irony in the efforts exerted by slave raiders such Callahan is that while he attempted to capture supposed runaway slaves, the U.S. government contemplated possible ideas as to how best to rid America of its black population. In 1859, Republican Senator from the state of Wisconsin James Rood Doolittle proposed in the Senate that the U.S. entered into an agreement with Mexico, Central America, or a South American country in order to establish a colony of African Americans in one of those locations. Senator Doolittle wrote “in Yucatan and Central America and South America there are vast regions, almost uninhabited, of the most beautiful and

³⁸ Letter Received by Colonel Emilio Langberg, October 22, 1855; and Letter Sent to Langberg, October 25, 1855; Múzquiz Records, Box 9, Folder 105, October –December 1855; Múzquiz, Coahuila, México Collection; Yale Collection of Western Americana; Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

³⁹ *Report of the Committee of Investigation Sent in 1873 by the Mexican Government to the Frontier of Texas* (New York City, New York: Baker and Godwin Printers, 1875), p.410.

⁴⁰ Letter from Ignacio Galindo, November 27, 1855; Letter from Jesús Garza González, May 11 and 24, 1856; Múzquiz Records, Box 9, Folders 105, October-December, 1855; Box 10, Folder 107, May-June, 1856; Múzquiz, Coahuila, México Collection; Yale Collection of Western Americana; Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; Michael J. Box, *Captain James Box's Adventures in New and Old Mexico* (New York City, New York: J. Miller, 1869) , p.204; *El Siglo XIX* (Mexico City) 27 May 1856.

productive countries in the world, in a climate well adapted to the constitution of the African race,...⁴¹ Only two years prior to Senator Doolittle's official proposal before the U.S. Senate, Lincoln had stated,

Let us be brought to believe it is morally right, and at the same time favorable to, or at least not against our interest to transfer the African to his native clime, and we shall find a way to do it, however great the task may be.⁴²

By 1862, the idea of sending blacks out of the U.S. had been discredited when the Secretary of the Interior Caleb B. Smith after investigating the geography of Yucatán concluded that the land there was not suitable for the colonization of blacks. Secretary Smith remarked,

Yucatán contains an area of 48,899 square miles and an Indian population of over 668,000, equal to about thirteen to the square mile. So large a population but little familiar with the ous of civilized life would present a very serious obstacle to successful colonization of the colored population of this country.⁴³

Taking advantage of the goodwill of both the Seminole and black colonists, when civil war broke out in the late 1850s in central Mexico between the conservative and liberal political factions, governor Vidaurri ordered the colonists to form a militia and join him as he confronted the central government. To the disappointment of Vidaurri, the black colonists refused to join his army, arguing that though they held him in high regards for his many efforts on their behalf,

⁴¹ *The Expediency of Acquiring, By Treaty, in Yucatan, Central or South America, the Rights and Privileges of Settlement and of Citizenship for the Benefit of Such Persons of Color of African Descent as may Voluntarily Desire to Emigrate.* Senate. United States 35th Congress. 2nd Session., Senate Mis. Document, No.26, January 24, 1859; Text from: Congressional Documents; Available from: ProQuest; Accessed: 06/12/2012, p.1.

⁴² Charles H. Wesley, "Lincoln's Plan for Colonizing the Emancipated Negro," *The Journal of Negro History* vol. 4 (1919): pp.9-10.

⁴³ *Message from the President of the United States: Transportation, Settlement, and Colonization of Persons of the African Race.* Senate. United States 39th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Exp. Document No. 55, May 16, 1862; Text from: Congressional Documents; Available from: ProQuest; Accessed: 06/12/2012, p.10.

they did not wish to get involved in the internal political affairs of Mexico.⁴⁴ Perhaps recognizing their man power value, as late as 1857, governor Vidaurri entered into a contract with Edward Luis Bernard from Corpus Christi so that the Texan businessman could transport by sea, at the expense of the state of Coahuila, some five hundred black families from the state of Florida. The governor agreed that in exchange for paying for the transportation and requiring that the black immigrants participate in the military defense of the country's northern frontier, he would provide them with plenty of arable land.⁴⁵ Unfortunately for governor Vidaurri, the deal with Bernard did not materialized as the remaining Seminoles in Florida did not want to negotiate a deal with the Texan.

The small degree of cohesiveness that remained between the Seminoles and blacks came to an end with the passing of Wild Cat in the spring of 1857; after this date, the new Seminole leader, Lion, along with other tribal elders brought formal complaints against the black colonists to governor Vidaurri in Monterrey. In supporting the Seminoles' complaints that the black colonists had been using more water for irrigating their crops than their colonization contract allowed and that they no longer participated in the military expeditions against the Indians; the *alcalde* of Múzquiz also informed the governor that many blacks, especially recent runaways from Texas that had made their way to the hacienda *Nacimiento*, only cause trouble in the region as they engaged in stealing cattle and destroying private property. Moreover, the Seminoles and some Mexican neighbors pleaded with the governor to move the black colonists to Mazatlán,

⁴⁴ Letter Sent to *the Secretario de Gobierno*, November 5, 1856; Múzquiz Records, Box 10, Folder 108, July-December, 1856; Múzquiz, Coahuila, México Collection; Yale Collection of Western Americana; Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Mexico* vol.5 (San Francisco, California: History Company, 1886) , pp.698-99.

⁴⁵ *El Siglo XIX* (Mexico City) 27 November 1857.

because the constant threat of filibusters and more runaway slaves, of dubious reputation they added, created tremendous strain in a region that could no longer afford further instability.

Governor Vidaurri responded to the allegations by advising the black colonists that they dedicate themselves to work and warfare against hostile Indians and to expel from their colony the recent runaway slaves that did not submit to the leadership of John Horse. To insure that all parties involved had their complaints receive a formal hearing from a government official, the governor appointed a justice of the peace.⁴⁶ Future disputes between the Seminoles and black colonists would be kept to a minimal as most of the Seminole tribe relocated back to Indian Territory in the summer of 1861 after tribal leaders had succeeded in convincing U.S. officials to grant them a piece of land for their people.

Once the Seminoles left Coahuila, sources consulted state that about 350 black colonists remained in the state.⁴⁷ Although the primary reason the Seminoles left Coahuila might have been the granting of a large tract of land from the U.S. government or the death of their beloved leader Wild Cat; however, John Kibbets, a Seminole leader, in his deposition to U.S. officials in 1874, stated that, “the Mexicans did not comply with their promises, and the Seminoles became disgusted....The colored people,...finally decided to leave because the Mexicans stole horses and robbed them.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Letter from J. Felipe Ramón, September 13, 1858; Múzquiz Records, Box 10, Folder 113, September-October 1858; Múzquiz, Coahuila, México Collection; Yale Collection of Western Americana; Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁴⁷ *Lista de los Negros de la Tribu Mascogo Agraciada por el Gobierno General con Terrenos de la Colonia del Nacimiento*; Seminoles y Mascogos, Número 94 (1891), 44-12-60; Archivo de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F., México.

⁴⁸ John Kibbets, Deposition 545, May 26, 1874; House., United States 43rd Congress, 1st Session, Ex. Doc. No. 257; Depredations on the Frontiers of Texas; Text from: Congressional Documents; Available from: ProQuest; Accessed: 08/15/2012, p.22.

The deposition of Kibbets highlights the troublesome race relations between Mexicans, American Indians, and the black immigrants. Kibbets further alleged that when the Seminoles complained to authorities, he does not state whether the complaint was brought to the attention of local, state, or federal authorities; they did nothing to alleviate their grievances. Moreover, in that statement by Kibbets, he maintains that blacks left the country because they had grown tired of being robbed by Mexicans; nonetheless, it has to be emphasized that at no point in his deposition did he say that his neighbors held a prejudice view based simply on the skin color of either the Seminole or black immigrants. It only appears that Kibbets and other Seminoles and black immigrants that brought forth formal complaints against the government felt that their Mexican neighbors envy their success attained in either agricultural or commerce endeavors, rather than a racial intolerance, as had been to a large extent the case with the arrival of Chinese immigrants.

As has been argued in a previous chapter, when the idea that miscegenation between Mexican women and Chinese men had begun to take place in the states of Sonora and Baja California, outraged men complained in local newspapers citing the inferior blood lines, of the Chinese immigrant men. Yet, Joseph A. Durand, a man who had lived for more than twenty years along the Rio Grande when he gave his deposition to U.S. officials in 1874, he stated that he saw that the Kickapoo Indians had begun to “mix” with the Mexican people without any hesitation from either party. In fact, Durand added that governor Vidaurri consistently invited more Kickapoo Indians to come. What further surprised Durand was that as a result of the miscegenation between the two races many of the Kickapoo Indian children now spoke

Spanish.⁴⁹ From first-hand accounts, it is evident that the population had no hesitation in interacting with either the American Indians or blacks. Furthermore, so appreciative of their military service and physical labor on the *baldíos* of the northern frontier, that President Juárez decided to place the American Indians and blacks under his protection.⁵⁰

With the arrival of the French invaders in the early 1860s, several reports demonstrate that the black colonists did get involved in the war effort siding with the Juárez republican army. John Horse did such a great job in defending his new country that officials baptized him *El Coronel Juan Caballo*; and in addition, the government gave John Horse a silver mounted saddle with a gold plated pommel in the shape of a horse's head.⁵¹ Following the French invasion and the birth of the *Republica Restaurada*, when Chief Nokoah, leader of the Kickapoos from Kansas, who had relocated from the U.S. to Coahuila near the hacienda *Nacimiento*, remarked at the extraordinary life the blacks enjoyed in Mexico. Chief Nokoah stated that the black colonists raised cattle, sheep, horses, and they grew corn, pumpkins, sugar cane, and sweet potatoes. Adding to their success in working their government land grant, the Kickapoo leader also mentioned that the black colonists paid the government rent and taxes on their produce and livestock.⁵²

Though the black colonists had the legal right to the hacienda *Nacimiento*, when the French invaded Mexico, they abandoned their land grant temporarily in order to avoid the civil war that ensued; nonetheless, as noted above, some black colonists did fight the French troops. When the

⁴⁹ Ibid. Joseph A. Durand, Deposition No. 525, May 26, 1874; p.17.

⁵⁰ Ibid, Manuel Ban, Deposition No. 543, May 26, 1874; p.20.

⁵¹ Kenneth Wiggings Porter, "Farewell to John Horse: An Episode of Seminole Negro Folk History," *Phylon* vol.8 (1947): pp.265-73.

⁵² George A. Root, editor "No-ko-ah's Talk: A Kickapoo Chief's Account of Tribal Journey from Kansas to Mexico and Return in the Sixties" *Kansas Historical Quarterly* vol.1 (1932): p.156.

French left Mexico in defeat, the black colonists returned to their land grant only to find that some of their local neighbors and Kickapoos had challenged their legitimacy to the hacienda *Nacimiento*. Fortunately for John Horse and his people, when he asked President Juárez to recognize their land grant that had been given to them in 1852, the president confirmed the terms of the agreement the black colonists had made with the government, vindicating the plight of the colonists.⁵³ The victory for John Horse and his people was short lived as many years would pass and large *hacendados*, along with several government officials following the death of President Juárez, took their case to the courts to challenge the validity of the black immigrants claim to the hacienda *Nacimineto*.

As late as the 1890s, both parties still wrestled as to who had the legal right to the land. In the spring of 1887, the Mexican consulate office in Eagle Pass, Texas, noted that several black men had requested that they be granted permission to enter Mexico in order to settle in their government land grant, but the consul office informed the *Secretaría de Fomento Colonización, Industrial y Comercio*, that they had no record of an agreement between the black immigrants from Florida and the state government dating to 1852.⁵⁴ In a letter that the governor of Coahuila wrote to the *Secretaría de Fomento Colonización, Industrial y Comercio*, in April of 1892, he asserted that the claim made by blacks in Eagle Pass, Texas, about their land grant in his state had legitimacy citing the 1852 accord made between them and governor Vidaurri. In that same

⁵³ *Report of the Committee of Investigation Sent in 1873 by the Mexican Government to the Frontier of Texas* (New York City, New York: Baker and Godwin Printers, 1875), pp.411-412; General Luis Alberto Guajardo, *Apuntes Datos y Noticias para la Historia de Coahuila*, November 29, 1866; Múzquiz Records; Múzquiz, Coahuila, México Collection; Yale Collection of Western Americana; Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁵⁴ Mexican Consul Office in Eagle Pass, Texas, to Matías Romero, March 17, 1887; Topografica: 44-12-60, Años 1887-1892; Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F., México.

1892 letter, which is worth quoting at length, the governor of Coahuila stated the following about the black immigrants:

this is a group of civilized people because of their religion, language, and customs; but they are susceptible to drunkenness and enjoy defying authority. Most of them spend their time robbing and pillaging. They cross into the United States where they take the cattle and horses they steal in Mexico, and when in this country, they sell the items they have stolen in the United States. Many of these individuals are deserters from the United States Army.⁵⁵

Significant about that statement by the governor is the various contradictions within his letter leaving the reader wondering about the official government stance on these black immigrants. For instance, on the one hand, he remarked that black immigrants are “*gente civilizada*,” citing their religion and cultural customs as key markers as to why these individuals made great immigrants for the country. Yet, on the other hand, he emphasized the many immoral vices these black immigrants had brought not only to the country but to the border region as a whole, highlighting their strong affinity for stealing cattle on both sides of the international boundary line. He further added that many of the blacks now residing in the country had actually been enlisted in the U.S. armed forces but had deserted and escaped into Coahuila. Thus, from that letter alone, it becomes difficult to ascertain whether or not the

⁵⁵ Letter from the Governor of Coahuila, April 30, 1892, to the *Secretaría de Fomento Colonización, Industrial y Comercio*; Topografica: 44-12-60, Años 1887-1892; Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F., México. Though the governor of Coahuila in the early 1890s had hesitation about future black immigrants coming to Mexico, the primary sources demonstrate that plenty of interest on the part of potential African Americans wanting to relocate to Mexico inundated Mexican consulate offices in the United States, as the possibility of racial discrimination did not seem to deter these individuals. See, *Legislación de México en Estados Unidos to Matías Romero*, July 21, 1886, Topografica: 44-12-63: *Colonización 1886, Publicaciones E Informes Sobre Emigración y Inmigración*; Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F., México. The newspaper *The Bulletin* from Philadelphia, questioned whether African Americans suited the needs of Mexico, citing that “although peaceful and law abiding, . . . they [blacks] will in all probability present the same social and political problems which are now offered by the colored people of the South, . . .” See, U.S. Annexation of Lower California, *The Bulletin* (Philadelphia) 8 December 1888, Topografica: 12-2-27; Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F., México.

government actually welcomed future black immigrants; this ambiguity logically brings forth the following question, which is at the heart of this essay: was Mexico really the land of opportunity for any immigrant regardless of his or her skin color as it did not discriminate?

Following emancipation in the United States, when the threat of runaway slaves no longer threatened either government, U.S. military officials before congress testified on several occasions that the new threat to the stability of the Texas border region had now shifted to the friendliness that had emerged between blacks and Mexicans. Lt. Col. John S. Mason informed congress in December of 1877 that the friendliness between the two racial groups encouraged desertions among the black troops stationed along the border.⁵⁶ Fears about a multiracial coalition of blacks, Indians, and Mexicans had accompanied the first Anglo settlers to Texas and remained a continuing source of anxiety through the post-Civil War years. Col. Mason even added that some black Texans had approached the Díaz government in the mid-1870s about the possibility of launching a colonization project in order to boost the country's cotton production. With the possibility of Texas cotton growers losing some of their black workers to the Mexican government, inevitably tensions between the two governments continued to persist with no end in sight, despite the U.S. government's efforts to curtail black migration to Mexico.

Complicating the matter for the U.S. government was the fondness or perhaps friendships that had begun to emerge between the African Americans and Mexicans. Captain Lewis

⁵⁶ Testimony of Lt. Col. John S. Mason, 4th Infantry, December 7, 1877; House. United States 45th Congress. 2nd Session., Mis. Document. No. 64; *Testimony Taken by the Committee on Military Affairs in Relation to The Texas Border Troubles*; Text from: Congressional Documents, Available from: ProQuest; Accessed: 08/15/2012, p.140. The concern that Col. Mason had about black soldiers along the border joining Mexicans in order to desert the U.S. army in order to form a separate republic for themselves was also echoed by Brig. General Christopher C. Augur in a letter he wrote to the Assistant Adjutant General on March 17, 1879; see Brig. General Christopher C. Augur to Assistant Adjutant General, March 17, 1879, in *Blacks in the United States Armed Forces: Basic Documents* vol. 3, edited by John MacGregor and Bernard C. Nalty (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 1977) ,pp.127-29.

Johnson, testifying before the U.S. Senate Committee on Military Affairs in December of 1877, stated the following about his experience with black soldiers along the Rio Grande:

According to my experience colored soldiers do not desert nearly as much as white soldiers do. Generally speaking, they are quiet friendly with Mexicans, especially with Mexican women. In fact, there is no prejudice on the other side in regard to color. In 1867, during the Mexican war of independence, the war of Maximilian, many colored soldiers from our side deserted and were made officers in Mexico.⁵⁷

That statement by Captain Lewis highlights three key points that go to the center of this essay's argument; first, he emphasized in his testimony that black men had a strong friendship with the Mexican people, especially with women, which to some degree may not come as a surprise considering that black women along the U.S.—Mexico border during the nineteenth century might have been difficult to find. A second point of emphasis that Johnson highlighted is that black men joined the republican army of President Juárez when the French invaded the country. This particular observation by Lewis, as alluded to in chapter two, confirms the argument that in case the Mexican people found themselves in duress, African Americans would in no doubt sympathize with their brown brothers. The third important observation made by Lewis is that in

⁵⁷ Testimony of Captain Lewis Johnson, December 4, 1877; House, United States 45th Congress, 2nd Session, Mis. Doc. No.64; *Testimony Taken by the Committee on Military Affairs in Relation to The Texas Border Troubles*; Text from: Congressional Documents, Available from: ProQuest; Accessed: 06/12/2012, p.142. I should mention here that although plenty of evidence exist that blacks participated in the defense of Mexico against the French and that they received plenty of praise from both the Mexican public and government, during this same time period, an incident in the town of Bagdad, Coahuila, once again tarnish the image of the African American as a potential quality immigrant for Mexico. In January of 1866, about 800 African American soldiers from Clarksville, Texas, entered Bagdad and ransack the town, killing several people during the pillage. Mexican witnesses described in horror that “the blacks dedicated themselves to robbery and pillaging,...they also committed several murders, such as the killing of a person that refused to give them his watch.” What further hurt the image of these black soldiers was that witnesses stated that these invaders had not been forced by their white military leader to ransack Bagdad; on the contrary, the black soldiers went to Mexico on their own accord, eliminating the argument that they had been the victims of the white man. See Government Reports from Matamoros, Tamaulipas, January 1866, Topografica: L-E-1097, 1861-1936; Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F., México.

Mexico there is no prejudice in regard to the skin color of people; hence why by conservative estimates, prior to 1865, at least some 4,000 runaway slaves had made their way south of the Rio Grande. Moreover that statement by Lewis validates the claims made by liberal politicians since the mid-1820s through the administration of Juárez that in the country every citizen had equal rights without race ever being a factor. Though the liberal message on immigration had been espoused for decades by government officials, Mexican consulate offices throughout the world warned politicians back home to proceed with caution so that the country “would not get fill by troublemakers, losers, or lazy individuals, but rather with productive, intelligent, and hardworking people that can assist us in bringing civilization to our country.”⁵⁸

What is striking, therefore, about the testimony Captain Lewis made in that December 1877 hearing is that while many potential immigrants, especially those from Europe, doubted the sincerity of the government propaganda spread in Europe through surrogates, Lewis’s observation had the potential to add an aura of credibility to the message that had failed to resonate outside of Mexico for many decades. The government’s message had failed to resonate because potential immigrants, including blacks, did not know who had authority in the country. For example, it has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, that when the governor of the state of Coahuila Santiago Vidaurri invited the Florida Seminoles and blacks to relocate to his state, the primary sources do not disclose whether the governor had attained permission from the federal government, in the first place, so as to grant these individuals large sections of government owned land, along with agricultural supplies. In other words, it appears by all accounts that

⁵⁸ *Publicaciones é Informes Sobre Emigración y Inmigración*, April 3, 1885, Topografica: 44-12-63 *Colonización* 1885; Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F., México.

rural/local officials in essence had the ultimate authority in regards to granting potential immigrants admission. Captain Lewis Johnson also attested to this point when he stated, “the Díaz government has absolutely no authority on that frontier,…”⁵⁹ In his testimony, Johnson added that with the arrival of President Díaz in 1876, the United States for the first time in its political relations with Mexico, could count on a friend willing to work to stop the border troubles that had afflicted the region for many decades. Johnson stressed that Díaz faced a tremendous struggle to get the northern frontier under control with so many thieves roaming the area. To prove his point, Johnson made a strong accusation by saying, “local officers and the rural police along the Rio Grande are, I think with these thieves. In fact, I know that the captain of local police at Camargo, Ramón Garza, is himself a grand thief.”⁶⁰

Adding to the chaotic situation along the border, H.C. Corbin said “it is very difficult for any person not familiar with the boundary –line to tell where Mexico leaves off and where the United States begin, from any difference in the habits, customs, and appearance of the people.”⁶¹ The observation made by Corbin helps us understand why to a large extent for many blacks relocating to the border, especially after 1865, precisely around the time both Corbin and Captain Lewis Johnson testified in Washington D.C., the social and cultural relationships they created with the Mexicans living in the region would have appeared to have no differentiation whether these bonds began on the U.S. or Mexican side of the international border. Hence, when blacks living in Texas along the Rio Grande decided to move to Mexico for either a colonization

⁵⁹ Testimony of Captain Lewis Johnson, December 4, 1877; House, United States 45th Congress, 2nd Session, Mis. Doc. No.64; *Testimony Taken by the Committee on Military Affairs in Relation to the Texas Border Troubles*, p.141.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, p.145.

scheme or when serving on a military function, they brought with them their biases toward Mexicans without making any distinction that they now resided south of the border.

The Alabama Black Colony in Tlahualilo, Durango.

Though U.S. government efforts to send blacks to other countries, especially to those in Latin America, in the late 1850s and early 1860s had failed, the private sector had not given up hope. About 800 African American men, women, and children left their homes in Alabama and headed for Tlahualilo, Durango, in search of a better life in early 1895.⁶² William H. Ellis, a wealthy African American man from Victoria, Texas, made an agreement with *The Agricultural Industrial and Colonization Company of Tlahualilo* to provide the hacienda, near the town of Tlahualilo, with African American laborers. Prior to Ellis deciding enter into a labor contract with the Tlahualilo Company, he had met in 1888 with President Díaz to discuss the possibility of introducing over 20,000 African Americans to the northern frontier; after all, only nine years prior to their meeting, Díaz had mentioned that the need for good quality immigrants had become one of the imperious necessities of the republic.

⁶² I should mention here that although this black colony from 1895, has garnered the most attention, since the U.S. federal government got involved to rescue these immigrants from the supposed hell they had endured in Durango; several other black colonization schemes prior to 1895 had taken place, though the lack of primary sources makes it difficult for me to elaborate more on them. For example, in 1857, Luis N. Fouché, a free African American from Florida, established a colony named “Eureka” near Tampico;” and also in that same year, 40 African Americans from New Orleans settled in Veracruz. In addition, in the 1870s, there had been plans under a proposed colonization company called *The American Colored Men’s Mexican Colonization Company*, to go to Sonora and set up a colony of black laborers to work on cotton production. Even blacks living in Indiana and New Jersey had contemplated setting up a colonization company to go Mexico and work in the sugar and coffee growing industries.

The Tlahualilo Company had the responsibility of assuming all of the transportation costs and providing them with the necessary tools needed for the agricultural endeavor. Prior to their departure from Alabama, we do not know what occupations they held before deciding to leave. Each family was to be given sixty acres for cultivation, forty for cotton, fifteen for corn, and five for a garden. The company was to receive forty percent of the yield of cotton and corn, the colonists fifty percent and Ellis ten percent. The colonists had two years to pay the company for their transportation costs.⁶³ These are the supposed terms of the contract that the company entered into with W.H. Ellis; the African Americans that left the South never negotiated directly with their new employer. As we will see later, this supposed ambiguity in the contract with regards to who actually contracted the 800 plus African Americans only led to mass chaos. The first wave of immigrants began to arrive in February of 1895; soon thereafter, more families arrived and the colony quickly had about 800 residents.

By the spring of 1895 the problems started in the colony. On May 28, 1895, Anthony Jones, a black colonist, escaped from the colony and went to the U.S. consul office in Chihuahua and spoke to R.M. Burke, head of that office. According to Burke, Jones told him that he and 38 other men, women, and children had escaped from the Tlahualilo colony, but as they made their way out, a group of armed Mexican men followed them and shot and killed all of his companions—he alone had survived to tell this horrific story. This alleged tragedy made international headlines, as various newspapers, such as the *Houston Post* and the *San Antonio*

⁶³ J. Fred Rippy, "A Negro Colonization Project in Mexico, 1895," *The Journal of Negro History* vol. 6 no. 1 (January 1921) : p.67.

Daily Express took notice. The sensationalized reports in the newspapers only build on the already tarnished image that Mexico did not welcomed immigrants, especially people of color.

To add to the already volatile situation between the black colonists and the government, Bristol H. Phillips, also a colonist told Burke that he and the rest of his fellow black southerners received horrible treatment at the hands of the colony's managers. Phillips claimed that he, his wife, and four children, through fraud and deception on the part of *The Agricultural Industrial and Colonization Company of Tlahualilo* left their home in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, in September of 1894, only to find misery and not the economic success promised to them. Thus, in February of 1895, Phillips's wife [her name is not provided] and his four children left Alabama in the first wave of black immigrants that left the South bound for Durango; Bristol stated that he stayed behind promising his family that he would join them later that year on the second ship that would carry more black colonists. Soon after Phillips' wife left for Durango, she wrote back to him and requested that he come and get her and the four children out of the colony. Bristol's wife informed him that slavery conditions prevail in the colony and that they had endured horrendous abuses. When Phillips arrived in Tlahualilo, W.H. Ellis arrested and jailed him for fifteen days for supposedly breaking their labor contract which stipulated that they had to work for at least two years in order to pay the company for the transportation cost. Prior to the arrest, Phillips claimed that Ellis lassoed him and dragged him through the colony so as to intimidate potential runaway black colonists.⁶⁴ Phillips added that Ellis told him that "these Mexicans would do anything he told them to do, and that he intended to have Phillips and his children all murdered

⁶⁴ *Failure of the Scheme for the Colonization of Negroes in Mexico, Message of the President of the United States, Referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.* House. United States 54th Congress., 1st Session., Document No. 169., January 27, 1896. Text from: Congressional Documents. Available from: ProQuest. Accessed: 08/15/2012. p.9.

before they got out of the Republic of Mexico.”⁶⁵ R.M. Burke related these accusations leveled against Ellis by Phillips to Mr. Uhl at the U.S. Department of State. Supporting the claims made by Phillips and Jones, Burke stated in his letter to Uhl that Sam Claber, another African American colonist that had gone to the Tlahualilo colony, stated that “they [he and his family] were cruelly treated.”⁶⁶ In his official deposition to Burke he remarked the following:

he[Sam Claber] was induced by false representation to leave his home in the United States with his wife and family, and in company with between 700 and 800 other citizens of the United States, and come to a colony in the state of Coahuila, Republic of Mexico.... after arriving at the colony he found they had been deceived; they found themselves in the worst form of bondage, with no hope of ever securing liberty; no letter wrote to friends stating the facts or conditions of their sufferings was ever permitted to reach the United States. He says they were cruelly and inhumanely treated, the food furnished being insufficient and not fit to eat....they received no proper medical attendance.⁶⁷

Unfortunately for the Tlahualilo company and Ellis, the accusations of mistreatment and horrible living conditions equating to possible slavery did not end with the first hand accounts of Anthony Jones, Bristol H. Phillips and Sam Claber; Willie Johnson, another colonists, upon returning to his home state of Alabama, he to recounted horrific scenes he witnessed in the state of Durango, as reported in various Alabama newspapers. According to Johnson, young children who refused to join their parents at the job site, receiving harsh beatings. In addition, he accused the colony’s general store of charging the black colonist obscene prices on basic necessities. For example, Johnson asserted that a pair of common jeans which typically sold for 30 cents in Alabama, at the colony store, they had to pay \$2.25 for that same product. He also stated that,

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p.2.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.3

“he would rather quickly go to hell than go back to Mexico.”⁶⁸ Johnson concluded his account of the facts by saying that many of the letters written by the black colonists stating the wonderful opportunities to be had in the colony and their great reception in Mexico had no truthfulness to them since William H. Ellis had actually written these letters on their behalf because many of them could not read or write.⁶⁹ In similar fashion as Willie Johnson’s experience, R.D. Hardy, a resident of Greene County, Alabama, stated that his month long stay in the Tlahualilo colony equated to being in a “colonial bastille.”⁷⁰ A man of strong Christian faith, Hardy could not tolerate having to work on Sundays because for those colonists that did not work on Sunday as a form of punishment they were not allowed to eat.⁷¹ Echoing Willie Johnson’s frustration, Hardy remarked that, “they worked under a system of slavery worse than that experienced by Russian exiles in Siberia.”⁷²

The U.S. consulate office in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, headed by Jesse W. Sparks had heard a different story relating to the events described by Bristol Phillips, Anthony Jones, Sam Claber, Willie Johnson, and R.D. Hardy. Joe Cardwell, also a colonist, came to Sparks’ office and told him that the stories that Bristol Phillips and Anthony Jones had told were false. According to the deposition given by Cardwell to Sparks, “none of the party were killed or wounded by soldiers, or any other person connected with the Tlahualilo Company, and that all returned in perfect

⁶⁸ *Mobile Daily Register* (Mobile, Alabama) 21 March 1895; *Montgomery Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, Alabama) 29 March 1895.

⁶⁹ *Mobile Daily Register* (Mobile, Alabama) 20 March 1895.

⁷⁰ *Mobile Daily News* (Mobile, Alabama) 23 April 1895.

⁷¹ *Mobile Daily Register* (Mobile, Alabama) 20 April 1895.

⁷² *Mobile Daily News* (Mobile, Alabama) 23 April 1895; *New Orleans Times-Democrat* (New Orleans, Louisiana) 23 April 1895.

safety to their quarters,...”⁷³ Sparks added that not wanting to believe either Cardwell or the stories related by Jones and Phillips about their horrendous experience in Mexico, he relied on the in depth investigation conducted by Charles Paul Mackie, a newspaper reporter from New York. Consul Sparks stated the following about Mackie’s findings, after he interviewed the leader of the revolt in the colony that led to some forty of them escaping their supposed bondage:

Mr. Mackie asked him[the black leader] if the Mexicans on that occasion mistreated them in any way. He said, no; that they did not,... these Mexicans had brought them something to eat and plenty of water to drink, and that they were nearly famished for water when found by this relief crowd of Mexicans, for it was a relief crowd sent out by the manger of the plantation with provisions, and water for these negroes, which relief crowd the manger started as soon as he learned that the negroes were gone, saying they would famish for water, not knowing the country, and not knowing where water was to be found in this part of the country, they would undoubtedly have died from want of water and food.⁷⁴

Noteworthy in that key observation by Mackie is that, by his own admission, the black leader of the colonists who revolted is that once they had been found by the colony’s search squad, he recognized that they received excellent treatment at the hands of the Mexicans and had it not been for them, they would have indeed perished in the desert.

The treatment received by the runaway colonists on behalf of the colony’s manager and their Durangense neighbors, only goes to support the argument that indeed Mexico may have been the “country of God and liberty,” as racial prejudice did not exist. The report by Mackie added that he found that the black colonists that did not runaway had very little to complain as the colony manager had brought them a physician from San Antonio, Texas, when smallpox broke out, and

⁷³ *Failure of the Scheme for the Colonization of Negroes in Mexico, Message of the President of the United States, Referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.* House. United States 54th Congress., 1st Session., Document No. 169., January 27, 1896. Text from: Congressional Documents. Available from: ProQuest. Accessed: 08/15/12. p.7.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

when it came to pay, the company “is very kind in advancing these negroes on their crops.”⁷⁵ Mackie felt that the black colonists demanded more than what they were entitled to, and he gave no credibility to the numerous accusations that W.H. Ellis behaved in a tyrant fashion toward them.⁷⁶ Furthermore, supporting the claim made by Cardwell and the findings by Mackie come from the personal testimony of Wyatt Long and Dave Jackson, two former colonists, who gave the *San Antonio Daily Express* an interview in which they described their ordeal. Wyatt Long directed his anger at the colony’s manager for not providing him and fellow black colonists with proper food rations and safe drinkable water; but he insisted that the public welcomed them with open arms and comfort them in their time of need. Dave Jackson remarked “I want to say the Mexicans helped us in every way they could. Some of them gave us what little money they could and all we met were willing to share with us whatever they had. They treated us right.”⁷⁷ In the same tone as Wyatt Long and Dave Jackson, A.A. Adams, another former colonist, in May of 1895, told his story to the *Tuskaloosa Journal*. According to Adams,

This part of Mexico is a great country, a grand country for the negro race; the lands are rich, climate good and healthful.... our people here are much pleased with the country and are satisfied and happy; Mr. Ellis, the gentleman who brought us here, has done in every particular all that he promised to do; each and every man is his own man, and is his own boss;....⁷⁸

Adams’s statement does not differ much from those of other black colonists who expressed similar points of view. For Adams and others like him, financial success might not have been

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.8.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ *The San Antonio Daily Express* (San Antonio, Texas) 30 August 1895.

⁷⁸ *The Tuskaloosa Journal* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama) 15 May 1895.

their primary motivation for going to Mexico, but simply having the opportunity to be as he put it, “his own boss,” suffice the most basic desire of the black colonists.

The testimonies published in the *San Antonio Daily Express* confirm the central argument that this essay has attempted to make by emphasizing that the evidence suggests that indeed in Mexico, black immigrants could expect to be treated equally before law without regard to the skin of their color. A compelling case can be made that in some instances black immigrants, just as had been the case with other European colonization schemes, received many government concessions, such as land grants and tax exemptions, which one can say may be deemed preferential treatment over its own nationals. This obvious preferential treatment helps explain the violent confrontations between nationals and foreigners that occurred throughout the late nineteenth century. Apparently, in many instances in which these confrontations took place, the locals did not have an issue with the immigrants per se, regardless of their ethnic background, rather, at the heart of the violent confrontations, as has been argued in previous chapters, lay the allegation that foreigners received too many government concessions that accorded them an unfair economic advantage over the country’s own citizens.

Echoing the conclusions of Mackie, consul Jesse W. Sparks stated that, “in my opinion, the company has done all in their power to supply the wants of these negroes and to alleviate their sufferings.”⁷⁹ Not surprisingly, Juan Llamedo, a member of the board of directors of *The Agricultural Industrial Colonization Company of Tlahualilo*, agreed with Mackie’s findings, citing that

The tendency, with few exceptions, shown by the negroes not to work brought about a consequent state of demoralization. Although these

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.9.

did not work, and still were supplied for their needs, they were not content, as was evidenced by their flight from the settlement in various parties, a proceeding which the company employees did not prevent, as they were not called on to do so. I should add that the manager acted under humanitarian impulses...The company had no right to hinder them, and allowed those who wished to, to go.⁸⁰

In that statement by Llamedo, he attempted to debunk the serious charge that the Tlahualilo was nothing more than a front for slave labor as had been the case in the U.S. South. In this letter, which Llamedo sent to E.C. Butler, head of the legation of the United States to Mexico, he wanted to emphasize that contrary to the charges made by Phillips and Jones, about the colonists being held in bondage, his company did not forced anyone to remain on the hacienda if they did not want to stay, they had the liberty to leave at will. Moreover, Llamedo stated that his company did not profit out of this colonization endeavor, but that instead, “this company has sustained great loss by the importation of the negroes.”⁸¹

The State Department ordered that an official investigation be conducted as to ascertain whether these black colonists had been enslaved or mistreated. Lieutenant Charles G. Dwyer, the man responsible for conducting the investigation, began his written report by stating that, “I am submitting the report without regard to anyone’s personal interests.”⁸² Dwyer started by saying that 816 colonists left the state of Alabama for the agricultural colony in Tlahualilo, Durango. The investigator did confirmed, as had been noted by everyone who lived in the colony, diseases broke out within a few months of their arrival and that in fact 70 colonists had died. Dwyer added that for the most part, the Tlahualilo company did “fulfilled the requirements

⁸⁰ Ibid, pp.25-26.

⁸¹ Ibid, p.26.

⁸² Ibid, p.42.

of the contract” they had with the black colonists.⁸³ An interesting observation by Dwyer emphasized that black colonists got paid a higher wage than their Mexican counterparts on the same hacienda; again, this drives this entire essay’s central argument that the country accorded many liberal opportunities to foreign immigrants, even if it meant putting the financial interests of the foreigners ahead of those of its own nationals, so as to provide these individuals what the government deemed the perfect ambiance for the growth of the colonization movement.

If indeed as Dwyer and Mackie reported that the Tlahualilo company did offered the black colonists what they had promised, then the promotional add that W.H. Ellis circulated in southern newspapers might have been true to some degree. According to the ad that Ellis’ Mexican Colonization Company circulated:

Wanted, colored country farm hands,...the greatest opportunity ever offered to the colored people of the United States to go to Mexico, which is better known as the country of God and Liberty, and which offers inducements for agricultural laborers in the growth of cotton and corn....We wish to impress on your minds that the great Republic of Mexico extends to all of its citizens the same treatment—equal rights to all, special privileges to none.... They need labor badly, and prefer the colored people to the Chinese and Italians....Lands can be bought up in the state of Durango cheaper than you can fertilize an acre in the state of Georgia or Alabama to raise a bale of cotton.⁸⁴

⁸³ Ibid, p.43.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.59. The ad that Ellis’s colonization company circulated in the states of Alabama and Georgia only reflected a perceived notion about Mexico’s liberal immigration policies. Four years prior to Ellis posting his ad calling for black colonists, the *San Francisco Chronicle* had a headline that stated, “Mexico has been and is liberal to foreigners in many ways, allowing them to open and develop mines of the precious metals, to occupy farms and plantations, and to carry on business of all sorts,...” See, *San Francisco Chronicle* January 5, 1891, Topografica: 15-4-98, 1891; *San Francisco Chronicle* August 19, 1891, Topografica: 44-12-59, 1891; Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F., México. One year prior to the Ellis experiment in Tlahualilo, Durango, the *Memphis Watchman* reported that an American judge residing in Mexico (McNamara, first name not provided) had bought over 2.5 million acres near the border in the state of Chihuahua and had plans to move over 10,000 southern blacks to work in the coffee and cotton industry within his acquired land. See, *Legación Mexicana en los Estados Unidos, Washington D.C.*, June 27, 1894, to Matías Romero, Topografica: 44-12-60, 1894; Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F., México.

The ad by Ellis unleashed a frenzy of excitement among blacks in the South. The *Legación Mexicana en Estados Unidos* in writing to Matías Romero in March of 1895, stated that various newspapers in the South had been reporting that thousands of blacks had shown tremendous interest in relocating to Mexico, despite the fact that some blacks returning back from the state of Durango told tales of mistreatment and bondage. In that letter by the *Legación*, it remarked that some black people had gone to the extreme of “sacrificing their mules, horses, cattle, and more, all with the hope of obtaining enough money to pay for their transportation costs to Mexico.”⁸⁵ To make matters worse for southern business owners, the letter highlighted that black workers had begun to abandon their worksites in the cotton fields, mines, and other industries in order to move to Mexico.⁸⁶

Concerned about the possible ramifications with the possibility of a massive exodus of black workers, the *Legación* informed Romero that some newspapers, such as the *Atlanta Constitution*, attempted to dissuade black people from leaving the U.S. by printing interviews with black people returning from Durango who said “if you indeed decide to go to Mexico, you will end up in a state worse than when you were a slave.”⁸⁷ Whether Ellis willfully deceived prospective

⁸⁵ *Legación Mexicana en Estados Unidos to Matías Romero*, March 15, 1895, Topografica: 44-12-63, 1895; Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F., México.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, March 11, 1895. Not only did newspapers tried to dissuade potential black people from leaving the U.S. for Mexico, but even the *Legación Mexicana* received letters from white southerners warning them of the potential harm that Mexico would incur by bringing black immigrants to its northern frontier. For instance, a man named Howard Miller, wrote to the *Legación* to inform them that, “I do not want to indicate any policy to Mexico or its representatives, but my experience in these matters make me certain that if some strong measures are not taken at once much trouble for the country—Mexico—and misery to the negroes will be entailed....If that idea gets abroad it is the end of all white colonization.” See, *Legación Mexicana en Los Estados Unidos, to Matías Romero*, February 7, 1895, Topografica: 44-12-64, 1895; Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F., México. The statement by Miller had an aura of a threat as it reminded government officials that if they allowed blacks to enter Mexico, then the possibility of white Europeans coming to Mexico would cease because no one desired to associate, let alone enter into miscegenation, with an inferior race. Thus, Miller simply wanted to advise Mexican officials as what not do if they did not want Mexico to become a laughing stock on the international stage.

black colonists in Alabama may be debatable, but certainly the Tlahualilo colony utterly failed. Nonetheless, Dwyer remarked that many black colonists in other recent colonization projects throughout the country had attained successful outcomes, such as those immigrants coming from Cuba, Jamaica, and other places to work in the sugar cane industry.⁸⁸

What further infuriated the U.S. consulate officers in Durango, Chihuahua, and Coahuila, is that they had gone out of their way to find some of these black colonists jobs throughout the northern frontier and yet, they still refused to work. In a letter written by John S. McCoughon, head of the U.S. consulate office in Durango, to S.F. Poston, head of the U.S. consulate office in Torreon, on July 19, 1895, he angrily said, “A short time ago Mr. W.L. Eaton was wanting 12 or 14 teamsters, besides other laborers. He preferred Negroes and would advance traveling expense. He is operating a large mine and could doubtless give employment to 25 or 30 men.”⁸⁹ Five days later McCoughon again wrote to Poston and told him:

Mr. J.F. Mathews, president of the Valederna Company, it is supposed, will go from mines of Torreon tomorrow, and I understand he can give employment to 30 or 40 men at once. They have houses there, so that men can go with their families and find houses, food, and permanent employment in a good healthy place.⁹⁰

The following day, Poston wrote back to McCoughon and also informed him that a contractor in Torreon also needed laborers. Despite the efforts exerted by U.S. officials to find these black colonists work, they never came to the mines or railroads.

The refusal by the runaway black immigrants to accept jobs offered to them only helped strengthen the stereotype that black immigrants could not benefit Mexico in any form; to the

⁸⁸ Ibid, p.45.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.17.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 19.

contrary, officials now had valid reason to refuse any future black colonization scheme. Consequently, when in the summer of 1894, Matías Romero received news that Col. A.J. Huston of Texas, had conceived of a plan to resolve the “race problem” facing the United States, by actually having the U.S government purchase a large section of land from Mexico, near the border, so that blacks could relocate there and form their own independent nation, the Mexican government said no. Romero immediately denounced that his country did not have any intention of selling or giving away land in order help the U.S. alleviate its race problem, warning that if indeed Huston’s proposal materialized, this black republic would only be a troublesome neighbor to both the U.S. and Mexico.⁹¹

Not discouraged about the end result of the Tlahualilo colony or the hesitancy shown by government officials such as Romero to welcome more black immigrants, W.H. Ellis gave an interview to the *San Antonio Daily Express* in October of 1895, in which he tried to clear his name from any wrong doing and insisted that Mexico still offered the best hope for black people in the U.S. According to Ellis:

The laws of Mexico are fair and impartial, and its present motto is, equal rights to all and special privileges to none, . . . as long as the negro is suppressed as he is in the United States the better class of them will seek new fields, and Mexico, standing at the very doors of the United States, offering inducements to all alike, will prove a welcome home to the negro.⁹²

Feeling optimistic about what the future held for the black race in the United States, Ellis added in his interview that “I have not abandoned the idea of Mexican emigration for the negro.”⁹³

⁹¹ *Proyecto de República de Negros en México*, August 20, 1894, Topografica: 15-6-65; Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México D.F., México.

⁹² *The San Antonio Daily Express* (San Antonio, Texas) 14 October 1895.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Ellis maintained that if the colony failed, it had nothing to do with the racial background of the immigrants in Tlahualilo, rather the work ethic of some of the immigrants had to be questioned, but this did not correlate to the argument that the black immigrant could not benefit Mexico. It bears reiterating that though the official report by Dwyer and Mackie's own investigation pointed out that some of the allegations against Ellis had merit, for the most part, the two reports concluded that Ellis and the Tlahualilo company fulfilled their contractual obligation with the black colonists and that the general public, along with the Mexican government, went out of their way to try to make the colony prosper.

In the end, the black colony in Tlahualilo failed because the colonists could not adapt themselves adequately to their new host nations' customs and traditions, not to say nothing of the language barrier. For instance, a common complaint from most of the colonists that returned to Alabama had been that the food and water in the hacienda tasted horrible, even to the point that it made them sick. Moreover, the black colonists complained that the physical setting of the hacienda, with its gated entrance doors, high fences, and armed men mounted on horses supervising the workers, resemble the cotton plantations that many had worked on when they were slaves in the South some thirty years earlier. Thus, for these colonists, the work setting in Durango, made them feel as though they had never left the South and their belief that they were going to the "Land of God and Liberty," as promised by Ellis, had been a complete lie. For their part, Ellis and Juan Llamedo from the Tlahualilo company maintained that the physical setting of the hacienda layout warranted the imposing fences, gates, and armed men, not with the intention of intimidating potential colonists; to the contrary, these drastic measures had been purposely design to protect the hacienda's colonists from the constant Indian raids that the northern frontier

had become accustomed to enduring for many decades. Therefore, because of the inability of the black colonists to comprehend this long standing tradition of the functionality of the hacienda labor system and way of life, the colonists had no chance of succeeding in their colonization endeavor.

Furthermore, some reports state that in their short stay in Mexico, these black colonists in Durango refused to interact with their neighboring Mexican neighbors, preferring instead to stay as close as possible to each other. This attitude by the black colonists can possibly be explained by the fact that many of the colonists that left Alabama had been members of church congregations; hence, these members were their established communities, and so the need to extend their community beyond what was familiar to them became an impossible task, at least from their perspective.⁹⁴ Therefore, the pressure for these colonists to learn Spanish or interact with the Mexicans living on the hacienda was not there.

On the other hand, blacks entering Mexico as slaves or recently freed people, in the 1850s and 60s, had the necessity to immediately try to assimilate into Mexican culture if their stay in this country was going to be fruitful. For the most part, black immigrants coming into the country during the mid-nineteenth century did not have the luxury of setting up a colony with familiar faces from a prior church congregation, let alone having a preacher to assist them in their time of need. Consequently, when these earlier black immigrants arrived, many of them quickly learned Spanish and married local women. In the early 1850s, as Frederick Law Olmsted traveled through northern Mexico, he mentioned in his diary that several black men he

⁹⁴ *New York Evening Post* (New York City) 29 July 1895. I should point out here that the newspaper reporter mentioned that he encountered at least 4 preachers that were among the colonists in Tlahualilo, and that they were men of more than average intelligence and force of character.

met had told him that the Mexican government was very just to them, and that they could always have their rights fully protected as if they were Mexican born. In addition, these black men told Olmsted that they had heard of other black men who acquired wealth in other parts of the country, positions of honor, and that they had connected themselves by marriage with rich old Spanish families.⁹⁵ The traveler added that “negroes are constantly arriving,” which clearly indicates that blacks in Texas were well aware of the opportunities available to them south of the Rio Grande River.

So because people such Ellis and black colonists from the 1850s, had managed to assimilate themselves, they were able to thrive in their new country. For instance, Ellis, after the failure of the 1895 colony, he continued to do business in Mexico City through the first decade of the twentieth century and only had praises to say about the opportunities that had been accorded to him. In fact, he was so thankful to the Mexican nation, but in particular President Díaz, that he actually named one of his sons Porfirio Díaz Ellis. The fact that Ellis was born in Victoria, Texas, played to his advantage. He was described by observers as being light-skin, and that he was often referred to as a mulatto of either Spanish, Mexican, or Cuban background. Ellis was so sensitive to his racial background that he even threatened to sue anyone who called him a “damn nigger;” citing that he was the son of a Cuban father and Mexican mother. Moreover, he even changed the names of his father from Charles Ellis to Carlos Ellis and his mother’s from Margaret Nelson Ellis to Margarita Nelsonia Ellis, and he preferred to be called Guillermo Enrique Ellis. These name changes and his light skin allowed him to move freely in Texas and

⁹⁵ Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey Through Texas: Or, a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (New York City, New York: Dix Edwards and Company, 1857), pp.323-325.

entered hotels and railroad cars that excluded blacks; the fact that he even spoke fluent Spanish only allowed him further access.

Furthermore, his obvious familiarity with the Mexican people living on both sides of the border allowed him to not necessarily see people these people as ignorant, backward, or as complete foreigners; rather, he knew that if he connected himself well, potential financial success awaited him. On the other hand, the black colonists Ellis brought from Alabama in 1895, could never see in the Mexican people and their culture, what he saw, once they arrived and set up their colony. It is not out of the realm of possibility that many black people from Alabama had not even seen a Mexican prior to their departure to Durango; all these black people knew about Mexico had been what they had heard from the constant propaganda that Ellis and others like him had ingrained in their minds. As a direct consequence of this propaganda, one white observer said that, “While they [blacks heading toward Durango] were at the depot waiting for the train to take them to Mexico they indulged in the most open and insulting abuse of the white men of the community.”⁹⁶ That same white man described seen many horse drawn wagons heading for Mexico with slogans saying that they were going to the “Land of God and Liberty.” The train carrying many of these colonists was referred to as the “Paradise Train.” White residents of the town of Eutaw, Alabama, described the frenzy among blacks as having been affected by the Mexican emigration fever. Southern white cotton planters feared that within a few years, “hundreds of thousands of African Americans would abandon the South for Mexico.”⁹⁷ So clearly there is no denying that these black colonists heading for Durango had

⁹⁶ *Montgomery Daily Advertiser* (Montgomery, Alabama) 10 March 1895.

⁹⁷ *Mobile Daily Register* (Mobile, Alabama) 3 January 1895.

great enthusiasm, high expectations, and a true desire to make Mexico their permanent home; unfortunately for them, their dreams never materialized, at least not for most of them for many of the aforementioned reasons.

A Black Man's Prejudice Views of Mexico: The Case of Henry O. Flipper

After the failure of the Tlahualilo colony, all hopes of for a successful black immigrant colony in Mexico seemed hopeless. Henry O. Flipper, West Point's first black graduate, who traveled through the country between 1883 and 1919, criticized harshly the government and its people, which only added to the already tarnished image that the country's current political and economic climate did not suit potential immigrants well. Flipper, after being court-martial from the Army in June of 1882, traveled through the United States Southwest and into northern Mexico; working for American mining companies which had interests in Sonora, Chihuahua, and Coahuila. A well educated man, who spoke and wrote Spanish, Flipper became an expert in Mexican land laws.

In his memoirs, Flipper wrote extensively about the immoral vices of the Mexican people. For instance, in a letter that Flipper wrote to his friend George Brainbridge, a black barber in El Paso, Texas, he told him that he knew of man in Mexico City that had married his own sister and the same had occurred in Chihuahua with another man.⁹⁸ Flipper added that young women had

⁹⁸ Theodore D. Harris, editor, *Black Frontiersman: The Memoirs of Henry O. Flipper* (Forth Worth, Texas: Texas Christian University Press, 1997) , p.34.

become vulnerable to being forced into prostitution by their own relatives because of the extreme poverty that permeated the country. Not fond of the idea of miscegenation between blacks and Mexicans, Flipper harshly criticized the children of African American men who had married local women, citing their “horrible” custom of eating tortillas and their high level of illiteracy, just like their Mexican mothers. Interestingly enough, Flipper in an almost apologetic tone, forgave the African American men he met in Mexico who had married Mexican women, judging their decision as one made out of pure carnal instinct. Clearly Flipper did not believe that the black man’s best interest could be found south of the Rio Grande.

While working for the Sierra Mining Company in the 1910s, Flipper received orders from New Mexico Senator Albert B. Fall, to investigate whether or not American companies in Mexico could become victims of the horrible violence ravishing the country amid the Mexican Revolution. While working in Mexico, Flipper came under attack from several U.S. newspapers, such as the *Boston Advertiser*, which accused Flipper of working with Francisco “Pancho” Villa against Americans. These accusations flourished after Villa’s attack on Columbus, New Mexico. The *Boston Advertiser* wrote on July 31, 1914:

A colored man is said to be genius or brains making a success of Villa... Whatever success Villa had had in a military way are declared to be due to Flipper. A daring soul without conscience and remorse met a powerful lot of knowing brains and the two agencies have worked admirably together.⁹⁹

Flipper furiously denied the allegations, pointing out that he remained loyal to the U.S. amid the speculation he had become a traitor. In a letter written to the *Washington Eagle* on May 4, 1916, Flipper stated “no man born in the United States who knows Mexico and has an atom of

⁹⁹ Ibid, pp.98-99.

intelligence can be otherwise,..."¹⁰⁰ Though Flipper vehemently denied that he ever participated in the Mexican army, he pointed out that he knew that several African American men had been heavily involved in the Mexican Revolution. For instance, General Victoriano Huerta's army included a black lieutenant, while Villa's army included a Major, and General José María Maytorena had a machine gun operator within his faction in the northern frontier.

In Flipper's hometown of Atlanta, Georgia, some African Americans, such as Flipper's own sister-in-law remarked that "For many years back here, ... We heard that Henry Flipper was Pancho Villa."¹⁰¹ According to reports from the 1910s, Villa's physical characteristics seemed to resemble those of a man of African ethnicity, such as the thick lips and short curly hair; hence why blacks in the U.S. southern states wanted to believe that Villa might have actually been Henry O. Flipper. Adding to the speculation about Villa's ethnic background came from a statement given by Alfred Young to the *California Eagle* on May 1, 1914. According to the *California Eagle*:

Rev. Alfred Young, negro pastor of the Whatcoat Methodist Episcopal Church, says General Pancho Villa is his brother. His right name, he says, is Spencer Young; that he was born on a farm near Cambridge, Md; that his father was a slave; that his grandfather was a white man and that from the pictures he has seen of Villa there can be no doubt about the relationship. The Rev. Young says his brother was a fanatic on military affairs, predicted a great career for himself and enlisted in the Ninth United States cavalry. The minister corresponded with his brother until the death of their mother here, and only today he wrote another letter to the arch enemy of Huerta.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p.101.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p.98.

¹⁰² *California Eagle* (Los Angeles) 1 May 1914.

The fact that many black southerners believed that Villa was black and had waged war on the white people of the United States, can help us understand why this community held the Mexican nation and its people in high regards, possibly the reason why since the 1850s through the 1920s, thousands of them decided to relocate to the “land of God and Liberty.”

True Freedom at Last: The Personal Stories

Contradicting the views held by Henry O. Flipper with regard to the Mexican people, Jack Johnson, heavyweight boxing champion, while living in exile in Mexico, pointed out that “I believe this to be the best place in the world for our people....The expense of coming here, especially from the southern states, is considerably less than going to South American countries.”¹⁰³ Johnson added that President Carranza “made every effort to make my stay in the Mexican Republic a pleasant and comfortable one.”¹⁰⁴ I should note here that Jack Johnson had fled the United States because authorities did not see to kindly to his open relationship with a white woman. To further his case that Mexico had no special privileges for white people, Johnson recounted an incident when he and a group of friends entered a Sanborn’s drug store to get a cold drink. The drugstore, owned and operated by Walter Sanborn, a Caucasian man, refused to provide service to Johnson and his friends because he “did not serve colored people.”¹⁰⁵ Obviously upset, Johnson left the store and quickly returned with four of Carranza’s Generals, who immediately drew their guns at Walter Sanborn and ordered him to apologize to

¹⁰³ *Chicago Defender* (Chicago) 7 June 1919.

¹⁰⁴ Jack Johnson, *Jack Johnson is a Dandy: An Autobiography* (New York City, New York: Chelsea House, 1969), p.112.

¹⁰⁵ *Chicago Defender* (Chicago) 12 July 1919.

Johnson. The Generals told Sanborn that Mexico was not a “white man’s country.”¹⁰⁶ To the delight of Johnson, and the black readers of the *Chicago Defender* newspaper, Walter Sanborn had his business license revoked by Mexico City authorities.¹⁰⁷ Received so well by the Mexican people, Johnson “became the idol of the citizens of this great city and the leading people, high military dignitaries and big political leaders are his constant companions.”¹⁰⁸ Evidently the actions taken by the President Carranza, impregnated, not only in the mind of Johnson, but also in African Americans in the United States as well, that Mexico could be a viable alternative to living in a country that although no longer held them in bondage, but that still discriminated them in many aspects of their daily lives.

When Johnson left Mexico City for the state of Baja California, where the governor had arranged a couple of boxing fights in order to attract tourism, Johnson recounts that he had an interesting trip, to say the least. While traveling through Sonora on train, a group of Yaquis stopped them and began robbing them. When the Yaquis found out that Johnson was aboard,

they were going to stage a wild demonstration in my honor. They manifested more interest and excitement over my appearance than they had in the promise of loot. Leaders of the band were profuse in their apologies for molesting the train, declaring that had they known I was aboard, they would not have thought of stopping the engine. What loot they had taken they restored to the passengers and told us that we might go on. I mingled freely with the Yaquis and when our train pulled put they were in a most friendly mood. I later was heaped with thanks by the passengers who had good reason to believe that had the Indians carried out their original intentions, they might not have lived to relate their experiences.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 26 April 1919.

¹⁰⁹ Jack Johnson, *Jack Johnson is a Dandy*, p.116.

The experience Jack Johnson had in Mexico only served to add credibility to the argument that Mexico's immigration policies did not discriminate anyone on the simple basis of skin color. Thus, what Johnson endured at the Sanborn's drugstore and that train ride through Sonora, helps support this essay's central argument that Mexico, though it had advocated publically its preference for certain immigrants believing that they might assist in improving the nation's blood lines, it seems that in the end, the constant financial duress the country usually found itself in, forced the government to embrace the capital brought by immigrants of all racial backgrounds. So in other words, the government, might have not publically desire to attract black or Chinese immigrants per se, however, officials had no choice but to accept almost anyone willing to come, since the country evidently faced an image crisis that had the international community believing Mexico "*era una tumba*" for potential immigrants, hence why many Europeans preferred Argentina.

It is worth noting that the Jack Johnson's experience at the Sanborn's drug store was not uncommon for people of color in the city. For instance, only a couple of years prior to Johnson's arrival in the city, at the Mexican Central Station, J.H. Hampton, an American railroad conductor, entered a nearby cantina and declared that he wanted to kill some "negroes." An African American man, Patterson (first name not provided), a brakeman working in the railroad industry, told Hampton, "this was a free country and the Negro could do as he pleased."¹¹⁰ Feeling disrespected by what Patterson had said, Hampton pulled out a gun and shot him several times, seriously injuring him. Hampton alleged that blacks had infested the city and had begun

¹¹⁰ *The Mexican Herald* (Mexico City) 26 September 1906.

to openly insult white ladies. The sources do not reveal what punishment, if any, Hampton received from local authorities.

Two key points from that Hampton and Patterson's story are worth highlighting. First, Patterson told authorities that he had been living in Mexico for four years. The fact that Patterson mentioned to Hampton that Mexico was a free country demonstrates that African Americans were well aware of the legal rights people of color could enjoy. Secondly, Hampton expressed anger that blacks had "infested the streets" and had begun to insult white ladies, this goes to show that indeed the freedom that blacks enjoyed in the city bothered many whites, who just like the pharmacist that refused service to Jack Johnson, could not get around at the idea of seeing their fellow American citizens, albeit them being black, walk the streets of Mexico City as equals to them. The sources consulted do not reveal how many blacks lived in Mexico City during the first decade of the twentieth century; but nonetheless, there had to have been plenty of them to have bothered J.H. Hampton to the point that he tried to kill at least one of them at a local cantina.

Thus, despite the problems that the presence of African Americans had created for authorities, such as the case of Patterson and Johnson, even on the eve on the Mexican Revolution, some politicians still clamored for a large wave of immigrants, regardless of their skin color. Enthusiastic about the possibility of 20,000 African Americans coming to the states of Campeche, Tabasco, and Nayarit, *El Imparcial* praised this colonization scheme because the black colonists would be bringing some capital with them. Furthermore, C.F. Treviño, an intellectual from Veracruz, had mentioned that he had heard of a proposed plan to settle 30,000 acres of land in Tabasco with African Americans coming from Texas and Louisiana, and that an

additional 400,000 acres had already been secured from government officials for future black colonization. Treviño had publically mentioned that in Mexico there is no prejudice, no racism or drawing of the color line; and that his government encouraged immigration and that the coming of industrious and well behaved “negroes” by the thousands would be welcomed.

Answering the critics that still held on to the xenophobia mentality that blacks could only hurt the country’s prospects for a more modern future, *El Imparcial* said that “the fact these proposed colonists are blacks, is of small consequence, considering the country needs immigrants willing to work.”¹¹¹ Furthermore, *El Imparcial* reiterated a popular slogan that had been utilized against those vocal government officials that only subscribed to the philosophy that a large wave of white immigrants was the necessary ingredient for the country’s success; “white immigrants are white outside but black enough in their hearts.”¹¹² Vehemently opposing *El Imparcial*, *The Mexican Herald* said, “For our part, we will say, in conclusion, that we would a thousand times rather that great stretches of our territory should remain deserts than they should be peopled and exploited by negroes, even if they do bring the small capital which so arouses the enthusiasm of *El Imparcial* and *El Tiempo*.”¹¹³

Believing the propaganda that Jack Johnson and other African Americans living in Mexico during the 1910s espoused, in 1919, a group of African Americans from southern California saw in Mexico what Henry O. Flipper did not; a beautiful land with endless possibilities and no racial hatred. The founder of the African American colony in the Santa Clara Valley, near Ensenada,

¹¹¹ Ibid., 29 April 1910. I should mention here that although I quoting these statements directly from *The Mexican Herald*, these statements, as mentioned in text, were made by *El Imparcial*; but they were translated into English and published in what was probably the country’s most popular newspaper for Americans living there.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid., 30 April 1910.

Baja California, Theodore W. Troy, an African American, envisioned moving hundreds of black families to this region. In this immense endeavor, Troy received assistance from two prominent African Americans, attorney Hugh E. MacBeth and Charlotta A. Bass, the editor of the *California Eagle*, the newspaper most responsible for promoting the Baja colony throughout California.¹¹⁴ Troy passionately believing in his enterprise and remarked:

I am going to a land where freedom and opportunity beckon me as well as every man, woman and child of dark skin. In this land there are no Jim Crow laws to fetter men; I am not denied opportunity because of the color of my skin, and wonderful undeveloped resources of a country smiled upon by God beckon my genius on to their development.¹¹⁵

Troy wanted to relocate about 200 families on the 21,000 acres of land that he and MacBeth had bought. The sources consulted for this essay, which includes the memoir of Charlotta A. Bass, do not disclose how many African Americans did leave southern California for Baja California, nonetheless, for the few that did move, their enthusiasm was undeniable.

R.M. Massey, an African American immigrant to Troy's colony, stated "I am buying 35 more acres of this land this week, and all I can say to our people in the United States is to get a hold of some of these choice lands before they go to a hundred dollars or two hundred dollars per acre."¹¹⁶ The striking phrase used by Massey in that statement is "choice lands," because for

¹¹⁴ *California Eagle* (Los Angeles) 30 March 1918. For instance, in one of its many headlines regarding the Lower California Mexican Land and Development Company, the newspaper noted the following statement: "this company, with a far-seeing vision, has delved deep and sure and presents a marvelous opportunity for the Negroes of this country to procure the richest land possible, easily within their reach from a financial standpoint, and at a distance of only 55 miles of a market as large as San Diego.... This is the chance for a man or woman who wants independence, who wants to be the sovereign of his own labor, who wants to be really free." Making the case for blacks to leave for Mexico, the *California Eagle* had help with the *The Messenger* which stated "As presently organized, Mexico's laws severely punish anyone for discrimination on account of race or color." See *The Messenger* vol.2 no.2 (July 1919): pp.8-9.

¹¹⁵ *California Eagle* (Los Angeles) 6 December 1919.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3 December 1920.

many decades, one of the primary hesitations that potential immigrants to Mexico raised focused on the quality of the land(s) that the government had assigned as part of its concessions to attract new immigrants. After a successful wheat harvesting year in 1920, the *California Eagle* reported that, “The boys celebrated by joining in a big hunt which netted numerous quails and rabbits and a fat buck, which furnished the piece-de-resistance at a special wedding supper tended Mr. and Mrs. Tilghman, the newly arrived bride and groom.”¹¹⁷ Encouraged by the progress he saw in his colony, Troy reportedly wanted to purchase an additional 100,000 acres and construct a health sanitarium. In 1922, two residents of the colony, James and Elizabeth Littlejohn, opened Las Palmas motel in nearby Ensenada. Clearly, for these black immigrants, Baja California accorded them opportunities not found in the United States.

The popularity of the colony even reached the state of Oklahoma, where the Key family, decided to visit the Santa Clara Valley colony. Impressed by what they saw, they partnered with MacBeth and made plans to form other similar colonies in the states of San Luis Potosi and Morelos. It has to be mention that the Key family was part of the black delegation of interested parties that visited President Obregón in 1922 seeking reassurance that their presence in the country would not lead to racial hostilities as they now endure in the United States. A man [name not provided by the *California Eagle*] living in the Santa Clara Valley remarked “I have never had as much peace in my life as I do here in Lower California.”¹¹⁸ In similar fashion as previous colonization endeavors, local and state authorities did not wait for the federal government to take the lead in attracting potential new immigrants, in the case of Troy’s colony,

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 21 February 1920.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 20 December 1920.

both the *California Eagle* and the *Los Angeles Times*, reported that local officials from the state of Baja California Norte personally traveled to Los Angeles in order to appeal to black residents to move to Baja California. The *alcaldes* of Mexicali, W.F. Torres, Tijuana, R.D. Monrignis, Ensenada, Luis G. Beltran, and the governor of Baja California, J. Inocente Lugo, actively sought black immigrants from southern California. Juan B. Uribe, a politician from Baja California, speaking at a Baptist Church in Los Angeles, told the congregation that,

My only regret is that it is not physically possible to immediately transport several million of these fine people who are my brothers and sisters to my beloved Mexico,...It is my sincere hope that the Lower California movement which has been started by certain colored men in the state of California will spread throughout the United States.¹¹⁹

The sincerity of that statement by Uribe may be open to debate as to whether or not he truly believed that black residents in Los Angeles were his “brothers and sisters,” what is not open for debate, however, is that Mexico found itself in dire need of foreign capital. Local and state officials had to seek potential immigrants on their own, since the federal government had failed to successfully recruit immigrants. Under desperate need for revenue, local authorities in Baja California, as well as in other Mexican border states, might have put aside their racial prejudice, in order to attract immigrants.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 13 September 1919.

¹²⁰ It should be noted here that even through the 1920s, as Troy attempted to get his colony underway, the central government in Mexico City still struggled to mold a cohesive national identity with which all Mexicans could identify, thus, the reason state officials resented the federal government for not doing enough to alleviate the financial crisis facing the country and their plight for immigrants to assist in the agricultural industry. For example, Gus T. Jones, reporting to the U.S. Senate Sub-Committee on the internal affairs of Mexico, stated that in the state of Baja California, governor Esteban Cantu, who had been at odds with the federal government for some of the reasons noted above, had maintained an independent government in that territory, paying no attention whatsoever to the central government in Mexico City. In fact, according to Jones, when Cantu heard that the federal government had intentions to send the army into Baja California in order to bring that state under control, the governor enlisted the aid of several thousand Japanese and Chinese by arming them just in case the federal army decided to move in. Cantu even contemplated sending an official delegation to Washington D.C. so that the U.S. would recognize Baja

The recruiting efforts exerted by government officials, at all levels, though perhaps not successful in attracting a large number of African Americans, the ones that did decide to leave the United States for Mexico, recounted stories of warm reception, endless business opportunities, and a freedom not found in their native country. William F. Cummings, an African American man from Los Angeles who moved to Mexico City, described his arrival to Mexico by saying “I felt as though I had been born again or at least that the jail doors had been thrown open.”¹²¹ Cummings, echoing the sentiment expressed by Theodore W. Troy, also stated that he desired to go to Mexico because a color line did not exist and the people extended to “U.S. Negroes” the warmest kind of hospitality. Interestingly enough, Cummings noted that he knew of numerous colored Americans that had renounced their U.S. citizenship to become naturalized Mexicans.¹²²

Another black man enthusiastically noted that he decided to move to Mexico after he witnessed a Mexican housekeeper who ordered four white girls to leave her home when they refused to sit at the dinner table with a black girl.¹²³ Even within the confines of Mexico’s higher level education the racial prejudice did not seem too evident. An African American school girl from California inquiring about going to a university in Mexico City, asked school director Enrique Loaiza about the dormitories for colored students and to her astonishment, he

California as an independent republic. Its possible then, to speculate that governor Cantu, might have only been interested in receiving the black immigrants Troy brought to the Santa Clara Valley so that they could serve as a militia force against the government; though no source consulted for this essay ever directly mentioned that, the fact that Cantu did provide guns to the Chinese and Japanese can easily lead one to conclude this black militia theory. See Gus T. Jones to Senate Sub-Committee: *Revolution in Lower California*, August 30, 1920; Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, Micro-film 334; available at University of Arizona Library, Tucson, Arizona.

¹²¹ *Ebony* vol.3 no.12 (October 1948) : p.12.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.15.

responded by saying, “Jim Crow is non-existent in Mexico City. Good students are what we want; colored does not mean a continental to us.”¹²⁴ William Lewis, left Texas in 1902, and through hard work, opened the largest restaurant in Mexico City and vowed that he would die in Mexico because this country accorded him the opportunity of a better life. George Maddox, a former resident of Detroit, after rising the in the ranks at a steel company, in similar fashion as Lewis, also boasted that he would never again return to the United States.¹²⁵ Hughie Myatt, an entertainer, about his experience in Mexico said,

You can’t imagine the pleasure it is to be in a country where everyone is your friend; where if you’re hungry, you don’t have to hesitate, just walk in wherever your money can take you. In short, I’ll stay down here because there is no race prejudice.¹²⁶

Myatt still remembered and embarrassing moment when was walking through Mexico City in search of what he called the “colored district,” when he could not find one, he asked a passerby for directions, only to be told that “there is none, people live wherever they wish here.”¹²⁷

Both Lewis and Myatt also reported that they knew of many black men who had relocated to Mexico because they had married white women and living in the United States had become pure hell. On the other hand, in Mexico, Maddox stated that, “I have lived in Mexico for ten years and never felt differently among Mexicans than among Negroes.”¹²⁸ Almost all of the black men and women who reported on their experiences in Mexico had a general consensus that they felt that the general public sympathize to their plight for civil rights freedom, because they knew that

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p.16.

many Mexicans living in the U.S. also suffered the same prejudice as they did in the South.¹²⁹ According to African Americans living in Mexico City, in their travels through the country, they found other settlements of African Americans in states such as San Luis Potosi, Veracruz, and Tampico, but emphasized that most of these immigrants had come to Mexico in the immediate years following the Reconstruction era in the United States.¹³⁰ Lewis recounted an interesting story when his wife visited Texas and received a congratulatory hug from a white insurance salesman for returning to “God’s country,” but to that man’s astonishment, she responded by laughing and saying “I just left God’s country.”¹³¹ Intriguing about the response Lewis’s wife gave to the white Texan man shows that the argument that backward thinking people predominated the Mexican landscape, a constant negative stereotype that the government had attempted to waiver off for decades, no longer had merit as a moral argument against as the Mexican people, as God had now smile upon the this great Aztec nation, at least according to the popular sentiment manifested by the African Americans that now called Mexico home.

¹²⁹ Ibid. Cummings, Maddox, and Lewis all noted that Mexican newspapers constantly reported on the abuses African Americans endured in the U.S. southern states; thus, concerned about its nationals going to that region of the United States, President Camacho, prohibited Mexican *braceros* from going to the states of Arkansas and Mississippi.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p.17.

¹³¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

An Infant Nation in Search of its First Foreign Immigrants

This chapter begins with a description as to the difficulties faced by independence leaders, and subsequent politicians, as they attempted to craft a modern nation amid an attitude of political and cultural apathy from the country's first official citizens. Apathy shown by people left the nation vulnerable to encroachment by foreigners. The need for government officials to secure its borders, especially its northern border, intensified to the point that officials, from all sides of the political spectrum, found themselves in the desperate need to resort to recruiting foreigners to colonize the northern frontier to prevent further loss of national territory. In addition, the introduction of a wave of European immigrants created the possibility of miscegenation to help foster a new national identity, sorely needed after Spain had made a renewed effort to retake Mexico in the late 1820s and the loss of Texas in 1836. The action taken by officials to remedy their country's lack of population encompasses the second main discussion of this chapter.

Moreover, a discussion as to the issue of slavery and how it fitted within the new plan for a modern liberal nation follows. In this part of the chapter, an analysis as to how politicians reconcile their liberal view on slavery, having been abolished in 1829, with the fact that the many U.S. immigrants, especially on the eve of the U.S. civil war, decided to bring their slaves with them believing that because they brought capital with them, that in essence would force authorities to look the other way and disregard their own law with regard to slavery. A subsequent analysis of filibusters and how that unsettled authorities receives attention at the end

of the chapter. Here the reader will read first-hand accounts from the U.S. soldiers that saw potential for the U.S. to annex huge portions of territory if not the entire country, citing the many untapped natural resources available; and surprisingly enough, some of them discuss in their diaries, the actual fondness they discovered in their interaction with the population remarking that assimilation might be possible. On the other hand, in this chapter the reader will also come across first-hand accounts from U.S. soldiers who did not see any economic gain in Mexico for the U.S.; mentioning the usual negative stereotypes that had been associated with the population.

The typical history book tells the story of a country that has been in search of its identity for many generations. From the arrival of the Spanish conquistadores in 1519, Mexicans battled a Spanish monarchy that for most of its three hundred year rule, denied them a voice within the colony. On the eve of the war of Independence in 1810, the leaders of the movement, mostly elite creoles, recognized that the vast independence cause would not succeed because the mostly peasant nation did not identify with the idea of a nation. A study about the village of Atlacamulco, shows that local grievances by the natives were at the heart of the discontent that led to the *tumultos*. Out of the 1,284 insurgents that were apprehended by royal forces, the majority of them had not traveled far from their homes, only a couple of miles. Thus, the possibility of state formation would be retarded for many years because the people, most of which were living in the countryside, could not identify with the birth of a new republic, let alone the formation of the government and all the politics that entail. The Catholic Church still held the Mexican mind hostage to its old traditions and superstitious beliefs. After the war of Independence, contrary to popular belief, the Church emerged even wealthier. Wilfred Hardy

Callcott writes that before the war of Independence, Church property had a value of 65 million pesos, but after the war, its holdings grew and amassed a fortune worth some 179 million pesos.¹³² From these staggering numbers, it is evident that the leaders of the Independence movement did not see the Catholic Church as a source of any of the social problems facing the colony, otherwise, understanding how the Church grew wealthier after the war becomes difficult. The fact that the movement was led by religious figures only partially explains the financial growth of the Church after the war; instead, it is more obvious that the masses pledged a greater allegiance to their local church and its priest than to any political head calling for a rebellion.

A case in point as to the power the Catholic Church still wielded some forty years after Independence has to be the difficulties the federal government encountered in certain states when it tried to implement its liberal agenda in the late 1850s. For example, in the state of Yucatán, authorities encountered a Maya community that did not want to comply with federal law that now required burials to take place in cemeteries rather than on local church grounds. The government made the case that such antiquated forms of burial had led to outbreaks of disease and did not conform to the modern nation building that was now underway with liberal policies at the helm. In the eyes of Yucatecan statesmen, unless the role of the Church could be minimized in community welfare, and the ties between citizens and their parish loosened, the peninsula would never emerge from the backward traditions of colonial rule.¹³³ Adding to the difficulty for the implementation of the Reform Laws, was the Church found many allies within the conservative wing, such as General Rómulo Díaz de la Vega in Yucatán, who dominated the

¹³² Wilfred Hardy Callcott, *Church and State in Mexico, 1822-1857* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1926) , p.65.

¹³³ Heather L. McCrea, "On Sacred Ground: The Church and Burial Rites in Nineteenth-Century Yucatán, México," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* vol.33 no.1 (Winter 2007) : p.55.

state's politics in the mid-1850s and made it his mission to prevent public health officials from moving forward with the orders coming from Mexico City and promising to advance the power of the Church. Simply said, religious loyalties and legislative compliance were not always compatible.¹³⁴ This case in the state of Yucatán demonstrates the extent of the power of the Catholic Church several decades after Independence and thus the reason why the liberal agenda, which had already been experimented prior to Juárez's arrival on the national scene, could not work in certain regions of the country. In 1874, when Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada tried to implement the anti-clerical laws that had been drafted to be part of the 1857 Constitution, the Catholic faithful in Michoacán and even Mexico City rose up in arms to protest, and so the president had to send General Mariano Escobedo to put down the bloody rebellion.¹³⁵ Popular values and culture were still subject to the influence of the Catholic Church, because the national government was still very weak and the inhabitants of the country did not constitute a nation.¹³⁶

Mexican society was made up by a series of *patrias chicas*. In other words, during the 1810s, people fought in defense of their community and not for the birth of a new nation. People could not identify with the revolutionary ideals espoused by liberal elites in Mexico City. Although the peasant ideology was difficult to define, it is clear that the village populations identified their own demands for local autonomy with the federalist movement and the Constitution of 1824.¹³⁷ This idea can to a large extent explain why it was easier for Father

¹³⁴ Ibid, p.42.

¹³⁵ Ramón Eduardo Ruíz, *Triumphs and Tragedy: A History of the Mexican People* (New York City, New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1992), p.259.

¹³⁶ D.A. Brading, "Liberal Patriotism and the Mexican Reforma," *Journal of Latin American Studies* vol.20 no.1 (May 1988) : pp.40-41.

¹³⁷ Christon I. Archer, "Fashioning a New Nation," in *The Oxford History of Mexico*, edited by Michael C. Meyer and William H. Beezley (New York City, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) , p.333.

Miguel Hidalgo to recruit rebels under the Virgin of Guadalupe banner, rather than the flag of a potential new nation. Had the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe not worked for Hidalgo for recruiting purposes, his successors Ignacio López Rayón and José María Morelos y Pavón would have not continued to use that iconic image as a recruiting mechanism. In fact, recruitment went so well that Hidalgo could not control the masses that had come to join movement simply because of the image of the Virgin. In December of 1810, when Hidalgo ordered Indians from Juchipila not to attack a local Spanish official, they refused arguing that they now had permission from the Virgin to do as they please.¹³⁸ In an obvious state of frustration with the masses because of their lack of national spirit, cohesion, and allegiance to a national flag, while instead fanatically rallying behind a religious banner waved by a local parish priest. An anonymous writer in the middle of the nineteenth century asserted, “In Mexico that which is called national spirit does not nor has been able to exist, for there is no nation.”¹³⁹ Echoing that sentiment expressed by that anonymous writer, the liberal newspaper *El Siglo XIX*, only months after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had been signed with the United States, in a state of obvious frustration stated, “at first glance one could doubt if our republic is really a society or only a

¹³⁸ William B. Taylor, “The Virgin of Guadalupe in New Spain: An Inquiry into the Social History of Marian Devotion,” *American Ethnologist* vol.14 no.1 (February, 1987) : p.22. Jeanette Favrot Peterson made the argument that the image of the Virgin was so powerful as a recruiting factor for Hidalgo’s cause that he gave her the title of General Captain as he paraded the image in each town he entered; see “The Virgin of Guadalupe: Symbol of Conquest or Liberation?” *Art Journal* vol.51 no.4 (Winter, 1992): p.45. Both Victor Turner and Eric R. Wolf made the case that by 1810 the Virgin was the supreme symbol of nationalism and a populist symbol that activated the masses; see Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1974); also by Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York City, New York: Columbia University Press, 1978); Eric R. Wolf, “The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol,” *Journal of American Folklore* vol.71 (1958) : pp.34-39. In similar fashion as Turner and Wolf, Felix D. Almaráz equated the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a “psychological weapon to persuade entire towns to join his[Hidalgo’s] cause.” See Felix D. Almaráz, “Texas Governor Manuel Salcedo and the Court-Martial of Padre Miguel Hidalgo, 1810-1811,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* vol.99 no.4 (April, 1996) : p.447.

¹³⁹ Charles A. Hale, “The War with the United States and the Crisis in Mexican Thought,” *The Americas* vol.14 no.2 (October 1957) : p.159.

simple collection of men without bonds, the rights, or the duties which constitute a society.”¹⁴⁰

At the end of the *Guerra de la Reforma*, even the Minister of Justice, Ignacio Ramírez, in 1861, as the *Siglo XIX* had argued 13 years earlier, asserted that the *municipio* is the nation.¹⁴¹

Also in 1848, *El Monitor Republicano*, in disgust at the result of the U.S.—Mexico War questioned why there had not been national resistance by the population against the United States like the Spaniards had done against the French in 1808.¹⁴² Both newspapers targeted the Indian population as a major culprit in the losing military cause. Moreover, *El Monitor Republicano*, sighted political indifference as a social sickness a thousand times worse than anarchy itself. Historian Charles A. Hale, writes, “Political apathy reigned and its presence was the cause of despair for many patriotic men who tried to see a way out of chaos.”¹⁴³ No one questions the fact that there were many heroic and valiant efforts on the part of some individuals. Hale argues that an attempt at a serious national defense failed because the few heroic people who decided to defend their country lacked leadership and they resembled more of a mob than even a guerilla force, let alone an army. If the majority of people did not relate to the liberal cause and military efforts against the Spanish government, then how was Mexico to form a government in the immediate years following its victory over Spain so as to attract European immigrants?

In the infant regime, the country’s first politicians clashed over how best to govern a country that seemed on the verge of collapse with liberals fighting against conservatives. Several constitutions did not yield the social and political stability sought after by its framers. Adding to the stress was the fact that the northern frontier appeared to be on the verge of seceding from the

¹⁴⁰ *El Siglo XIX* (Mexico City) , 1 June 1848.

¹⁴¹ D.A. Brading, “Liberal Patriotism and the Mexican Nation,” p.32.

¹⁴² *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) , 7 June 1848.

¹⁴³ Charles A. Hale, “The War with the United States and the Crisis in Mexican Thought,” p.155.

rest of the country. The first politicians quickly recognized that the main reason that its northern frontier was in a state of vulnerability was because it lacked a significant number of inhabitants to consider the region safe from possible encroachment by either the United States or Indian raiders. Even some twenty-five years after independence, the country had not succeeded in cementing a sense of national cohesion. For instance, during the U.S—Mexico War, the state of Yucatan, instead of assisting the national military efforts, historian, Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, said, “In order to avoid a complete blockade of its ports by the United States Navy, Yucatán declared itself neutral; and then, when the Caste War broke out, fearful, state officials decided to request annexation to either Spain or the United States.”¹⁴⁴

Not only had Mexico begun to lose support from its northern frontier states, but even worse, as Vázquez said, Yucatán even wanted to secede from the country and seek annexation to either Spain or the United States. Many historians have pointed out that the success of the first generation of politicians, whether centralist or federalist, was simply being able to salvage a country that had been severely fragmented by foreign encroachment, internal turmoil, and political instability, that for example, led to twenty *Secretarios de Hacienda* between 1835 and 1840. Therefore, on December 21, 1821, Agustín de Iturbide set up *La Comisión de Relaciones Exteriores del Imperio*, with the hope of attracting immigrants. For Iturbide, not just any type of immigrant suited the new empire; it had to be the “right” one. The first types of immigrants that the commission had in its sight were Irish immigrants because of their positive work ethic and strong hostility toward the U.S. Moreover, and just as important as their dislike for Americans,

¹⁴⁴ Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, “Los Primeros Tropiezos,” in *Historia General de México: Versión 2000* (México D.F., México: El Colegio de México, 2007) , p.550.

which would create a strong safeguard against the United States on the northern frontier, Iturbide's government believed that these Irish immigrants subscribed to the Catholic faith that in essence made them the best possible candidates. In the December 29, 1821, report prepared by *La Comisión de Relaciones Exteriores*, which made the recommendations on immigration policy for the Mexican Empire, it emphasized,

The Irish are Catholics and faithful to their religion that they will defend it at any cost. They have great moral virtues, and a great work ethic that has no limitations. They are no friend of either England or the United States; and in case one of these countries decides to declare war against the Mexican Empire, we can count on these great Irish colonists to protect and defend our vast borders.¹⁴⁵

Six months after *La Comisión* had made its recommendations, Diego Barry, Tadeo Ortíz, and Felipe O'Reilly, colonizing agents, had already made a proposal to Iturbide to bring nearly 10,000 Irish immigrants to Texas.

Not wanting to take any chances with the Irish immigrants, despite the aforementioned great qualities they supposedly had, government officials required that all incoming immigrants present officials with proof of their baptism record and a letter from a consulate or local authority certifying who they were. If the immigrants met the basic requirements, they would be given 80 acres of land per family, exemption from military service, and would only be required to pay half the Church's tithe and the same rate on the property tax for a period of six months. If some of these immigrants brought slaves with them, the constitutional government would determine at a

¹⁴⁵ Juan Francisco de Azcárate, *Un Programa de Política Internacional: Dictamen Presentado a la Soberana Junta Provisional Gubernamental del Imperio Mexicano, por la Comisión de Relaciones Exteriores, 29 de Diciembre del año de 1821, Primero de la Independencia*; Archivo Histórico Diplomático Mexicano, Serie II, no.37 (México D.F., México, 1932), p.227.

later date if these black slaves would be allowed to stay. Only a couple of months later, Valentín Gómez Farías introduced his own colonization project.

Gómez Farías's vision differed from that of Iturbide because whereas the Emperor sought European immigrants of Catholic faith, Gómez Farías made the argument that the nation did not necessarily need European immigrants; all the country needed to do was to give the same advantages offered to potential immigrants to its own citizens that lack land suitable for cultivation, which by all accounts was a great majority of the population. Gómez Farías went as far to suggest that the government might have to consider granting large sections of land to its Indian population. He also prohibited immigrants from bringing their slaves, and slaves that entered the country would be set free upon entering the country. The government would issue *cartas de seguridad* for the purpose of preventing the black immigrants from being re-enslaved by Americans living on the northern frontier. The governor of Tamaulipas added that to attain the *carta de seguridad*, all black immigrants needed to provide government officials with a letter written by a Mexican citizen that attested to the good moral character of that individual; all other black immigrants that could not get that letter would be deemed "*turbulentos*."¹⁴⁶

In a sign of desperation, the *Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores*, Lucas Alamán proposed that the northern frontier be populated with Chinese immigrants or in a worse case scenario, that as a deterrent, at least send prisoners to the Alta California region with the hope that that desolate area could in some way become productive. Unfortunately for Alamán and other government officials who advocated foreign immigration as political, social, and economic salvation, the

¹⁴⁶ Archivo General de la Nación; Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores; vol.16, Fojas: 216, 228, 229, 230; Noviembre 10, 11, y 27, 1839; México D.F., México.

proposed immigrants did not come, at least not in the large numbers that had been predicted. Alamán and others attributed this early failure to a xenophobia culture in the country, which was rooted in the fact that for most of the three hundred colonial rule, the population had not grown accustomed to seeing many foreigners, thus at the first sight of immigrants setting up colonies, many people felt weary about the intentions of these new arrivals. The idea of attracting foreigners was not one that just so happened to developed after 1821 in the psyche of the country's first politicians, but in fact, these early *políticos* had been inspired by the blueprint laid out by the United States several decades earlier.

With the United States as an example, therefore, Alamán insisted on two issues that would put his country on par with its northern neighbor: religious and racial tolerance. When in 1824 a U.S. citizen was assassinated, Alamán ordered severe punishments for those that insulted or simply bothered the immigrants. Perhaps blinded by their insatiable admiration for the U.S. political system, Mexican politicians may have decided to look the other way when they knew that the U.S. political system did not accord equal rights to everyone and that discrimination dominated the U.S. landscape at that time. The irony in this story is that President Guadalupe Victoria, in 1825, had no problem in letting hundreds of Kickapoo and Shawnee Indians form a colony in Texas after they had pointed out their frustration with the U.S. government and relentless persecution by the Anglos. Thus, while the country attempted to emulate the United States in their supposed liberal stance with regards to racial tolerance, the reality was that the nation put to practice the policies the United States had on paper; yet politicians did not see the contradiction. The government had to be weary about North American Indians wanting to move south of the Rio Grande River, since the current climate with the Indians already living in the

country had, for the most part, only caused turmoil. Between 1848 and 1853, more than one thousand people died because of the constant Indian raids¹⁴⁷ The supposed good intentions on the part of the Native Americans seeking refuge had to be taken with a grain of salt.

Although on the surface religious freedom seems to have been the main complaint of U.S. citizens living in Texas had against local authorities, the issue of slavery underlined a great deal of discontent. By leaving the U.S. and moving to Texas many of these Anglo settlers believed that they could bring their slaves with them or simply buy some new ones that were making their way into Texas via Galveston Bay. The government did not have the resources to patrol its northern frontier. By 1823, Texas had 3,000 Anglos living illegally, and only 200 officers to patrol the entire area. Had many of these settlers known that Mexico had abolished slavery in 1829 its probable they would not have moved to Texas in the first place. Nonetheless, the government had a strong suspicion that the Anglo squatters in Texas had plans to seize that territory for the United States. As early as 1839, some Texans had proposed establishing *Los Estados Mexicanos del Norte*, which included the states of Tamaulipas, San Luis Potosí, Jalisco, Nuevo León, Coahuila, Durango, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, New Mexico, Baja California, and California.

In order to get the upper hand on the Anglos, the government made an effort to recruit black slaves to rebel against their owners, with the promise that officials would provide them with land. In exchange for their freedom, black slaves living in Texas aided the army in river crossings, spying, and in other vital chores. Evidence of a strong fondness for blacks, especially

¹⁴⁷ William T. Kerrigan, "Race, Expansion, and Slavery in Eagle Pass, Texas, 1852," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* vol.101 no.3 (January 1998) : p.282.

those being held in bondage, comes from the heroic effort of Captain José Enrique de la Peña when he personally disguised a soon to be re-enslaved black man and brought him to Matamoros from Goliad, Texas. General José de Urrea said that fourteen black families sought his protection in Victoria. Prior to Santa Anna's departure to Texas, Minister of War José María Tornel told him to grant blacks their freedom and the right to travel to any point in the Mexican Republic.

Many blacks had indeed learned of the liberal policies with regards to slavery and some of them in the mid 1830s met the army with opened arms as an army of liberation.¹⁴⁸ Colonel James Morgan had learned of a plan that entailed the joining of forces between the Coushatta Indians, Mexicans, and blacks with the hope of ridding Texas of the despised Anglos. Several reports from that time mentioned that not all of the black slaves in Texas welcomed the arrival of the army, and that in fact, many of them actually assisted their masters in Texas's military efforts. These black slaves believed that by aiding their white masters, they might win their eventual freedom.

*The Inability of the Government to Foster a National Sentiment
Following the Texas Secession*

By 1836 with the loss of one of its northern states, the country feared that more of its territory would be annexed by the United States. Adding to the fear was the internal political struggles had led to many military officers such as José María Canales in the northern frontier

¹⁴⁸ Paul D. Lack, "Slavery and the Texas Revolution," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* vol.89 no.2 (October 1985) : p.193.

leading a group of rebels in a struggle to create their own republic called *La República de la Sierra Madre* in Tamaulipas with the eventual goal of annexing this small country to the United States. José María Carbajal, entered the country through Texas accompanied by 400 armed men, on the pretext that they were searching for run away slaves, but in fact he was simply a filibuster. The state of Sonora fare no better as Gaston Raousset de Boulbon with the help of French adventurers tried to take over that part of the country. Later in the nineteenth century the state of Baja California also endured filibustering.

As late as the 1840s, many officials still believed they could take back Texas. Carlos María de Bustamante even had more ambitious ideas than just taking Texas back. He insisted that if the country played its cards right, they could actually win even more territory. The logic behind his reasoning was that if the army just won one major battle in the northern deserts, the army would not be far from knocking on some U.S. southern states, which could possibly lead to a slave uprising that would in no doubt cause the newly freed blacks to join the Mexican forces. In the words of Bustamante, “If Mexico takes the war to the south of the United States; it would be a tremendous temptation for thousands of slaves to break free from the chains of bondage. This barbaric system of labor has been repudiated by our laws and customs.”¹⁴⁹ In 1841, one year prior to Bustamante’s plan, Juan Nepomuceno Almonte, acting as *Ministro de Guerra*, ordered that all emissaries in the U.S. to circulate letters, if at all possible in newspapers in cities such as New Orleans, in which it would be announced that Mexico offered great advantages to those held in bondage. Almonte went as far as to suggest to the government that it might want to

¹⁴⁹ Carlos María de Bustamante, *El Gabinete Mexicano Durante El Segundo Periodo de la Administración del Exmo. Señor D. Anastasio Bustamante Hasta la Entrega del Mando del Exmo. Señor Presidente Interino D. Antonio López de Santa Anna, y Continuación del Cuadro Histórico de la Revolución Mexicana* (México D.F., México: J.M. Lara, 1842), p.37.

consider hiring a professional writer to perform this task, provided that he did not charge too much for this service. Questions might exist as to the sincerity of the government's humanitarian concerns for the blacks held in bondage in the U.S., but there is no doubt that the government had indeed contemplated receiving some form of assistance from the black population.

On the one hand it only appears that the government was only interested in using the slavery issue as a political ploy to get back at the U.S. economically and perhaps even culturally. On the other hand, in 1841, five years after the loss of Texas, the *Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores*, Sebastián Camacho, informed the English minister, Richard Pakenham, that the government was horrified to know that Anglos in Texas were still introducing slaves into that territory, some twelve years after the country had abolished that practice. The question remains: why were Camacho and other officials horrified at the sight of slavery, if this issue had passed from being a concern to one that was now in the hands of Texas officials? In complaining to Pakenham, it is possible that the government was only interested in getting the English government stirred up, no matter what it took, so that it could militarily assist in its effort against the U.S. The pleas did not produce positive results. For instance, in September of 1842, several English sailors refused to join a group of Mexican soldiers who were determined to retake Texas as they felt disgusted at the idea that these people wanted to liberate black slaves so that they could join their military cause against the U.S.

Having no success obtaining military support from European powers on the eve of the U.S.—Mexico War, officials still pursue the tactic of wanting U.S. soldiers and other Europeans living in the U.S., such as the Irish, to turn on the U.S. in exchange for land. The strategy of arming blacks in the U.S., an idea pondered since the 1830s, had not been abandoned in the mid

1840s. A case in point comes from an incident in March, 1846, in which several U.S. soldiers, along with three black slaves, crossed the Rio Grande to join the Mexican military effort, supposedly enticed by a group of men on the other side of the river. Officials knew that they did not have the financial resources to bribe U.S. soldiers, but offering them large sections of land could possibly win them over, and apparently government officials put a bet on their country's resources as the best source of enticement. The *Ministro de Guerra*, Almonte, just like Camacho and Bustamante, believed strongly in arming the blacks in the South, and promising the Irish, that in the case of a Mexican victory, it would end slavery in that former region of the U.S. Bustamante had reached a point of desperation in 1848, that just like Santa Anna, he too advocated for the strategy of trying to persuade the soldiers to turn on their own government in exchange for large sections of territory.

In many respects, it appears that officials quickly realized that in essence, the best offensive attack against the U.S. was not its man power, which it sorely lacked, but rather its natural resources. For instance, when Otero found out that Americans, along with nationals living on the northern frontier were exploring the possibility of creating *La República de Sierra Madre*, he called for military assistance from foreign countries, sighting the indifference that Mexicans had towards their own country's political affairs, embarrassingly saying "nothing could be expected out of the Mexican people."¹⁵⁰ In making reference to the size of the population in the years leading up to the U.S.-Mexican war, nearly 8 million citizens, I am arguing that the geographical size of the country made it extremely difficult for officials to properly guard its northern frontier;

¹⁵⁰ Moisés González Navarro, *Los Extranjeros en México y los Mexicanos en el Extranjero, 1821-1970, volumen 1* (México D.F., México: El Colegio de México, 1994) , p.286.

hence the desperate calls since 1821 for liberal policies allowing the swift introduction of European immigrants. Government officials in the 1820s had mentioned that for a country with a population of seven million Mexicans and a vast territory that extended from Oregon to Yucatán and from Texas to Guatemala, a population of that size seemed insufficient.¹⁵¹ Tadeo Ortiz de Ayala, a colonizing agent interested in bringing Irish to the country, also remarked that if Mexico was to place itself in the rank of the most respected and prosperous nations, it would need to increase its population.¹⁵² Even as late as the first decade of the twentieth-century, intellectuals such as Andres Molina Enríquez, made the case that the country needed a massive influx of immigrants, as nationals had not reproduced at the levels needed to adequately sustain its national territory, so he insisted that if the country did not reach a population of 50 million soon, the country would not survive.¹⁵³

The pleas of Otero and those other politicians that subscribed to the senator's political philosophy, received little attention outside of the country. Senator Otero's frustration with the people should not come as a surprise, especially with the indigenous segment of the population, which felt no need to take up arms against invading foreign troops; these individuals were more likely to pick up a machete and avenge an injustice against their hostile *cuadillo* boss. In general, Mexicans had a tradition of disliking military service beyond the defense of their home provinces and communities, and that feeling remained strong after Independence.¹⁵⁴ Many of its

¹⁵¹ José Angel Hernández, "From Conquest to Colonization: Indios and Colonization Policies after Mexican Independence," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* vol.26 no.2 (Summer 2010) : p.308.

¹⁵² Edith Louise Kelley and Mattie Austin Hatcher, "Tadeo Ortiz de Ayala and the Colonization of Texas, 1822-1833, Part II," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* vol.32 no.2 (October 1928) : p.155.

¹⁵³ Andres Molina Enríquez, *Los Grandes Problemas Nacionales* (México D.F., México: Imprenta de A. Carranza e Hijos, 1909), p.358.

¹⁵⁴ Christon I. Archer, "Fashioning a New Nation," p.325.

citizens were unwilling to engage in the defense of a nation that occupied a continental expanse that they did not fully comprehend.¹⁵⁵ Considering that through the 1830s and 1840s the nation was in such economic shambles, the government could not afford to pay its own military. Taking advantage of the financial vulnerability of the country, various states and rich *hacendados* created their own militia armies not to combat invading armies, but rather to fight off the national army which from its inception in the early 1820s, had attempted to create a centralist government.

The U.S.—Mexican War and the Plea to U.S. Troops to Stay

In 1849, one thousand Evangelical Germans asked the government for permission to settle in the country. This group said that they had heard positive feedback from other Germans living in Mexico and were intrigued that the country's liberal policy on religious tolerance far outpaced that of the United States. In that same year, a rumor circulated that over twelve thousand Hungarian immigrants had shown interest in migrating. To the despair of the government, such great number of European immigrants did not come, despite the valuable incentives offered. For those few who did decide to venture there, as has already previously mentioned, enthusiasm awaited these individuals. The arrival of Carlos de Pindray, along with eighty French men, on November 21, 1850, who came to Guaymas, Sonora, amid high government expectations, is a case in point.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. , p.337.

The residents of Guaymas, just like many others in the north, had endured tremendous hardship, especially violent attacks at the hands of the raiding Indians that had not been brought under government control on either side of the border. Thus, after being granted land, animals, and other provisions, the French organized several excursions to go after the raiding Apaches, all to the delight of the *Sonorenses*. The reception that the people from Guaymas gave to Carlos de Pindray and his men raises several questions. First, were the people of Guaymas, or for that matter, people in general, sincere in their enthusiasm for the arrival of immigrants into their towns and *rancherías*, regardless of their racial or religious background, believing that these foreigners would serve as the catalyst needed to move the country forward? Or, secondly, did people on the northern frontier disguise their xenophobia toward the foreigners arriving, knowing that these immigrants brought possible financial growth, such as in mining, to a region that sorely needed it, and the added bonus that they could provide the security that the centralist government had failed to provide?

After losing the war with the United States, officials told Nicholas Trist that they would not like to see slavery introduced in the states that Mexico had ceded. What lay behind what appeared to be on the surface a benevolent petition on the part of the government remains a mystery. Nonetheless, Manuel Payno, a novelist during the mid nineteenth century, made the argument that when Father Miguel Hidalgo made the call to end slavery he did it out of a true conviction for the humane treatment of blacks, and not because he caved in to political pressure arising out of Europe calling for the abolition of slavery.¹⁵⁶ Payno's view on Hidalgo speaks

¹⁵⁶ Manuel Payno, *Carta que Sobre los Asuntos de México Dirige al Sr. General Forey Comandante en Jefe de las Tropas Francesas* (México D.F, México: Imprenta de Vicente Garcia Torres, 1862) , pp.14-15.

highly of the liberal views that the first leader of the Independence movement had, and leaves no doubt that Hidalgo had no ulterior motives other than to help a small number of blacks still being held in bondage.

Payno's view differs from that of historian Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán who did not see Hidalgo's decision to abolish slavery as a bold political or social move, since he believed that at the dawn of the Independence movement, the country did not have a large number of slaves or for that matter, a black population in general, since it had been absorbed through the process of miscegenation. Therefore, Beltran challenges the validity of Hidalgo's political boldness, in other words, it did not take much political courage to take such a stand on slavery when in essence the practice had been phase out many years earlier and it was no longer an issue for the leaders of the Independence movement. Yet, further evidence reveals that Hidalgo was not alone in his view on slavery. José María Morelos y Pavón, a *mestizo* from Michoacan, with African ancestry, recruited mulattoes and blacks from the sugar plantations in Veracruz on his way to fight the Spanish forces in Mexico City.¹⁵⁷ Morelos, like Hidalgo, judged slavery as irrational, inhumane, and even lectured Quintana Roo that people should not be judge on the basis of skin color.

At the root of the disastrous failure in its military campaign against both Texas and the United States was the fact that some twenty-five years after the country had won its independence from Spain, it had not succeeded in embedding a sense of national pride and unity. By 1847, with a population near seven million, at least three million Indians were unaware that

¹⁵⁷ Ramón Eduardo Ruíz, *Triumph and Tragedy*, pp.156-57.

New Spain had ceased to exist.¹⁵⁸ Three quarters of the Indians had probably not yet heard that Mexico was independent of Spain.¹⁵⁹ Ignorance or indifference to the political struggles of the nation, perhaps, but the end result left no doubt that the country was vulnerable to foreign encroachment and the United States took advantage. In January of 1848, Colonel Ethan Allen Hitch claimed that in the Valley of Mexico, the president of the *ayuntamiento*, Francisco Suárez Iriarte, at a gathering to celebrate the American victory offered the U.S. soldiers a toast for their success. Some speculate that Iriarte and other local politicians secretly wished for the full annexation of Mexico to the United States, hence the reason for the toast. Colonel Hitch stated that several local residents begged him and his soldiers not to leave until they succeeded in destroying the powerful influence the clergy and army still enjoyed in the country.¹⁶⁰

The assertions made by Colonel Hitch were echoed by William Booth Taliaferro, an American traveler during the last year of the U.S.—Mexico War. In writing to his grandfather on May 24, 1848, from Pachuca, Hidalgo, Taliaferro asserted

Most of the people of this little town regret the departure of the Americans as much as we rejoice in going home. Mexico in every place occupied by our troops has been stimulated by contact with Yankees to a degree of activity which it had never attained, and the market afforded by our occupation to all their products scarcely dreamed of.¹⁶¹

The U.S. soldier added that while in Pachuca, a man named Don Pedro, told him that he was grateful that the U.S. army had come because they had brought peace and security to a region ravished by guerillas. Taliaferro insisted, in his memoir, that he and the rest of the U.S. soldiers

¹⁵⁸ Moisés González Navarro, *Los Extranjeros en México y los Mexicanos en el Extranjero*, p.273.

¹⁵⁹ Charles A. Hale, "The War with the United States and the Crisis in Mexican Thought," p.157.

¹⁶⁰ Moisés González Navarro, *Los Extranjeros en México y los Mexicanos en el Extranjero*, pp.272-73.

¹⁶¹ William Taliaferro and Ludwell H. Johnson, "William Booth Taliaferro's Letters from Mexico, 1847-1848," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* vol.73 no.4 (October 1965) : p.471.

upon arrival, were well fed and shown the town and persuaded to do commerce with the local businesses. Echoing Hitch's view, Taliaferro also took notice of the power of the Catholic clergy and criticized its stronghold on the people, noting that the friars were the most ignorant people he met in all of the country.

The remarks made by those three Mexicans to Colonel Hitch made it clear that the nation had not succeeded in breaking many of its colonial bonds, such as the social, political, and economic power the Catholic Church and the military still wielded over the country's affairs. For example, after Santa Anna left Mexico City for Veracruz to stop the advancement of General Scott, Valentín Gómez Farías and Congress confiscated fifteen million pesos of Church property for the sake of financing the nation's war effort. Undoubtedly upset, the Church relied heavily on its upper class young men, mostly *criollos*, dubbed the *Polkos*, to defend it from what it understood to be government encroachment. For an entire month, the *Polkos*, rather than marched to Veracruz with their men to oppose Scott's army, fought soldiers loyal to Gómez Farías.¹⁶² The *Polkos* were officers in the national militia; hence, they had the duty to defend their country, but in typical political fashion, they aligned themselves whichever way the political winds blew, only bearing in mind which faction gave them their best chance for both political and financial gain. In the words of Ramón Ruíz, "the *Polkos* selfishly put politics ahead of *patria*."¹⁶³ Under such a toxic political environment, it should not have surprised both Colonel Hitch and Taliaferro that people in the countryside, such as Don Pedro in Pachuca, insisted, if not outright begged the invading U.S. army officers to consider staying for a longer

¹⁶² Ramón Eduardo Ruíz, *Triumph and Tragedy*, p.215.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

period of time with the hopes that these foreigners could help stabilize their crumbling country. In many respects, the views expressed by both Hitch, Taliaferro, and other soldiers, served as a catalyst for many politicians in the U.S. who had envisioned the Manifest Destiny policy to include not only the takeover of all of the territory west of the Mississippi River, but the total annexation of the country.

The U.S. government got further reassurances that total annexation might actually be a welcome desire from the people when it got word that people in Yucatán, mainly rich *hacendado criollos*, sought military assistance from the U.S. government in their efforts against the rebellious Maya, all this happening at the same time that General Scott triumphantly entered Mexico City. The *criollos* of Yucatán, sent Justo Sierra O'Reilly, father of late nineteenth-century Minister of Education Justo Sierra, to Washington with pleas for help and promising to remain neutral in the United States' effort against the rest of the country. Ironically, these same *hacendados* in Yucatán that now wanted military assistance from the United States had earlier rallied under the banner of "Gringos go home," but that tune change when the Maya rebels were on the verge of taking Ciudad Carmen and Mérida, capital of Yucatán. At this juncture in the conflict, nationalism and patriotism, if there was ever any from these individuals, took a back seat to the pressing concern of protecting their large haciendas and their lives.

After Sierra O'Reilly's pleas fell on deaf ears, he did not give up. Immediately following the U.S. army victory, the *hacendados* in Yucatán, recruited soldiers from the Thirteen Infantry Regiment, coming mainly from Mobile, Alabama, in the summer of 1848, paying them eight dollars a month. To add further incentive to these American soldiers, the Yucatecans also offered the Americans 320 acres of land to each one of the 933 men that went off to kill the

Maya. Sierra O'Reilly, the brainchild behind the movement in Yucatán, had made it explicitly clear that he desired white immigrants so that through miscegenation, the local bloodlines could improve.¹⁶⁴ His concern about improving bloodlines in Yucatán goes to show how desperate the elite sector was in eradicating bloodlines, or in other words people, that did not meet their supposed scientific criteria as bearing the necessary physiological traits, beginning with skin color, needed to move the country socially, culturally, and economically forward. In this view, anybody who did not subscribe to their political philosophy was an enemy and needed to be ousted.

Thus, the interpretation that Mexico by mid nineteenth century had liberal tendencies that began with equality before the law for all people, regardless of race or religious creed, no doubt has to be questioned. The hypocrisy is clear: on the one hand calling on the Anglos to leave their country, while on the other hand, when convenient, asking these same soldiers to stay and actually desiring to conduct commerce with them. Undoubtedly these contradictory actions displayed by the public would have given the U.S. soldiers, and subsequently possible European immigrants, a cause for concern as to whether or not they wanted to cast their lot in this unstable nation. This contradiction came to fruition when U.S. soldiers entered Mexico City and once they took up their quarters, people from their roof tops threw stones at the foreign army residing in their city. No sooner had some of these American soldiers begun to heal their wounds, some were indeed injured, when a group of women accompanied these soldiers to the Hotel Bella Unión, where a “lively trade in the upstairs bedrooms” developed.¹⁶⁵ These vastly different

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p.217.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

receptions given to the U.S. troops left no doubt as to the fragile state of the nation. National unity had not occurred for the young country. Despite the liberal political rhetoric of no tolerance for discrimination, at mid nineteenth-century, class and caste, still determined an individual's place on the social hierarchy scale.¹⁶⁶

The famed politician, Mariano Otero, insisted “something was terribly wrong if a Yankee army could march through hundreds of miles of Mexican territory unmolested by the native population.”¹⁶⁷ The observation made by Otero reflects the political and cultural disconnection that Mexico City politicians had with the rest of the country. Senator Otero's sentiment was echoed by Henri Pierre Loizillon, a French writer of the time, who noted “the French conquered Mexico with their legs rather than their swords.”¹⁶⁸ Similar remarks had been made some twenty years earlier by former President José Joaquín de Herrera who pointed out that the invading American forces marched through the states of Zacatecas and Jalisco without facing any opposition from the local population.

Some U.S. politicians regarded Mexicans as docile and effeminate. The editor of the *New York Sun* said, “The Mexican race is perfectly accustomed to being conquered;” while the editor of the *New York Herald*, James Gordon Bennett concluded, “what began as a rape might end in a happy marriage.”¹⁶⁹ Army officer Edward D. Mansfield suggested that the U.S. was not superior to Mexico by nature but instead by its superior knowledge in the sciences. This argument was made on the basis that the northern frontier, including what is now Arizona, New Mexico, and

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. , p.195.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. , p.221.

¹⁶⁸ Henri Pierre Loizillon, *Lettres Sur L'Expédition du Mexique, Publiées Par Sa Soeur, 1862-1867* (Paris, France, 1890) , p.152.

¹⁶⁹ Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800-1890* (New York City, New York: Atheneum, 1985) , p.185.

California, was not being put to “good” use because the people lacked the necessary drive and ambition, so characteristic of the U.S. frontiersman, to exploit the natural resources. The argument that Mexicans were backward and thus the reason their land should be expropriated, was not an acceptable argument so a sophisticated case had to be made. Senator Ambrose H. Sevier from Arkansas believed that if Mexicans resisted, they should be rounded up and put in a reservation like the Cherokees.¹⁷⁰ An Illinois congressman stated the case against Mexico in typical terms, citing their effeminate character as the basis for an acquiescent attitude to U.S. tutelage.¹⁷¹

The logic behind the argument, which seemed to echo a popular political sentiment at the time, was that the U.S. government, along with private capital, could bring economic vitality to a region that even lacked a large population. The *Democratic Review*, a political journal, also added that U.S. institutions were superior to those of Mexico.¹⁷² The reasoning for taking over the northern frontier was that U.S. civic institutions outpaced those of Mexico. The case for taking over all of the country, or at least its northern frontier, was framed under the rhetoric of rescuing the people from their barbaric leaders and backward Catholic institutions that seemed to oppress its citizens. The U.S. army would therefore be liberators of some sorts in the eyes of the people. Indeed, this liberator sentiment was fueled by many first hand accounts of U.S. soldiers either fighting the Mexican army, as in the case of the U.S.—Mexico War, or in the assistance rendered later in the 1860s to the Juárez administration in their efforts against the French, but also against the filibusters. In addition, many U.S. travelers who passed through the country or

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.183.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p.185.

¹⁷² Ibid., p.176.

just so happen to lived south of the Rio Grande at the time of conflict and reported back to their families in the U.S. also boasted about their delightful experience. Furthermore, many U.S. newspaper reporters in the country added to the chorus that believed that the public would be better off under the leadership of the U.S.

Thus, the reports by the Americans by mid nineteenth century varied widely. On the one hand, some thought the idea of annexing all of the country was sheer stupidity considering the people could not be assimilated into the U.S. culture. Some had the more extreme view, racist, one may add, that the population, by virtue of its racial composition was inferior in every way to the Anglo American. Yet, on the other hand, others like Taliaferro praised the people and remarked, “the luxury to be found in Mexico is scarcely equaled in the most splendid of our cities....Mexicans display very good taste in my opinion...”¹⁷³ By no means was Taliaferro alone in this view, Jane McManus Storm Cazneau, through her travels in Mexico wrote to the editor of the *New York Sun* and noted two factors that contradicted the assessment of the filibusters. First, she adamantly emphasized the ability of the people to establish a republican government, in contrast to the opinion held by those U.S. politicians that strongly believed that the people needed to be liberated from its dictatorship form of government and colonial bonds exercise by the Catholic Church.¹⁷⁴ She had a more moderate view as to how best approach the Mexican situation. Cazneau, maybe because of her utopian mindset, made the case for the creation of three separate republics from Mexico: that of Rio Grande, as had been espoused by some filibusters during the 1830s, the Republic Veracruz, and the Republic of Yucatán. In the

¹⁷³ William Taliaferro and Ludwell H. Johnson, “William Booth Taliaferro’s Letters from Mexico,” pp.459-60.

¹⁷⁴ *New York Sun* (New York) 13 and 24 May 1847.

creation of these three separate republics, Cazneau asserted that the U.S. government would have a location to send free blacks. In other words, the Republics of Veracruz, Yucatán, and Rio Grande, would serve as a safety valve to rid the U.S. of its racial tension.

Cazneau's social and political views reflected the Young America spirit. This generation of Americans believed that gradual emancipation and the eventual relocation of blacks in the tropics was the solution to the slavery question, hence the idea of advocating for the Republic of Veracruz or the Republic of Yucatán made sense to these supporters. Cazneau suggested that even slave holders might want to consider moving to these new republics so as to avoid the rift that was beginning to surface between northern and southern states. The idea behind Cazneau's suggestion was to set up these colonies so as to begin a commercial relationship with these new republics. On the surface, Cazneau's ideas, manifested throughout New York City newspaper editorials, appeared to demonstrate benevolence on her part towards both blacks and Mexicans, citing her support for Benito Juárez; yet, the reality seems to show that Cazneau's suggestions were nothing more than a facade for the continuation of the Manifest Destiny policy that by the mid 1850s at the time Cazneau was writing, the U.S. had already taken Texas, New Mexico, and California.¹⁷⁵ Nonetheless, in the spirit of the filibuster movements, which Cazneau advocated in some way, the northern states of Sonora and Baja California still drew strong appeal to potential investors, especially those in mining and agriculture, and those slave holders who at their core maintain that their form of capitalism suited their interest best. Cazneau's true character revealed itself in her letters to President James Buchanan, in which she informed him that Juárez

¹⁷⁵ Linda S. Hudson, *Mistress of Manifest Destiny: A Biography of Jane McManus Storm Cazneau, 1807-1878* (Austin, Texas: Texas State Historical Association, 2001) : p.145.

was willing to sell the rights across Tehuantepec for a million dollars; this would open the country to the right class of settlers, meaning slave holders. She added that another million dollars would secure the northern frontier.¹⁷⁶

Cazneau's suggestions only reflected a popular sentiment of the time. Robert W. Schufelt, the U.S. consul general at Havana, undertaking a special mission to Mexico in late 1861 and early 1862 to evaluate the French intervention, advocated a black colony on the Tehuantepec Isthmus. Schufelt argued that colonists would assure U.S. control over this transit route, which he considered crucial for future U.S. commercial growth and national security.¹⁷⁷ Schufelt viewed black colonization more as a tool of national policy than as a humanitarian act toward freed blacks.¹⁷⁸ Under Schufelt and Cazneau's assessment, the U.S. would benefit from a security standpoint by having the aforementioned colonies, in strategic locations of course, since this accorded the U.S. government the opportunity to continue its Monroe Doctrine, which through the mid-nineteenth century faced various challenges from European powers seeking to establish themselves in Mexico under the guise of seeking payment for unpaid loans, as in the case of both England, Spain, and France. So in order to avoid or prevent another European power from establishing itself in the country, as Spain had tried to do in the late 1820s and early 1830s, people such as Cazneau and Schufelt urged the U.S. government to act quickly, and if in the process the black slavery issue got resolved, then it could be deemed a double victory for the U.S.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p.165.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas Schoonover, "Misconstructed Mission: Expansionism and Black Colonization in Mexico and Central America During the Civil War," *Pacific Historical Review* vol.49 no.4 (November 1980) : pp.610-11.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p.611.

Obviously not all politicians saw this strategic move as a benevolent course of action; in fact, many politicians believed that slave holders simply wanted to expand slavery not only into Mexico, but also the Caribbean and Central America. Even politicians in Latin America did not believe in the sincerity of the arguments made by people like Cazneau. Latin American governments feared the africanization of their nation.¹⁷⁹ During the period of these proposals, which had garnered the attention of U.S. politicians, Mexico and other Latin American countries had begun to experiment with the idea of attracting European immigrants so as to “improve” their racial composition, believing that through miscegenation the outcome would yield a more productive society. The possible introduction of blacks into the country, scared officials believing such arrival would retard the few advances achieved up to that point. The U.S. government was relentless in its pursuit to rid the U.S. of its black population and desire to colonize them in Mexico. In the 1860s, the U.S. congress passed legislation that allocated funds to purchase the Island of Cozumel, off the coast of the state of Yucatán, with the intention of sending blacks there. The congressional effort to push for the immigration of blacks to Mexico was spearhead by Senator James Rood Doolittle, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Mexico had not offered any part of its territory for sale, thus, these political discussions in the U.S. Congress gave Mexican officials the perception that the U.S. was after more national territory; they did not accept the argument that these territorial acquisitions had the simple intention of relocation U.S. blacks to these remote locations. Officials believed there was something sinister in the proposals laid out by the U.S. They had a legitimate reason for concern

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p.616.

about the prospect of blacks coming to their country. For instance, if in the case the government refused to sell any of its territory to the U.S., then the second option to consider would be to settle the blacks in a colony in which these individuals would be protected and policed by U.S. forces and only subjected to U.S. law, even though they would be physically residing on Mexican territory. The argument used by some U.S. officials in order not to appear as bullying the Mexican people, was that it did not want the African-Americans residing in these proposed colonies to become an economic and social burden on the national government. In other words, the U.S. government was acting in good faith, but to the Mexican population, these U.S. blacks would be too close for comfort.

Both the government and the people through the 1860s had only shown ambiguity, at best, when it came to welcoming black immigrants. To begin with, the size of the black population in the mid nineteenth-century had been deemed extremely low, to the point that many European and American travelers at the time referred to that segment of the population as “insignificant.” For instance, Carl Christian Sartorius, traveling through the country in 1850, actually claimed that “In time the black race will disappear altogether, and would have been extinct already, if free negroes,...had not emigrated from Cuba.”¹⁸⁰ Sartorius asserted that the people of African descent he saw on Mexico’s West coast, lacked education and had no interest in the political affairs of the either the local or federal government and to make matters worse, they had fallen victims to the vice of heavy drinking.

¹⁸⁰ Carl Christian Sartorius, *Mexico. Landscapes and Popular Sketches* (Stuttgart, Germany: Brokhaus, 1961), pp.50-51.

Furthermore, an interesting observation by Sartorius, highlighted the black population of the Costa Chica, had begun the process of miscegenation with the Indian population, consequently, a fusion of both racial cultures had begun to emerge that now had the black people enjoying the favorite past times of their *mestizo* neighbors such as horse races and cock fights.¹⁸¹ The claims made by Sartorius received further elaboration when W. Hall Bullock, an English traveler through the country's Costa Chica in the mid 1860s, also came to the same conclusions, emphasizing the high rate of interbreeding he saw between blacks and Indians.¹⁸² Unfortunately for the government, not only did foreign travelers have this view of Afro-Mexicans, but even Ramón Sánchez, a Mexican geographer, who had been hired by the government to conduct a study of the West coast, essentially concluded the same as both Sartorius and Bullock.¹⁸³

Taking into consideration what Bullock, Sartorius, Sánchez, as well as the observations of other travelers with regard to the degeneration of the masses on the West coast because of the miscegenation taking place with the few remaining blacks, officials had no hesitation in the 1850s and 1860s in refusing the black colonization schemes proposed by the U.S. government. At mid nineteenth-century, government officials had not come to terms with the country's strong legacy of miscegenation. Furthermore, an intellectual community had not yet developed, at least not one significant in numbers to be loud, that could shed light on the benefits that miscegenation had brought to the country and that government officials had nothing to fear with the arrival of black immigrants.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.179.

¹⁸² W. Hall Bullock, *Across Mexico in 1864-1865* (London, England: MacMillian and Co., 1866) , pp.231-32.

¹⁸³ Ramón Sánchez, *Bosquejo Estadístico e Histórico del Distrito Michoacano de Jiquilpan de Juárez* (Morelia, Michoacan, México: Imprenta de la Escuela Industrial Militar, 1896) , p.166.

As will be analyzed in the final chapter of this essay, African Americans seeking admission to the state of Coahuila in 1851 did receive the government's approval for colonization purposes, and as a matter of fact, both the government and the public welcomed these black immigrants with much enthusiasm. What distinguishes the pessimistic sentiment manifested by these same officials with regards to blacks living on the West coast versus those in Coahuila was simply the geographical location of the colonies. As has been argued thus far, the blacks on the West coast had been deemed living too close for comfort and therefore the possibility of miscegenation, which the aforementioned travelers emphasized, had begun to take place at an alarming rate for government officials. On the other hand, the black colonists living in Coahuila had established a colony in a rural and isolated area, where contact, if any at all, with the rest of the population would be kept to a minimal. Moreover, this particular colony served as a buffer zone against further possible encroachment from American filibusters and they served on many military expeditions against Indian raiders throughout the northern frontier. In other words, the black colonists in Coahuila served a function for the government at a critical juncture in the nation's history; whereas the other small segment of the black population living in the interior of the country, had been stigmatized as nothing more than a social burden, almost no different than the popular sentiment officials had with regards to Indians.

CHAPTER 3

The French Intervention and Immigration Politics

This chapter analyzes the years encompassing the War of the Reform and the French intervention approximately the years between 1858 and 1867. Moreover, this chapter illustrates the extent to which authorities, including Maximilian were willing to go in order to attract not only foreign investment, which was sorely needed after losing half of the national territory, but just as importantly, the never-ending saga of finding the right foreign immigrants well into the French intervention.

In this chapter, first hand accounts from former U.S. Confederate soldiers who came to the country and remarked about their splendid reception and promoted the opportunities that awaited anyone willing to relocate from the U.S. to this magnificent nation. These same soldiers that praised the country, in some of the letters they wrote to family members in the U.S., they chastised other southern families that came to the country only to return back to the U.S. completely disillusioned with their short lived experience. U.S. immigrants that found fortune cited the laziness as the main culprit for the misfortune of some their fellow Americans. Returning back to their southern homes, these former colonists had harsh words for the government and newspaper propaganda that supposedly deceived them about what misery and possible death awaited them south of the border. Moreover, a discussion as to how the government and the short lived Maximilian monarchy dealt with the issue of slavery as many of the U.S. newcomers insisted on bringing their black slaves receives some discussion.

Nonetheless, the majority of the analysis in this chapter focuses on the extraordinary job done by three secret agents, working on behalf of the Juárez administration, that had the arduous task of achieving three objectives: first, secure financial backing from either the U.S. government or private entities to assist President Juárez in his military effort to take back his country from the French and Emperor. Second, the three secret agents upon securing the necessary funds, they had the responsibility to purchase military equipment needed to arm the republican army. Last, and just as importantly as the first two responsibilities, the agents had the difficult task of convincing thousands of U.S. volunteers to fight alongside Mexicans against the French, for which they would be paid, but also, to convince them that they should relocate to the country permanently in order to form new immigrant colonies, specifically in the northern region. The discussion that follows focuses on the work of the country's official representative in Washington D.C., Matías Romero, General Plácido Vega, General Gaspar Sánchez Ochoa, and the governor of the state of Tamaulipas, General José María Jesús Carvajal.

A distinction has to be made between the immigrant pursuits made by the government and those made under Emperor Maximilian during the reign of his tenure between 1862 and 1867. Whereas the government did demonstrate a liberal stance on opening its doors to a selective group of immigrants, Maximilian differed drastically going as far as to pursue aggressively former ex-confederate soldiers and even allowing, if they so desired, to bring with them their slaves. In order to accomplish this task, Maximilian hired M.F. Maury, a Virginian, as imperial commissioner of colonization.¹⁸⁴ The emperor authorized Maury to appoint seven agents of

¹⁸⁴ George D. Harmon, "Confederate Migration to Mexico," *Hispanic American Historical Review* vol.17 no.4 (November 1937) : p.461.

colonization for the following states and cities of the United States: Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Mississippi, California, New Orleans, and Mobile.¹⁸⁵ The *New York Herald* reported in 1865 that circulars and pamphlets were issued setting forth the advantages for emigrants.¹⁸⁶ The strategies employed by Maximilian's government did not go unnoticed by the U.S. government and, in fact, the U.S. tried to prevent colonizing agents from entering the United States.¹⁸⁷ To entice ex-confederate soldiers, Maximilian stated, those "who may desire to bring laborers with them, or induce them to come in considerable numbers, of any race, are authorized to do so..."¹⁸⁸ Following the political trend of years past, Maximilian also promised religious freedom, together with sufficient improved land free of rent within the vicinity selected for colonization purposes. Moreover, his government promised the exemption from military service for five years, which to southern men and women tired of a bloody three-year war might indeed persuade them to move their families to the newly established empire. By the fall of 1865, nearly one hundred former confederates had relocated.

During a time when the United States' thirst for expansion seemed to have no end in sight, many saw Mexico as their next stop toward financial success. Upon hearing the concessions Maximilian's royal empire had accorded to those U.S. immigrants willing to relocate, Luis Arroyo, head of the consulate office in New Orleans, informed José Fernando Ramírez, *Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores*, that in the United States, Bernard Caufield, a lawyer by profession, had arranged to take millions of Americans from Illinois, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and Massachusetts to the colonies that been set up by the empire. Before embarking on such an

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ *New York Herald* (New York City) , 29 December 1865.

¹⁸⁷ George D. Harmon, "Confederate Migration to Mexico," p.465.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p.462.

ambitious endeavor, Caufield wanted to ascertain that the government had achieved a level of stability that would allow the U.S. immigrants to take full advantage of the incentives Maximilian's empire had been boasting.¹⁸⁹ Arroyo added that Caufield wanted large sections of land, near Veracruz, specifically for the cultivation of cotton, sugar cane, and tobacco. Caufield made the point that he and the rest of the U.S. immigrants, that wanted to move out of the United States, did not have Mexico at the top of their list as their first choice, instead, he preferred to go to any point in South America, but with no offers from those countries, he had to content himself with the concessions made by Maximilian. Moreover, in 1865, the *Compania de Colonización Africana y India*, had also shown tremendous interest in bringing both "blacks and chinese" to work for a period of at least ten years.¹⁹⁰

The experience of each confederate family living in Mexico varied widely. Some ex-confederate soldiers had nothing but praise to say about their reception in the country, while others obviously regretted their decision to leave their homes back in the southern United States, citing fraudulent inducement as the main culprit for their disastrous venture. Arroyo stated that many U.S. citizens living in the country found themselves in a sad and desperate situation if their goals were not met within a short period of time.¹⁹¹ General Sterling Price told the *New York Herald's* correspondent in Mexico, "I have here [Córdova Valley, Veracruz] six hundred and forty acres which I would not exchange for any twelve hundred acres in any part of the United States. Where will you find a richer soil and a healthier climate than this?"¹⁹² Price added that

¹⁸⁹ Archivo General de la Nación; Relaciones Exteriores, Siglo XIX; Caja 27, Expedientes: 21-23, Fojas:1-3, 1866; México D.F., México.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid; Segundo Imperio; vol.275, Expediente 8, Fojas:12.

¹⁹¹ Ibid; Relaciones Exteriores, Siglo XIX; Caja 101, Expediente 6, Fojas: 1-4, 1866.

¹⁹² *New York Herald* (New York City) 12 January 1866.

it would be best for the United States to let the conservatives and liberals resolve their differences, because any intervention on the part of the U.S. government, would inevitably lead to the awakening of nationalism and thus further jeopardize the already fragile U.S.—Mexican relations. One has to read between the lines of the statements General Price gave to the *New York Herald*. It was not in the best financial interest for General Price and his fellow ex-confederate soldiers residing in the country to have the U.S. government intervene to rid the country of the French empire, because in doing so, these men feared two possible outcomes.

First, if the United States intervened, then they sensed that it would annex all of the country and subsequently prohibit the ex-confederate soldiers from owning slaves. Although the country, as already stated, had abolished slavery in 1829, the government had made generous exemptions toward the U.S. immigrants, allowing them to bring their black slaves with them and in essence continue the practice of slavery. In order to appear as though the government was not caving in to American colonists' pressure to allow slavery in their proposed colonies, the government stipulated that the slaves introduced could only be held in bondage for a certain period of time before their masters had to set them free. Whether on purpose or rather as an intentional loophole, the government decided that the white colonists could draw up labor contracts with their slaves. In essence, these contracts stated that the laborers had to work for a certain period of time before they could be allowed to leave the colony, but in reality, these contracts indebted the black men and women so much that they could never break the chains that held them in bondage. The officials had to be aware of this abuse but decided to look the other way in the name of attracting more immigrants, their valuable capital, and black labor, desperately sought after since the 1820s. Knowing well under what economic situation the

nation found itself in the 1860s, Americans such as General Price took advantage of the generous concessions offered by the government, and because these Anglo men had too much to lose if the United States meddled in Mexican affairs, they advocated for a policy of non-intervention.

Second, besides the scenario in which these ex-confederate soldiers envisioned losing their “laborers” in the case of a U.S. military intervention, they also feared that under that scenario, not only would they lose their laborers, but also, they could possibly lose the thousands of acres of fertile lands that the government had granted them. For those southerners that left Mexico dissatisfied with what they found, General Price had nothing but harsh words. He angrily said, “Those individuals who migrated to Mexico expecting to live off the fruits of nature without labor quickly returned to the United States dissatisfied and gave a distorted impression of the country itself.”¹⁹³ In a letter Benjamin Crowther, a southerner living in Mexico, wrote on February 9, 1866, to J. Calvin Littrel in Saint Louis, he argued that the failures of southerners in this country, was in no way Mexico’s fault, but rather southerners expected to be given so much without working hard.¹⁹⁴

The country’s plan to retain its white residents constantly received attacks from the U.S. newspapers which advocated for its southern residents to stay in the U.S. where opportunities were much greater and their presence needed. For example, the *Charleston Daily Courier* said “We want all of your young men here in our own state....What we need in this state is a population.”¹⁹⁵ Harmon adds that the southern papers naturally did not encourage southerners to migrate, for the South needed all of its white inhabitants.¹⁹⁶ *The Nationalist*, from Mobile,

¹⁹³ George D. Harmon, “Confederate Migration to Mexico,” p.473.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, p.475.

¹⁹⁵ *Charleston Daily Courier* (Charleston, North Carolina), 4 January 1869.

¹⁹⁶ George D. Harmon, “Confederate Migration to Mexico.” p.477.

Alabama, advised southerners to stay in the South because people were always “within reach of the comforts of civilization, and under a liberal and respected government.”¹⁹⁷ That statement in *The Nationalist* is interesting because it highlights two negative stereotypes that the Mexican government could never seem to escape. First, *The Nationalist*, emphasized that southerners needed to stay close to home to be close to the comforts of civilization. The innuendo made by *The Nationalist* that the Mexican population was clearly uncivilized and represented a real threat to white southern families. Second, the newspaper boasted that the U.S. government was now, in 1866, a liberal and respected government, an obvious insinuation that their southern neighbor was still conservative, unstable, and had no respect across the world. Here one may add that banditry and violence in the countryside helped to stigmatize the nation as a place not suited for either the colonist or venture capitalists. Much to the dislike of politicians, even the French ambassador ridiculed the state of political affairs in the country by remarking sarcastically that bandit gangs were the only Mexican institution that functioned with perfect regularity.¹⁹⁸

Under tremendous stress, in the 1860s, the liberal faction of the government not only had to contend with the conservative political faction and Emperor Maximilian, but also Juárez and Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada had to face the reality that their efforts to attract foreign immigrants, especially those from Europe and the U.S., and the capital many brought with them, was also undergoing a severe attack from the press. Adding insult to injury, Americans such as, Beverly Tucker, remarked that while he traveled from San Luis Potosí to Mexico City, he was robbed five times. The editor of the *Mexican Times*, Major John Edwards, emphasized that there was no

¹⁹⁷ *The Nationalist* (Mobile, Alabama) , 25 January 1866.

¹⁹⁸ Robert M. Buffington and William E. French, “The Culture of Modernity,” in *The Oxford History of Mexico*, edited by William H. Beezley and Michael C. Meyer (New York City, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) , p.405.

love for the people of the United States.¹⁹⁹ Edwards added that he believed that the most important concern in the mind of the people was how to rid their country of all foreigners. His concerns had a large degree of truth to them. General Escobedo, who directed the execution of Emperor Maximilian said,

we should be allowed to worship our God, till our own soil, work our own mines, and not have our women defiled by Yankee libertines. By every means in our power we should make the country Mexican; and as all the property in the hands of foreigners was made by our misfortunes, we should take it, now that we have the power, and hunt them from the country.²⁰⁰

The Desperate Plight of the Juárez Administration to Attract American Troops, Capital, and Immigrants in Order to Rid the Country of the French

Prior to the Republican victory over the French, President Juárez and trusted members of his administration worked arduously to save their beloved country. Following the blueprint of Emperor Maximilian, Juárez knew that if his endeavor had any chance of succeeding, it would require the financial and military assistance of the United States. Unfortunately for President Juárez, his plea for help came at a time when President Lincoln's biggest concern was keeping the United States intact. In the face of these odds, Juárez decided to roll the dice, so to speak, and persisted with his goal of attracting, if not directly the help of the U.S. government, at least the financial assistance from private capital and possible man power recruitment might be enough to tip the balance in favor of the republican forces, which were scattered throughout the northern frontier and some had even gone to New Orleans. President Juárez entrusted this

¹⁹⁹ *Charleston Daily Courier* (Charleston, North Carolina) , 15 March 1867.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 30 July 1867.

mission, which was to be kept as secretive as possible, to Matías Romero, his minister to Washington, General Plácido Vega, the governor of the state of Sinaloa, General José María de Jesús Carvajal, governor of the state of Tamaulipas, and General Gaspar Sánchez Ochoa. All three Generals had remained loyal to the liberal cause during the bloody three-year *Guerra de La Reforma* and to the constitutional president, Benito Juárez, whose position had been usurped by the conservative General Felix Zuloaga in 1858.

The mission of the three Generals and Minister Romero was simple, at least in theory: they were to secure funding and procure rifles, ammunition, canons, and other such items that would aid the republican army's cause. Moreover, in order to obtain the necessary funds for the military expedition, President Juárez granted the four men authority to issue millions of dollars in Mexican bonds, bearing high interest rates, and as a form of collateral, the traditional guarantees of large sectors of fertile agricultural lands and mines were set aside to entice the large scale U.S. lenders. Furthermore, the four men had the responsibility to recruit thousands of U.S. men to come and fight for the republic. In the spring of 1865, as the U.S. Civil War was ending, thousands of U.S. soldiers from both the Union and Confederacy were becoming available. In addition, while Emperor Maximilian since 1862 had sought Confederate soldiers to come to the empire, with little success, the three generals made no quarrels about recruiting these southern soldiers. Confederate agent John Slidell went as far as to offer Napoleon III help with his desire to conquer all of the country if in return he would assist southerners in their efforts against Lincoln, but at the very least, Slidell wanted Napoleon III to give the Confederate states recognition. It is safe to say that desperate times called for desperate measures for the liberal forces. Last, President Juárez also asked these four men to wage a propaganda war in the U.S.

press against Emperor Maximilian; the primary task of this portion of the mission was to change the minds of the U.S. public that it had to be in the best political and economic interest of the United States to assist its southern neighbor by enforcing the Monroe Doctrine or else face a possible French empire that would not only threatened the stability of Mexico but also other Western hemisphere countries, which in the early 1860s, were still vulnerable to foreign encroachment.

In the United States, Matías Romero boasted about the many commercial opportunities in his country. He indicated that his government would grant liberal economic concessions to Americans; and when that was done, the United States would gain all the advantages that could be obtained from annexing the country without acquiring any of the inconveniences that such a step would produce. That statement by Minister Romero reveals that he and President Juárez had disturbing knowledge about the United States intent to annex possibly all of the country; with that devastating possibility as an outcome, Romero knew that he had to beat to the punch the Americans who still subscribe to the Manifest Destiny philosophy. Consequently, he had to sell his country at least symbolically speaking, entirely to the Americans, without losing the political argument at home that the republican administration of President Juárez was in essence giving away their country to the United States. Under this dire scenario, the Juárez administration would not appear to be any different from the conservative faction who had been accused by liberals of selling out to France, and consequently, his actions would place him in the same vein as the repudiated Santa Anna.

Romero had been warned about the possible outcome of making foreign loans. Genaro Garcia remarked that the U.S. Secretary of State William H. Seward had told Romero that for

every million dollars from the United States, Mexico would lose a state, and for every firearm an acre of mineral land.²⁰¹ While Garcia's words might seem outlandish, there is no denying that in the early 1860s the country's finances were not fiscally sound; hence why the French invaded in the first place, and why Spain and Great Britain consider their own course of action for debts owed to them. Whether Seward had exaggerated the terms of a loan for Mexico, that might be true, but the fact remains that Romero was desperate for money. Furthermore, he possibly expressed his concerns in figurative language to get the attention of liberal politicians back home and make them understand the daunting task that lay ahead for Juárez and his supporters; rather than literally believing Seward's statement that for every firearm given to Mexico, the country would lose an acre of mineral land. Despite Secretary Seward's cautious warnings, both President Juárez and Minister Romero insisted on their need for U.S. financial assistance. Mexico was so broke that, Juan Navarro, the head of the Mexican consulate office in New York City, informed Matías Romero that his family was literally starving. Thomas Corwin, the U.S. Minister to Mexico, in 1861 attempted to secure a large loan for Juárez's cause with 6% interest rate. Seward informed Corwin in September of 1861, that the U.S. President accepted an offer to pay the interest on the country's debt to Great Britain and France; this plan was contingent upon these two countries accepting the terms of the deal. The Secretary of State told Corwin that the loan would be "secured by a specific lien upon all the public lands and mineral rights in...Lower California, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Sinaloa."²⁰² One of the beneficiaries of these generous

²⁰¹ Genaro Garcia, *Juárez: Refutación a Don Francisco Bulnes* (México D.F., México: Privately Printed, 1904) , p.143.

²⁰² U.S. House. *The Present Condition of Mexico. Message from the United States, in Answer to Resolution of the House of the 3 of March last Transmitting Report from the Department of State Regarding the Present Condition of Mexico*, 37th Congress., 2nd Session., House Executive Document No.100., April 15, 1862, p.22.

concessions was the Mexican Mineral and Colonization Company, headed by Jacob Leese, of Monterey, California, who promised to pay the government over \$100,000 in gold in exchange for a large section of Baja California land.

The government was weary of granting individuals large sections of land who had the sole purpose of exploiting the natural resources of the country and then leaving it once its productive yields had dwindled to non profitable levels; therefore, Romero and Juárez insisted that their secret agents only grant land to companies that had colonization plans. The reasoning behind this move was simple, if individuals were granted large sections of land they would still leave the country open to the possibility of losing more territory to the United States, not to mention the Indian raids of the northern frontier would continue to persist. On the other hand, if the American companies that loaned money to the to the country brought colonists with them to their land grants, as Leese was supposed to do by bringing some 200 U.S. families, then the government felt that the U.S. government would be deterred from trying to annex more territory and potential filibusters would have to contend with newly established U.S. residents that now had a vested interest in protecting their new homes. Leese did not succeed in bringing the immigrants he had promised Romero, but he did provide the government with a deposit for the scheme, which inevitably helped the liberal cause with their ammunition and gun purchases.

Minister Romero chose General John McAllister Schofield as the right person to head a 100,000 army of volunteers to assist the republican army. The plan stipulated that the men would come as emigrant/soldiers, serve for three years, and receive pay equivalent to the one they earned during their service in the U.S. army. Romero's first choice for the mission was General Grant, but he insisted that the mission suited General Schofield best and that he would

instead try to convince President Johnson to go ahead and approve the mission.²⁰³ To Romero's disappointment, Secretary of State William H. Seward, with whom Romero corresponded, did not believe that it was in the best political interest of the United States to engage in Mexican affairs that could potentially lead to war with France. This decision does not necessary mean that Secretary Seward had no interest in assisting its southern neighbor, despite President Johnson's support for military intervention aided by General Schofield; Seward believed that by sending General Schofield to France to pressure Napoleon III that that political move alone would lead to the French army removing itself from Mexico and thus Maximilian would have no choice but to surrender under peaceful terms. Seward's plan failed because Schofield's one year stay in France did not succeed in convincing Napoleon III to remove his troops from Mexico. Obviously upset with Secretary Seward's decision to not support direct U.S. military assistance for President Juárez's effort, Minister Romero, according to Colonel Albert S. Evans, with the help of General Grant tried to have Seward removed from President Johnson's cabinet.²⁰⁴

The Recruiting Efforts in San Francisco, California

The setbacks suffered by Minister Romero did not discourage General Vega, General Sánchez Ochoa, or General José María de Jesús Carvajal the other secret agents who went to the U.S. in order to secure loans and military supplies for the republican army. General Plácido Vega, in April of 1864, while operating in San Francisco and with the support of many former

²⁰³ John McAllister Schofield, *Forty Six Years in the American Army* (New York City, New York: Century, 1897) , pp.379-85.

²⁰⁴ Colonel Albert S. Evans, *Our Sister Republic: A Gala Trip Through Tropical Mexico in 1869-1870* (San Francisco, California: Colombian Book Company, 1870) , p.270.

U.S. army officers, secured over 3,000 rifles that were onboard the American steamship *John L. Stephens*. Unfortunately for President Juárez, Vega's shipment never reached Mexico because it was seized before it could leave San Francisco. Colonel Charles James, the head of the San Francisco customs house, supported the French intervention in Mexico, and received French gold from the French consulate office in that city in exchange for stopping the departure of the *John L. Stephens*. The tenacious General Vega only three months later had prepared another large cargo of military supplies, some 20,000 rifles and 18 canons that were to be delivered aboard the ships *Haze* and the *San Diego*, but this mission suffered the same fate as the previous one. The surveyor general of California, General Edward Beale, a friend of Vega, urged Colonel James to release the seized cargo for the republicans. Beale wrote to James on July 16, 1864, "I tell you that if these arms reach Mexico she will regain her liberties; but if, through the pusillanimous complaintancy of our government, by you, its agent, she should fall to the tender despotism of Austria, your name will become the synonym of everything that is humanly base wherever the Democracy rears the flag of a free people."²⁰⁵ Responding to the Beale's concern, James said: "My duty in the matter is plain and I can neither be bullied, wheeled, coaxed, or cajoled from performing it."²⁰⁶ Even though General Vega suffered many setbacks do to James's obstruction, he did managed to send Juárez well over 15,000 rifles by land and some six ships by the fall of 1865.

Following President Juárez's instructions to secure arms and ammunitions, but also to spread the republican government propaganda, General Vega disseminated Juárez's pleas through the

²⁰⁵ General Edward Beale to Colonel Charles James, July 16, 1864; Charles James Papers, fols. 14-18; Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, California.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Colonel Charles to General Edward Beale, July 20, 1864; fol.1.

three Spanish newspapers of San Francisco: *La Voz de Méjico*, *El Nuevo Mundo*, (founded and sustained with funds General Vega had received from President Juárez), as well as *Eco del Pacífico*. These propaganda efforts had positive results. Francisco Catalán, from northern California, and A.L. Cervantes, from San Luis Obispo, requested from Antonio Mancillas, the editor of *La Voz de Méjico*, reprints of various articles that stipulated the financial rewards to be awarded for all those Americans willing to join President Juárez in his endeavor. Catalán and Cervantes informed Mancillas that in their regions, much fervor had been expressed by those willing to help the Mexican army.²⁰⁷ As a result of this propaganda effort, General Vega organized several organizations, such as Monroe Doctrine societies, that had as their goal to help Mexico with either military or financial assistance. These Mexican clubs, succeeded in helping Vega with his objectives. For instance, Victor Castro, a wealthy Mexican residing in northern California loaned Vega \$24,000.²⁰⁸

Once the U.S. Civil War drew to a close in the spring of 1865, General Vega received an onslaught of letters from discharged U.S. soldiers requesting to be enlisted in the volunteer armies that the secret agent had conceived with the approval of Matías Romero and President Juárez. One such request came from Edward A. Lever, who came from the East coast to California to volunteer in the army. In spite of being dissuaded by his friends, in a letter dated November 4, 1864, Lever stated his desire to go to Mexico and assist President Juárez, “Being in heart and soul a believer in republicanism, I have long sympathized with Mexico and her patriots, therefore I offer myself for any position whereby I might be of service to the sister

²⁰⁷ Francisco Catalán to Antonio Mancillas, May 14, 1865; General Plácido Vega Papers, 2, fols. 342 and 366; Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, California.

²⁰⁸ General Plácido Vega Papers, 4, *Libro Mayor*, fol.12; Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, California.

republic of my own dear native country.”²⁰⁹ Seeking further information from Vega, Lever asked the General,

I can raise a company of thoroughbred Americans, many of whom have seen service in the East and have been comrades in arms with myself. Will you accept a company of good men? Equip them? Commission their Officers and furnish them with means of transportation to where you may need them? If you will do this, all I have to do is ask is that the company will have a chance to prove that they are against the foreign and domestic hordes that acknowledge the sway of usurper.²¹⁰

Lever believed that if the U.S. saw so many Americans enlisting in Juárez’s cause, then the U.S. government would feel compelled to extend further support to its southern neighbor.

From Nevada Territory, A.D. Rock also notified General Vega of his desire to raise an army of volunteers. Rock, originally from the state of Virginia, expressed concern that rumors circulated that army organizers had no interest in enlisting U.S. men who had been soldiers in the Confederate army. In a letter, May 19, 1865, Rock wrote: “There seems to be an implied understanding between yourself and authorities of the United States that none shall be allowed to go to Mexico except those known to be opposed to the Southern states of our union...I, sir, have been doing all in my power to strengthen the aims of President Juárez in sustaining the true and rightful government.”²¹¹ Also from Nevada Territory, Daniel E. Hungerford, informed Vega of his interest in joining the proposed volunteer army. Hungerford insisted that his decision was only contingent upon President Juárez not recognizing the southern confederacy in any form.²¹² It is important to note here that Hungerford expressed concern with regards to President Juárez possibly recognizing the Confederacy states, because at the time he wrote his letter to Vega in

²⁰⁹ Ibid., Edward A. Lever to Ramón de Zaldo; 1, fol.818.

²¹⁰ Ibid., Edward A. Lever to Plácido Vega, November 15, 21, 1864; 2, fols. 18 and 25.

²¹¹ Ibid., A.D. Rock to General Plácido Vega, May 19, 31, 1865; 1, fol. 511; 2, fols. 362 and 385.

²¹² Ibid., Daniel E. Hungerford to General Plácido Vega, July 16, 1864; 1, fol. 533.

the summer of 1864, the United States' Civil War still raged on, and thus the apprehension that southern states might get political recognition might embolden that army. Obviously by the summer of 1865, with the defeat of the Confederacy army, Hungerford's concern no longer matter, and as a matter of fact, many former Confederate soldiers heeded the call to join Juárez. Surgeon, S.G. George, from San Francisco, inquired about the pay and bonuses to be received for service. There is no doubt that the secret agents had garnered the attention of the Americans, but the promises made by the government, or at least by those secret agents entrusted to carry out President Juárez's orders, may have been excessive in nature or perhaps, viewed from the other side, the potential soldiers might have been too naive in their belief that a bankrupt government, could live up to its financial obligations and promises made.

A good example of a possible nightmare scenario was the case of Francisco Warner. Lieutenant Colonel Warner, who had enlisted in the army in San Francisco, became disillusioned with Juárez's agents in that city because they had not paid him for four weeks of services. On October 25, 1864, he told Vega,

If it was not convenient for you to let me have the money I would have been far better satisfied had you told me. But if you wish to redeem your promise you can do so by sending the money to the fruit store corner on Dupont and Sutter streets this week or I shall be obliged to accept aid from another source. I can serve the Imperial party and they know it or they would not have offered me money to join them.²¹³

What is telling about that statement by Warner is that, at least for some of the Americans that did join the republican army, their loyalty lay not with which cause they sympathized the most because it was a "justified cause," but rather with, which political faction could delivered first on

²¹³ Ibid., Lieutenant Colonel Francisco Warner to General Plácido Vega, October 25, 1864; 1, fol. 235.

their terrific promises. In other words, Warner and others like him, could have cared less about Juárez's plight, since as he stated to Vega, he was willing to switch sides to the Imperial army if payment for his four week service was not met. Moreover, Warner's threat had to be taken seriously by Vega and other officials, because Maximilian, in similar fashion as Juárez had been attempting to court the interest of former Civil War veterans.

Despite the inconformity and threats leashed out by men such as Warner, the requests to join the republican army kept coming for General Vega. Captain H.C. Flynn wrote to Vega telling him that he had twelve men with military qualifications "eager" to go to Mexico and defend the cause of liberty. Interestingly enough, at a time when the government was concerned about getting Americans enlisted in the army for the sake of adventure, Flynn emphasized in his letter that he was offended at the notion that his willingness to serve for the Juárez republican army would be deemed as nothing more than an excursion filled with adventure. Captain Flynn and well as some of the other Americans argued that the cause of liberty was their sole motivation for going into Mexico. Another army surgeon, F.M. Cassill, manifested, "I have always had a lively interest in the fate of our sister republic ever since the Frenchman's foot first polluted her soil."²¹⁴ One request came from Juan Díaz, who desired to go to Mexico with the developing expedition army, but wanted to know if Vega would have any hesitation in allowing him to take his wife on the venture.²¹⁵ George B. Shearer and Charles J. Miller offered Vega another type of assistance: "We are both practical printers and desire to assist you in your endeavors to drive from your dearly beloved country your deadly enemy."²¹⁶ They informed Vega that although

²¹⁴ Ibid., H.C. Flynn to General Plácido Vega, June 28, 1864; July 10, 1864; F.M. Cassill to General Plácido Vega, June 20, 1865; 1, fols. 526 and 528.

²¹⁵ Ibid., Juan Díaz to General Plácido Vega, June 3, 1865; 2, fol. 395.

²¹⁶ Ibid., George B. Shearer and Charles J. Miller to General Plácido Vega, June 2, 1865; 2, fols. 397 and 398.

they could not physically entered into battle against the French army they could assist President Juárez by helping him spread the republican message through their business of printing.

As previously mentioned, Vega, Romero, and President Juárez were not only sought to recruit soldiers for the Mexican army, but also colonists. While in the United States, Vega, Romero, Sánchez Ochoa, and Carvajal, all distributed a pamphlet entitled, *Decrees of the Mexican Constitutional Government Inviting American Emigrants to Settle in the Republic*; which boasted about the opportunities for those Americans willing to relocate. The pamphlet said:

Mexico is the finest country in the world. There a person may enjoy every kind of temperature that he may desire. There is abundance of water to irrigate the soil. Mexico only needs peace to be able to afford the means of enjoying all the luxuries of a happy life....In conclusion, this fine country offers such advantages to the industrious and preserving settler that, in a short period of the time he could not fail to acquire a more comfortable and easy homestead than can be had in any other part of the world with the same amount of labor.²¹⁷

The need to recruit every possible volunteer even forced General Vega to circulate the pamphlet in California prisons. Ernest C. Roland, a prisoner in San Quentin received propaganda material from Vega so that it could be circulated in that prison with the intention to attract volunteers.²¹⁸

A setback for the recruiting agents occurred when potential soldiers their only hesitation preventing them from going to San Francisco and joining the rest of the recruits for the expedition called Arizona Exploring Expedition, was that they lacked the necessary funds for transportation.²¹⁹ The financial strain on Vega and the other agents can be illustrated by the fact

²¹⁷ Ibid., 3, fol. 429.

²¹⁸ General Plácido Vega to Ernest C. Roland, May 11, 1865; *Correspondence Politique de Consuls, Etats Unis*, Microfilm, 23, fols. 317 and 318; Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, California.

²¹⁹ Donaciano Mazón to General Plácido Vega, May 18, 1865; Plácido Vega Papers; 2, fol. 356; Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, California.

that General Vega actually had to pawn jewelry belonging to his family to Don Vicente Ortiz, for over \$4,000 dollars.²²⁰

In the end, General Vega's plan to send thousands of volunteers from San Francisco by several steamships did not happen, as the Arizona Exploring Expedition was swiftly apprehended before it could leave the San Francisco port by authorities, with the help of local French officials. Many of the men onboard the ships, were imprisoned and accused of treason and arms smuggling, at a time when President Lincoln had not lifted a ban on arms and ammunition leaving the United States. After several of the men posted bail, had their trials, and were exonerated, they grew disillusioned with the whole scheme and decided not to pursue the matter anymore. The tenacious Vega, by the summer of 1866, with President Johnson having lifted the ban on exporting arms and ammunition, succeeded in sending a small number of volunteers along with 7,000 rifles and other equipment to aid some 3,000 soldiers. The irony in General Vega's mission is that once he arrived in Sinaloa, his group of volunteers was quickly detained for suspicion of being filibusters or volunteers for Maximilian's cause. Once General Vega presented the documents that certified that he had been entrusted by President Juárez to go on a secret mission to the United States, he along with his small army of volunteers were allowed to proceed with their campaign. Vega's volunteers were few in number, but these well-trained soldiers from the United States, fighting alongside the Juaristas, provided a symbolic and psychological stimulus to the struggle.

U.S. Soldiers in Mexico: Their Impressions

²²⁰ Ibid., 6, Comprobante 51; fols. 23 and 24.

The road taken by General Gaspar Sánchez Ochoa to recruit volunteers for the republican army and secure funding for the excursion differed from that taken by General Plácido Vega. General Sánchez Ochoa had the legal authority, given to him by President Juárez in 1864, to secure a loan of \$10 million dollars to help the republican cause. Moreover, he had the obligation to secure a large amount of military equipment, which included at least six ships. Upon arriving in San Francisco, Sánchez Ochoa promised two assistants, Frederick G. Fitch, an engineer, and Alfred A. Green, a wealthy American doing business in the country in the 1860s, \$50,000 each for their cooperation with the republican cause. Immediately both Colonel George M. Green, his brother Alfred, and Fitch founded the Monroe League of California that was supposed to secure moral and material aid for its southern neighbor. Whereas the clubs organized by General Vega centered mostly on Spanish speaking people of California, the recruiting efforts of General Sánchez Ochoa, focused more with the Americans living in California. In fact, in his memoir Frederick G. Fitch recalled how he and Green published *The Vindication of Liberal Mexico*, a weekly pamphlet that was also given to members of congress and the president of the United States in order to promote the Juárez agenda.²²¹ Sánchez Ochoa's best chance at securing funding for the ambitious venture came after the general had a meeting with General John Charles Frémont, who assured the secret agent that he could help. Frémont was sympathetic to Juárez's cause and promised to loan the government 6 million dollars. In exchange for that large loan, Frémont and Sánchez Ochoa signed a contract on

²²¹ Frederick G. Fitch, *American and Mexican Joint Commission: Memorial of Frederick G. Fitch* (San Francisco, California: M.D. Carr & Co. Printers, 1870) , p.6.

February 2, 1866, in which the government conceded to Frémont the right to build a railroad from Guaymas, Sonora, on the Gulf of California, to some point in the U.S. West. Such a generous grant obviously raised many concerns with Juárez and other members of his cabinet; so much so, that Minister Romero argued that Sánchez Ochoa had exceeded his authority by giving railroad concessions to Frémont. Romero was so upset at what Sánchez Ochoa had conceded to Frémont, that he actually asked President Juárez to revoke the general's commission as a special secret agent for the government.

Not willing to give up on assisting his country, Sánchez Ochoa, obviously upset at Matías Romero's decision, along with his associate Frémont, decided to get in contact with General Jesús González Ortega, who was residing in New York City, and by 1865, claimed that he was now the legitimate constitutional Mexican president. General Jesús González Ortega, made such a claim, based on the fact that President Juárez's four year term had come to an end, and the Constitution stipulated that the president of the Supreme Court, in this case, González Ortega, was to assume the presidency as interim. Sánchez Ochoa having lost his credibility with the Juárez administration believed that he could redeem himself, if he could convince González Ortega to go along with his and Frémont's plan. On February 22, 1866, General Ortega agreed to the contract that had been developed between Sánchez Ochoa and Frémont. It should be stated that although González Ortega had not been granted any legal authority to recruit soldiers or funds from the Juárez administration, Colonel William H. Allen, who claimed to have received permission from González Ortega, formed the Mexican Emigration Company with the intention of taking over 100,000 U.S. citizens to Mexico as colonists. It was understood that they also had the responsibility to defend the country against invading foreign powers, in this

case, the French. In early May 1865, the *New York Herald* noted the following advertisement posted by Allen:

Mexico, Maximilian, and Monroe Doctrine. All persons who desire joining a company soon starting to make a strike for fame and fortune in the land of golden ores and luscious fruits, aided and protected by the patriotic President of that republic, will please address Benito J. Juárez, box 5,614 New York post office.²²²

Despite the ambitious goal of Colonel Allen to recruit 100,000 volunteers the *New York Herald* reported that only 435 former soldiers had inquired about the opportunities posted in the newspaper.

As with other expeditions that had been planned before Colonel Allen's, the members of the Mexican Emigration Company could not directly go as soldiers, because U.S. authorities at the border would immediately stop them, as had been the case with the expedition that General Plácido Vega wanted to launch from San Francisco. Colonel Allen immediately disseminated General González Ortega's message and by late June, some 109,000 men from across the country had shown interest. Colonel Allen wrote General González Ortega on June 30, 1865,

Engageing in the present movement not for wealth alone—but fame, and to assist in caring out a principle long established in the American mind—that of nonintervention by European powers in state affairs on this continent...Such body of men have ever been organized and held together at so slight an expense as that now controlled by me.²²³

This movement spearheaded by Colonel Allen could not get off the ground for the simple reason that General González Ortega could not provide the promised bonuses and transportation funds. Allen's recruits were willing to fight as long as they received pay for their services; therefore, the

²²² *New York Herald* (New York City) 6 May 1865.

²²³ William H. Allen to General González Ortega, June 30, 1865; Jesús González Ortega Papers; Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley, Berkeley, California.

patriotic sincerity of these colonists-soldiers has to be questioned. These men were not volunteers but rather paid soldiers. If the Juárez administration had to pay the thousands of recruits it wanted to attract from the United States, a substantial amount of money was needed to succeed in the endeavor. The best incentive the government could offer the U.S. soldiers was a large land grant and citizenship. The exact number of volunteers that either secret agent was able to recruit will never be known, since many of the numbers recorded in the archives, do not correlate with the actual number of Americans who officially submitted paper work to enlist in the republican army. Nonetheless, the fact remains that indeed several thousands of Americans did go and fought alongside republican army soldiers against Maximilian's army.

Perhaps the best recruiters for potential colonists and soldiers were not the secret agents, but the former Colonels and Generals from the U.S. Civil War. General Lew Wallace from the state of Indiana exemplified this recruitment effort. He founded the Mexican Aid Society, and in a letter written on April 30, 1865, said "his organization and its affiliates would control public sentiment, govern the politicians, raise funds, recruit soldiers, and beget cooperation and united intelligent management."²²⁴ General Wallace received assistance from Captain Harvey Lake of San Francisco, who led a contingent of American soldiers, under the guise that they were miners going to work in mines in the state of Sonora. Prior to leaving from San Francisco, both General Wallace and Captain Lake secured funding from Sam Brannan, a San Francisco banker. With the money received, the American Legion of Honor, bought uniforms, horses, rifles, pistols, drugs and medical equipment, and over ten tons of ammunition. In fact, Lake and his men met

²²⁴ General Lew Wallace to Thomas Buchanan Read, April 30, 1865; Lew Wallace Collection; Indiana Historical Association, Indianapolis, Indiana.

with President Juárez in the city of Chihuahua, temporary capital of the republic, on September 15, 1865. In a letter sent to a friend, posted by the San Francisco *Daily Times*, he said the following about his meeting with Juárez,

We were well received at Chihuahua, but did not get as high rank as we expected. The President told us that we could have the same rank that we held in our own service, for the present, and that we should remain together five or six months to have an opportunity to learn the language, and then have promotions according to merit....Our corps now numbers forty Americans. Each of us has one lancer—a soldier with a lance—mounted, who serves us in the capacity of servant and tutor, or instructor in the language. His duty is to take care of our horse and attend to our wants generally, but chiefly to teach us the language.²²⁵

Another member of the American Legion of Honor, wrote back to the U.S., as he and the rest of the troops traveled through Durango, remarked that he and his U.S. colleagues were pleased when General Aranda, head of the central division of the Mexican army, appointed Colonel Arthur Haines to lead the U.S. soldiers. A former volunteer soldier informed the *Daily Times* that Colonel Haines made him and his colleagues feel confident about their military expedition since the colonel had gained their respect by advocating on their behalf with Mexican officials. Moreover, in his story to the *Daily Times*, the soldier emphasized that Haines fought for them to get equal chance before the officers. The logical question is: why did U.S. soldiers rendering assistance to a helpless republican army, have to fight to get “an equal chance with the native officers?” Was this simply a case of racial or cultural differences? The assertion made by the soldier puts in question that liberal politicians welcomed immigrants of any nationality so long as they adhere to Mexican Law.

²²⁵ *The Daily Times* (San Francisco, California) 11 January 1867.

In other words, some U.S. soldiers, once in the country might have just endured the same hostility that the French invaders encountered in the early 1860s. Native soldiers, just like their U.S. counterparts with respect to army officers, probably felt disturbed at the thought of taking orders from a U.S. officer, after all, it had only been some twenty years since their country had signed the Treaty of Guadalupe, and many wounds had probably not healed. Furthermore, many of the pro-Mexico societies that formed in the United States originated with the central concept of the Monroe Doctrine as their premise for liberating their southern neighbor from the tyranny of France. Nonetheless, for some people the Monroe Doctrine did not differ too much from the philosophy of Manifest Destiny, which had at its core, an aura of U.S. invisibility that demanded constant expansion.

The desperate situation of the republican government in the middle 1860s might have created a state of temporary amnesia for the Juárez administration about filibustering or encroachment on further national territory by the United States; or they saw such bind as a risk they had to take. The rhetoric manifested by officials was dumbfounding at best, as they had to contend with the shameful act of having to beg U.S. businessmen for loans and former Civil War veterans for military assistance. On the one hand, Juárez reportedly gave secret agents who went to the U.S. in search of help, the legal authority to offer as an incentive, besides the obvious monetary compensation, large sections of fertile lands, in exchange for either military service or loans from U.S. citizens. Yet, on the other hand, when General Gaspar Sánchez Ochoa made a contract with General Charles Frémont for large sections of land in Sonora, that action was almost deemed treason in the eyes of Matías Romero who swiftly reported the action to the President. Juárez did not hesitate to revoke any legal authority General Sánchez Ochoa had as a

special secret agent for the government. The question remains, why would General Sánchez Ochoa's decision to grant railroad concessions to U.S. investors be any more detrimental to the republic, than Romero's decision to offer land and mines to these same U.S. capitalists?

American Legion of Honor reported that they could not believe the sight of the cowardice displayed by the native troops when fighting the French. One officer reported that while the native soldiers were retreating, the U.S. soldiers dashed into the town and attacked the French Austrian troop and kept them at bay, so that Juárez could escape when otherwise he would have been captured. The correspondent for the *New York Herald*, Colonel Church, reported that he gave his own horse, which was faster, to President Juárez. According to Charles A. Bailey, the American Legion of Honor covered Juárez's army's retreat while they stood and fought the French army led by Miramón. Lieutenant Seaton Schroeder echoed this statement and stated in his memoir that the American Legion of Honor saved the republican army from complete annihilation.²²⁶ Joseph H. Blake, another U.S. volunteer soldier, asserted that the American Legion did all the hard fighting while the native soldiers gathered the spoils. In fact, according to some reports, without verification, when Emperor Maximilian surrendered in the city of Querétaro in May of 1865, he walked with a white flag in hand and gave his sword to Colonel George Green.²²⁷ In a letter, published in *The Alta California*, a newspaper from San Francisco, Green wrote:

My small command... which composes the Legion of Honor, captured the Carlota Regiment of Cavalry, 500 strong with 80 officers, among them several chiefs. Our victory is complete. We have taken Maximilian, with Miramón and all the principal Generals of the Empire, all the artillery

²²⁶ Seaton Schroeder, *The Fall of Maximilian's Empire as seen from a United States Gunboat* (New York City, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1887), p.40.

²²⁷ Colonel Albert S. Evans, *Our Sister Republic: A Gala Trip Through Tropical Mexico in 1869-1870* (San Francisco, California: Columbian Book Company, 1870), p.228.

and transportation—in fact, making a clean sweep. We have 10,000 prisoners...I have just seen Maximilian, who takes it quite coolly, but says he is Emperor no more.²²⁸

The hostility between U.S. soldiers and native soldiers received attention from contemporary witnesses. Not only did former volunteer soldiers make it clear that they were dissatisfied with their overall experience in the country, after all, many had not even received their full financial compensation; but even a former imperial soldier, Felix C. Salm-Salm, writing in his memoir, one year after Maximilian had been executed, echoed the frustrations of the U.S. soldiers. Moreover, according to W.A. Cornwall, many U.S. soldiers were so displeased with their reception in the country that some plotted to free Maximilian, as a way to get back at authorities for not living up to their promises.²²⁹ One day officials sweet talked the U.S. soldiers with tales of an untapped oasis; and then suddenly, the next day, the same officials denied offering the volunteers any guarantees. It appears that the government, in a Machiavellian sort of way at some level, almost purposefully deceived the members of the American Legion of Honor, perhaps in some small way as retribution for what occurred some twenty years earlier?

Despite the accusations made by Cornwall and others, Colonel John Sobieski, a former Union soldier, remarked that after the execution of Maximilian in the summer of 1867, Juárez was so appreciative for all of the military help received from the U.S. soldiers that he personally invited some officers to his home and granted them an interview. Sobieski recalled how Juárez had won their hearts and thanked them for their service; because although people naturally defended their country, according to the president, he was amazed at the bravery

²²⁸ *Alta California* (San Francisco, California) 3 July 1867.

²²⁹ W.A. Cornwall, "Maximilian and the American Legion," *Overland Monthly* no.7 (1871) : pp.445-48.

demonstrated by the volunteers, whose sole intention was seeing the country liberated from France. Although Juárez might have been sincere, his rhetoric did not suffice. Many of the U.S. soldiers in the spring of 1868, after waiting several months for their pay and bonuses filed suit against the Mexican government through the United States—Mexican Claims Commission of 1868. Many of the U.S. soldiers, accepted \$300 in full compensation from the government, in exchange for renouncing any further legal claims.

The Disappointment of the U.S. Generals in Mexico

Besides Minister Matías Romero, General Plácido Vega, and General Gaspar Sánchez Ochoa, the Juárez government had designated another secret agent, General José María Jesús Carvajal, the governor of the state of Tamaulipas. Entrusted with the sole mission of recruiting U.S. soldiers, procuring all of the necessary materials needed for the army, and obviously securing, perhaps the most valuable of all resources, money; General Carvajal's efforts became intertwined with those of General Lew Wallace, founder of the Mexican Aid Society. When they met in March of 1865, on the banks of the Rio Grande, Carvajal provided Wallace with the proper documentation that accredited him on behalf of President Juárez, as an agent responsible for securing 40,000 rifles, 10,000 volunteers for the army, and foreign loans. Wallace insisted that if Carvajal and the rest of the republican army were willing to assist the United States in preventing the possibility of Confederate soldiers fleeing into Mexico, then Wallace assured Carvajal that he would take him to Washington D.C. and help him make the necessary connections in the capital. Within a couple of months, Wallace had helped Carvajal secured

thousands of U.S. volunteers. In a letter, to his wife, Wallace said that all was ready for the volunteers, but that they lacked the necessary funds for transportation—a never ending saga.²³⁰

A former Confederate officer, Colonel H. Clay Crawford, was so enthusiastic about the prospect of helping Mexico, that he was willing to finance the transportation of men to Mexico. As a result of such enthusiasm, Wallace, sent Colonel Crawford to the banks of the Rio Grande and ordered him to wait for his arrival with additional volunteers, so he or General Carvajal could lead the expedition into the state of Coahuila. In Texas, Colonel Crawford and his second in command, Colonel Arthur L. Reed, struggled to find volunteers, but General Wallace pointed out that many former slaves joined the movement. J. Passama Doménech, said Colonel Crawford promised fifty dollars a month to all those who joined his corps.²³¹ In January of 1866, Colonel Crawford, along with Lieutenant Colonel Edmundo Davis, commander of the 118th Colored Battalion, and over one hundred colored soldiers crossed the Rio Grande and invaded the town of Bagdad with the intention of liberating seventeen of his men who had been captured and were about to be executed by General Tomás Mejía, head of Maximilian's Imperial army. Once the republican forces freed the prisoners, they spent seven days looting and ransacking Bagdad. This made a terrible impression on the residents of Bagdad with regards to the African American soldiers commanded by Colonel Crawford.

Crawford's imprudence upset General Wallace, but he continued his effort to aide General Carvajal. In the summer of 1866, General Wallace aboard the steamship *J.W. Everman*, departed from New York City accompanied with several U.S. volunteers and military supplies. Upon

²³⁰ General Lew Wallace to his wife, September 4, 1865; Lew Wallace Collection; Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

²³¹ J. Passama Doménech, *L'Empire Mexicain, la Paix, et les Interest du Monde* (México D.F., México: México I. Cumplido, 1866) , p.39.

arrival in Mexico, General Wallace met with President Juárez and expressed his desire to get mining, colonization, banking, and telegraph concessions from the government.²³² Wallace described his impression of Juárez in a letter to his wife. In complete admiration for the president, Wallace, also in that same letter shun the U.S. government by arguing that he wished his government had men as capable as Juárez. What a surprising picture of Juárez considering that at this juncture, heated discussions in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate often pertained to the suitability of assimilating millions of conquered Mexicans, if the U.S. decided to annex large sections of its neighbor. Many U.S. politicians believed that because of the racial composition of the population with mixed blood origin, that in essence made Mexicans vastly inferior to Americans. Wallace knew no one else but his wife would read his letter. That letter espoused delight in the meeting he held with officials and saying that some of the men, including President Juárez, were “better” and “abler” men than the Americans. Wallace was by no means the only American expressing favorable views, other U.S. officials and investors had done the same, but these opinions remained in the minority.

General Carvajal’s ability to secure a large loan immediately hit a stumbling block. In May of 1865, the general came in contact with Daniel Woodhouse, secretary for the United States, European, and West Virginia Land and Mining Company. Woodhouse claimed that he could secure a 30 million dollar loan, but in return the company he represented, requested 500,000 acres of mineral lands, 5 million acres of agricultural lands in the states of Tamaulipas and San Luis Potosí; as well as eighty percent of all state and federal revenues from those two states.

²³² General Lew Wallace to Benito Juárez, October 22, 1866; Lew Wallace Collection; Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Furthermore, the Carvajal—Woodhouse contract further stipulated that the country would grant concessions for railroad construction, telegraph lines, and exclusive rights for operating a double track railroad from Matamoros to the state of San Luis Potosí. Only three months after Carvajal signed this contract, he submitted it to Romero for approval, but the minister declined to sign it, noting that Carvajal had over stepped his authority. Soon Carvajal learned that Daniel Woodhouse had deceived him because no one had ever heard of his company. The situation became so dire that Carvajal had only succeeded in selling \$9,000 worth of bonds. In fact, General Herman Sturm pointed out in a letter written to Romero that a Mexican officer who was exiled in New York and destitute for food and shelter was refused even a loaf of bread for \$1,000 in Mexican bonds.²³³

Sturm had been designated Agent of the Mexican Republic, by General Carvajal, for the purchase and shipment of all material necessary for the prosecution of the war against the French. General Sturm was further promised \$20,000 in pay and a brigadier general position in the Mexican army. After the Woodhouse debacle, Carvajal was able to secure a \$4,600 loan from Sturm, who was a wealthy man. In return for the generous loan, Sturm and two of his brothers were granted 50 acres of mining land and 4,400 acres of agricultural land in Carvajal's home state of Tamaulipas. General Sturm was so concerned with helping Mexico that when General Carvajal received the news that several former Union officers had a large sum hotel bill as they awaited further instruction from officials, that Sturm stepped in and paid it with his own money so that the republican cause would not lose further credibility among Americans.

²³³ General Herman Sturm to Matías Romero, August 28, 1866, in *General Sturm, American and Mexican Commission; Herman Sturm versus the Republic of Mexico* (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1872) , p.228.

Moreover, he also financed several boats equipped with the military supplies needed by the army. Sturm had done such a good job supplying the forces that he received a letter from officials and was told not to send any more camp tents, shoes, stockings, coffee, among other items, because these were considered luxuries for the native soldiers.²³⁴

To Sturm's disappointment, when the French troops were defeated and President Juárez returned to Mexico City, he did not receive the full financial compensation he had been promised by Carvajal. The betrayal felt by Sturm had also been felt by his colleague Lew Wallace. In a letter in August of 1889, Wallace pleaded President Porfirio Díaz, for the full financial compensation for the work he arduously performed some twenty three years earlier. In an attempt to appeal to Díaz's humanity, Wallace admitted, that he had impoverished himself and many around him all in an effort to aide their southern neighbor. Sturm, just like Wallace, spent many years after the end of the French intervention trying to collect money owed to him, but not until 1892 did he receive compensation for his services rendered to the republic. In the end, no doubt both General Lew Wallace and General Herman Sturm, among other U.S. soldiers who participated in some fashion in helping the country rid itself of the French invaders, still had a utopian view of the country as a romantic land rich with gold and silver mines; hence they often preferred to get mine and railroad concessions rather than just a onetime cash payment for their services.

Mexico's Inferiority Complex at Mid Nineteenth Century

²³⁴ Herman Sturm, *The Republic of Mexico and its American Creditors* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Douglass & Conner Printers, 1869), p.41.

The actions taken by President Juárez and his political supporters can best be illustrated by what Thomas Benjamin calls an inferiority complex. In making reference to the U.S.—Mexico War, Benjamin claimed that, “An examination of the Mexican origins of the war uncovers fear, hatred, and admiration toward the United States, a self- perception of inferiority, and an admirable stubbornness which did not disappear in 1848.”²³⁵ Mexico’s inferiority complex did not cease to exist in 1848; in fact, one may easily argue that it got worse, as was evident during the French intervention. Prior to Benjamin making this argument, Mexican historian Samuel Ramos, in his 1934 work *El Perfil del Hombre y la Cultura en México* made the controversial claim that Mexicans, for the most part, suffered from a neurotic character that had led to an inferiority complex. In similar vein, Emilio Uranga also came to the same conclusions as Ramos, only choosing to replace the word inferior with “insufficient.” While some scholars attribute this inferiority complex to a post independent Mexico, Michael MacCoby attributes this feeling to the days of the Spanish conquest and unfortunately, in the national period, people have not been able to rid themselves of this negative self-perception feeling with regards to the United States. The inferior complex, MacCoby writes, arises out of “living in the shadow of the United States, with its overwhelming and military superiority, which has aggrandized huge chunks of Mexican territory.

Most Mexicans still resent not only their loss of land, but also the United States intervention in the Revolution of 1910.”²³⁶ The inferior sentiment might have not just been in relation to the

²³⁵ Thomas Benjamin, “Recent Historiography of the Origins of the Mexican War,” *New Mexico State Review* vol.54 no.3 (July 1979) : p.178.

²³⁶ Michael MacCoby, “On Mexican National Character,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* vol.370 (March 1967) : p.68.

United States, after the humiliating experience of having to live under the rule of a French imposed emperor for nearly five years, in the immediate years that follow, the country's elite quickly, so it seems, forgot about Maximilian and began to crave French fashions and ideas now that President Díaz brought political stability and a tremendous amount of financial growth for the upper-class segment of the population. Simply put, the country could not determine whether or not it hated or admired the United States. Perhaps Stephen D. Morris, said best, "Some hold the view that U.S. cultural, economic, and/or political influence constitutes a clear threat to the nation's interest, a view rooted in and reflecting the lack of trust in the U.S.A.; yet others embrace a different position, often preferring to emulate the U.S.A. for the purpose of progress,..."²³⁷ This clear divide among both the general public and government in relation to its cultural, political, and economic progress with the United States, highlights that although not every citizen has an inferior complex, a certain segment of the population does harbor that sentiment, and in the words of Octavio Paz, this feeling is often times hidden behind complex masks.

Returning the analysis to the French Intervention, after the execution of Maximilian, a new sense of nationalism arose among the people, especially in the minds of upper class politicians.

²³⁷ Stephen D. Morris, "Reforming the Nation: Mexican Nationalism in Context," *Journal of Latin American Studies* vol.31 no.2 (May 1999) : p.376. This important topic on the inferior complex of Mexicans and how it relates to the development of national character and identity, goes beyond the scope of this manuscript, and thus warrants more analysis than a short sub-section. The following works have been consulted for this section: David A. Brading, *Los Orígenes del Nacionalismo Mexicano* (México D.F., México: Secretaría de Educación Audiovisual y Divulgación, 1973); Frederick C. Turner, *The Dynamic of Mexican Nationalism* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); R. Barta, *The Cage of Melancholy: Identity and Metamorphosis in the Mexican Character* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Octavio Paz, *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico* (New York City, New York: Grove Press, 1961); and the work that has influenced me the most, Samuel Ramos's, *El Perfil del Hombre y la Cultura en México* (México D.F., México: Imprenta Mundial, 1934). Even famed Mexican political commentator Carlos Monsiváis, in an attempt to understand the Mexican inferior complex, only added insult to injury when he stated "Somos el país mas corrupto o transa;" see Carlos Monsiváis, "Muerte y Resurrección del Nacionalismo Mexicano" *Nexos* no.109 (1987) : p.20.

The people, with the help of Irish and U.S. troops, had defeated a world power. The military achievement emboldened the army and gave the government the impression that they could now go on to take the country back from foreigners, as stated by General Mariano Escobedo. The irony in Escobedo's incendiary remarks is that while on the one hand, the government desperately sought foreign capital and immigrants, even willing to look the other way when it had knowledge that many of these "desirable" immigrants were criminals, non-Catholic, and brought with them detrimental vices, such as slavery, desperate times called for desperate measures, or so it seems. On the other hand, Escobedo's statement gave the impression that the country had evolved and now had the economic and political capacity to enter the world stage. In the process, it planned to begin by taking the mines away from the English and fertile agricultural lands from the Americans. The inconsistency in the rhetoric espoused by the government created ambiguity as to where the nation stood on new immigrants into its territory. The result was the arrival of only six to seven thousand European and American immigrants.

Furthermore, it had been the plan of the government since the 1830s to have the newly arrived immigrants established themselves in rural areas, especially on the northern frontier and near ports, so that the country's vast lands could be developed into fertile agricultural fields; unfortunately for the government, most of the immigrants did not see the countryside as the place for their future; on the contrary, the countryside represented everything that was wrong with the country. Therefore, when European and U.S. immigrants came, they swiftly made the move from the rural regions to the urban centers, mainly Mexico City, where they applied themselves in trade and commerce. As foreigners moved to the city, racial tensions quickly arose, giving

way to numerous cases of violent attacks, such as the case of Chinese immigrants suffering racial hostility in the states of Sonora and Baja California.

It appeared as though the population was indifferent to the presence of foreign immigrants, regardless of race, as long as these new comers were not in plain sight; hence the government wanted them to reside in the countryside. When the Europeans, Americans, Chinese, and other immigrants moved to the cities and set up their businesses to compete directly with local businesses, then it seems that the population was no longer content with having these foreigners in their country and quickly appealed to the government to exile these peoples—who were now a threat.

CHAPTER 4

The Rise of Porfirio Díaz and His Desire to Attract Immigrants

General Porfirio Díaz when he claimed the presidency in the 1870s believed the nation needed to populate its northern frontier, and for that matter, the country as a whole. For decades the nation defined a major problem in the north as the Indian question. From the first days of independence, novice politicians had conflicting ideas about how to deal with the country's Indian population, a large segment of the population. The difficulty stemmed from the fact that the Indian population appeared disengaged with the formation of the new republic; this led many to call for their extermination and replacement with European immigrants who could help build financially and culturally the country. This continued, and many politicians in the Díaz administration search for European immigrants.

Many politicians expressed a strong desire for European colonies during the late nineteenth century, and concomitant dislike, often times bordering on racism, toward Chinese immigrants. The federal government advocated European immigration by paying representatives in Europe to promote the country's economic advantages. Immigrants who came received generous land grants, agricultural supplies to assist in the colonization, military service exemptions, and in some cases, full citizenship within a short period of time. A favorite incentive among many new comers, tax exemptions, came under attack. In spite of what both the federal government and the public deemed generous incentives, the European immigrants did not come, at least not in the large numbers desired. Díaz's political rivals insisted that the private sector should be

responsible for recruiting immigrants, and so the profits or the losses should be their responsibility. Some colonizing companies, often of foreign origin, had shown some degree of success in their recruiting efforts. Thus, political bickering over immigration politics encompassed the Porfirian years.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, liberals did not believe that its vast national territory, specifically those *terrenos baldíos* in the north could possibly yield maximum economic potential in the hands of *Indios*. Liberals such as José María Vigil and Francisco Zarco, newspapers *El Monitor Republicano* and *El Siglo XIX*, and President Juárez, ardently espoused the message of “the extermination of anything of Indian origin”.²³⁸ They did not have the necessary intellect to carry out the mission of developing the northern frontier. Therefore, the only way to develop its northern frontier was to bring immigrants to transform the country.

Nonetheless, not just any type of foreign immigrant suited the judgments of liberals. Díaz’s *científicos*, inspired by what Argentina and the United States had achieved in their demographics, vigorously sought European immigrants. They believed that in the hands of these highly desirable immigrants, the nation would succeed financially. In addition, the immigrants would mix with the indigenous population and by intermingling bring these *Indios* into modernity. Some of the *científicos* despised the Indians so much that they did not see much value in them. For instance, Enrique Creel believed that five Indians equated to one white person, while Matías Romero and Carlos Díaz Dufoo calculated that four Indians equaled one white.²³⁹ *El Universal* went as far as to say that the regeneration of the Indian was impossible;

²³⁸ Luis González, “El Liberalismo Triunfante” in *Historia General de México: Versión 2000*, (México D.F., México: El Colegio de México, 2007) , p.641.

²³⁹ Moisés González Navarro, “Las Ideas Raciales de los Científicos, 1890-1910,” *Historia Mexicana* vol.37 no.4 (April-June 1988) : p.572.

while in similar tone *El Tiempo* saw no hope since two thirds of the nation's population was Indian.

During the efforts to create the first national museum in the mid nineteenth century, intellectuals discussed how to best integrate the nation's undeniable indigenous past into the museum without appearing to embellish the contributions of Indians. In other words, some degree of respect had to be paid to the indigenous past, but the debate centered on how much of the museum's art works and monuments had to reflect the nation's past, instead of focusing on the contemporary and the envisioned future. In the 1850s a fetishism developed for the Indian past; that included wanting to preserve anything Aztec, Maya, or Olmec as the height of Indian culture and indeed something that made officials proud. On the other hand, the contemporary Indian represented stagnation, a mere shadow of his or her ancestors. Indians began to be perceived as exotic creatures.²⁴⁰

What had begun to take place with the arrival of Díaz is that the definition of national identity and nationalism had begun to change as the countries *científicos* and upper class citizenry, usurped some of the country's most popular and revered iconic images, such as the Virgin of Guadalupe and disassociated it from the Indian Juan Diego and the insurgent Father Miguel Hidalgo, and made it the patriot saint of the new ruling elite. Thus, the majority of the population, in the words of cultural historian William H. Beezley, was left holding on to almanacs, board games, and popular theater performances as their form of entertainment, but more importantly, these past times represented the masses sense of community and cohesiveness

²⁴⁰ Luis Gerardo Morales Moreno, "El Primer Museo Nacional de México," in *Hacia Otra Historia del Arte en México: De la Estructuración Colonial a la Exigencia Nacional, 1780-1860*; coordinadora Esther Acevedo (México D.F., México: Arte e Imagen, 2001) , p.59.

and in essence that equated to their collective memory as to what national unity and identity meant, despite what the intellectual community wanted them to subscribed to.²⁴¹

Some *científicos*, to be fair to them, did subscribe to the idea that Indians could be reformed and eventually fully integrated into mainstream society rather than relegating them to its outer fringes. Andrés Molina Enríquez pointed out that the Indians did have positive qualities such as their ability to endure hard work. These sentiments would become an *indigenismo* movement. Intellectuals began to recognize that miscegenation did not necessary present a social, cultural, or economic barrier towards modernity and progress. In the early 1920s, secretary of public education José Vaconcelos, through his writings about miscegenation and the eventual outcome of a “cosmic race,” revived the ideology about the birth of the “fifth universal race,” a superior race. His writings influenced liberals throughout Latin America to believe that miscegenation was a concept that should bring pride to their countries rather than feeling shameful about their racial composite.²⁴² Earlier Justo Sierra called the Mayas ferocious rebels. He identified himself as “*semiblanco*” while he traveled on a train full of whites in the United States.

Even President Díaz showed conflicted rhetoric towards the Indian. On the one hand, he ferociously attempted to remove the Yaquis from Sonora; on the other hand, he told the delegation in Cotton States Exposition in New Orleans that he did not want the Indians, who were part of the display, to be ridiculed since this ethnic group, represented the nation. The Spanish immigrants during the Porfiriato argued that the vast majority of government officials of

²⁴¹ William H. Beezley, *Mexican National Identity: Memory, Innuendo, and Popular Culture* (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2008) , p.97.

²⁴² Lourdes Martínez-Echazábal, “Mestizaje and Discourse of National/Cultural Identity in Latin America, 1845-1959,” *Latin American Perspectives* vol.25 no.3 (May 1988) : p.34.

the Díaz's administration held racist views about the Indians.²⁴³ Thus, the official position toward Indians showed ambivalence because officials did not know how to best deal with that large population. Andrés Molina Enríquez lauded the super ability of the Indian worker, Mateos Castellanos in 1909, argued the country would be thirty times much richer, stronger, and more respected, if the current eleven million Indians were replaced with any immigrants regardless of race.

Some intellectuals argued that the Indian did not hold back the nation and thus the need for European immigrants had no merit. Other so-called experts insisted that the lack of progress did not lie with the Indians' unwillingness to assimilate into the greater mestizo population, instead the country's social and economic illness resulted from its lack of population. The counter argument, supported by intellectuals such as Madero, emphasized that the country's population size was not the heart of the nation's problem, rather the young country lacked quality workers. For instance, Matías Romero said that in an eleven hour work period, an *obrero* could build a brick wall by laying some five hundred bricks. During that same time period, a U.S. worker could lay some 2500 bricks. A demonstration came in 1906, when Coahuila's government officials pleaded with the federal government to send the army to help pick crops rotting in the fields because the region lacked workers. In 1907, someone claimed that Argentina's five million citizens were worth more than country's fourteen million Indians. This discussion quickly spiraled into talk of genetic types as reason the nation did not prosper.

²⁴³ Clara E. Lida, "Inmigrantes Españoles Durante El Porfiriato: Problemas y Temas," *Historia Mexicana* vol.35 no.2 (October-December, 1985) : p.223.

The indigenous work ethic dumbfounded most of the *científicos* who admired at some level the ability of Indians, such as the Yaquis, who could accomplish more tasks in a twenty four period than a non-Indian, yet suddenly quit, saying that their task had been accomplished and they had no desire to complete a full week's work. Carl Lumholtz in his travels through the northern frontier was impressed at the ability of the Pápagos' to walk seventy miles a day with only a small provision of *pinole*. He further remarked that Pápago women had been blessed with splendid physical abilities. This remark by Lumholtz contradicted the general consensus among the *científicos* who insisted Indians lacked the physiological traits required to advance the nation's progressive ideals. Lumholtz, nonetheless, raised several concerns about the Pápagos' future, citing first that their recent contact with foreign travelers had begun to influence the way they dressed and the foods they eat, changing to bread, coffee, and ham. Unfortunately many of the Pápagos had fallen victims to the vices of alcoholism; an addiction that many social scientists had found as one of the more pressing issues afflicting the lower class. Many high society women went to great lengths to hide any hint of their brown skin by trying to whiten their skin because they did not want to be perceived as being Indian.

Still, some politicians pointed out that the fact that Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz became presidents, as evidence of how proper education could overcome ethnicity. Nonetheless, the physiological characteristics of the Indians made them targets of ridicule and harsh racism unleashed by both newspapers and politicians. Romero, for instance, attributed low productivity not only to the Indian but the worker in general because of, poor diet, lack of education, and even at the topography in which most of the population lived. His argument rested on the fact that

most of the people lived in high elevation towns and cities, and that the low atmospheric pressure rendered the worker less capable of more efficient productivity at the job site.

Another racial group that garnered interest from government officials in the late nineteenth century was black immigrants. *El Monitor Republicano* called them lazy drunks and less intelligent than Indians.²⁴⁴ In the eyes of the *científicos*, miscegenation with black immigrants could not possibly yield a stronger race; to the contrary, interaction with these peoples, let alone full blown miscegenation could only handicap the progress towards modernity. Officials knew that they could not on legal grounds deny the entry of immigrants into their country since their 1821 constitution prohibited such prejudice actions. Indeed conservative officials could have attempted to change the country's first constitution, but perhaps in attempting to do so, that would entail more bloodshed as another civil war would have to be the price to pay for amending or completely changing the constitution. Considering that the nation had just come out of a decade long war for independence, the appetite for war was not there, let alone the funds to undertake such a drastic and radical move just to simply include a new article in the constitution that would deny entry to certain racial groups or people of a religious faith other than Catholicism. Thus, because of the financial constraints, officials were almost obligated to swallow their pride and withhold their racial prejudices and accept any immigrant as long as they brought capital with them.

Moreover, since September of 1829, Mexico had officially abolished slavery; as a direct consequence of such a bold step, it has been estimated that at least 4,000 black slaves escaped their captors in the U.S. and headed for Mexico where they knew freedom awaited them. It is

²⁴⁴ Moisés González Navarro, "Las Ideas Raciales de los Científicos," p.575.

not known how many black slaves in the South knew that Mexico had abolished slavery; however, what is known is that some government officials, such as Juan Nepomuceno Almonte, immediately following the loss of Texas in 1836, contemplated organizing another military movement to recapture that lost state, but this time around, they plan on receiving assistance from slaves living in Texas and enticing those blacks still held in bondage to join the Mexican cause as freedom awaited them south of the border.²⁴⁵ The reception given to blacks, especially prior to 1865, by officials was ambiguous, at best. In some instances officials attempted to circumvent the constitution by arguing against these immigrants on the grounds that their personal habits, culture, and hygiene, did not compare favorably to that of white immigrants. For example, E.M. de los Ríos, an intellectual pointed out in 1889 in regards to the possible arrival of one thousand black families that the white race was the most active, the most intelligent, the more civilized, and that educated Americans had shown an intellectual capacity for great achievements.²⁴⁶

A loud chorus of opposition to the possible introduction of Jamaican blacks dominated the headlines in the capital newspapers during the 1880s. *La Patria* insisted that blacks get drunk daily, work little, and they are insubordinate.²⁴⁷ Another popular newspaper, *El Monitor Republicano*, reminded government officials that they needed to make a clear distinction between their moral and ethical feeling toward black immigrants. Some felt sympathy for to their plight as they said that they harbored no racial prejudice toward them. Nonetheless, some

²⁴⁵ See chapter 1 footnote 11, where I specifically quote Carlos María de Bustamante saying how Mexico with the help of black slaves could win Texas back. Furthermore, in that same page, I make reference to the plan envisioned by Minister of War Juan Nepomuceno Almonte, which included circulating propaganda in the U.S. to entice blacks to rebel and come to Mexico.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ *La Patria* (Mexico City) 7 April 1882.

officials argued that the fight for human equality was one thing and the needs of a nation were another thing and obviously reconciling these two issues was almost impossible.²⁴⁸ Horrified at the possibility of miscegenation between blacks and Indians, *El Monitor Republicano* mentioned that it would certainly be a calamity if the indigenous population entered into miscegenation with individuals of doubtful and insignificant blood lines, because that would only contribute to the degeneration of that race.²⁴⁹ The newspapers did not operate in a vacuum; they simply expressed the racist view of some politicians and the sentiment of a certain segment of the population.

With only a little over two generations of experience governing and experimenting with a new nation, both liberal and conservative politicians knew that the country desperately needed an influx of labor to put its vast national territory to good use. Obviously deciding what type of immigrant suited the infant nation caused tremendous turmoil, with black immigrants stuck in the middle of not only an economic but also a cultural debate among politicians. As noted above, while many officials felt that the introduction of black immigrants would retard the progress of the nation, other politicians remarked that,

If in the hostile environment of the tropical coast, only the blacks are brave enough to undertake that arduous work, if they are the only ones who could build railroad tracks, we should not protest their desire to come or receive them with hostility; to the contrary, we should welcome them for they bring progress and civilization.²⁵⁰

The argument referred to certain regions of the country, with a harsh physical environment that, made it extremely difficult for both the government and private companies to recruit workers to relocate to those inhospitable regions to begin laying railroad tracks. The statement made it clear

²⁴⁸ *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) 8 March 1882.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 17 February 1882.

²⁵⁰ *La Patria* (Mexico City) 7 March 1882.

that personal convictions could not obstruct economic needs, in other words, pride had to be put aside, as the nation desperately needed the railroad, in the literal sense of, laying the tracks toward progress.

The federal government had a difficult time accepting black immigrants, but soon recognized that it had no choice but to allow private companies to begin bringing in these laborers. Private companies, such as the Mexican Central Railroad, in attempting to build a railroad track between Tampico and San Luis Potosí, had insisted for years that it could not find native workers; therefore, company officials maintained that in order to move forward with its plans, it had to bring foreign workers to perform that labor. It was reported that the Mexican Central Railroad brought some 1,000 African-Americans from the southern states and another 2,000 black workers from the West Indies in order to accomplish its goal.²⁵¹ The public did not take their arrival very kindly. *La Voz de México*, reported the complaints of abuse that Jamaican immigrants had toward their employers and the people.²⁵² Since many black Jamaicans entered the country through New Orleans, Louisiana, the *New Orleans Times—Democrat*, in similar fashion wrote about the suffering of black immigrants during their stay, highlighting the point that railroad companies did not pay these poor immigrants what had been promised in Kingston.²⁵³

What infuriated the public with regard to these black immigrants was that as opposed to many others who had come, such as the Chinese, Jamaican men brought their families with them. This type of immigration alarmed the people and even some politicians; because it clearly

²⁵¹ Jonathan C. Brown, "Foreign and Native Workers in Porfirian Mexico," *The American Historical Review* vol.98 no.3 (June, 1993) : p.798.

²⁵² *La Voz de México* (Mexico City) 16 July 1882.

²⁵³ *New Orleans Times—Democrat* (New Orleans, Louisiana) 10 May 1882.

indicated that they intended to make a permanent home. On the one hand, single male immigrants, for the most part, after earning some money, left the country with no intention of making Mexico their home. On the other hand, the Jamaican men had brought their families and manifested their desire to permanently relocate and start new lives in their host nation.²⁵⁴ In an attempt to ease the fears of people, *La Patria* and *El Monitor Republicano* emphasized that bringing blacks presents us with some great advantages that warrant serious consideration.²⁵⁵ In the end, because of the desperate need for workers during the 1880s and the misery the Jamaicans faced in their own country, they kept coming through the first decade of the twentieth century. The gulf states of Veracruz and Tamaulipas received most of the Jamaican immigrants who immediately went to work in the agriculture sector; but other states, such as Campeche, also benefited from the influx of the Jamaican laborers.²⁵⁶

The Catholic newspaper *El Tiempo* made a distinction between the different black immigrants. It pointed out that the nation would indeed benefit from black immigrants but only from those coming directly from Africa, since they had a proven record of hard work and the ability to endure hostile environments. Arriving Africans in the late nineteenth century scared some people; this resulted first with the arrival of African soldiers from Sudan, Egypt, and Namibia that aided the French government in their military efforts after the battle of Puebla in May 5, 1862. The arrival certainly caused fear among rural peoples who had never seen a black person. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, made the argument in the early 1940s that immediately after the Independence War in 1821, officials did not have policy regarding blacks because of their

²⁵⁴ *La Patria* (Mexico City) 29 de Abril 1882.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 10 March 1882; *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) 12 March 1882.

²⁵⁶ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) 6 April 1905.

limited numbers, except for abolishing slavery in 1829. On the eve of the war of independence, roughly 600,000 people of African descent lived in New Spain, that number equated to only 10% percent of the total population. As a result of this low number, consequently figuring out a policy toward black immigrants did not enter the political discussion as a pressing issue when a country needed to be rebuilt and its coffers needed money. It has been well documented that as opposed to discussing the black segment of the population, in ridding the country of the colonial caste system, the liberal politicians concerned themselves' with figuring out what to do with the majority of the citizenry—the Indians. Furthermore, the geographical location where the majority of people of African descent lived only placed them at a disadvantage in the national discourse of equal rights for all citizens; if they could not be seen because of their isolation, as Aguirre Beltran argued, then it was almost as if they did not exist in the newly independent nation.

Popular opinion expressed negative stereotypes about the African-Americans. *El Tiempo*, declared that Afro-Mexicans only displayed corrupt and effeminate qualities, contrary to the traits desired by the government.²⁵⁷ Senator José María Couttolenc believed that only under slavery would blacks work; left to their own vices, they were a degenerate and lazy race.²⁵⁸ In 1895, in an intimate letter that Justo Sierra wrote to his wife, that while he traveled through the U.S., he despised the black community; he compared his experience to finding a hair in a soup. José Vasconcelos in the 1920s argued that although people of African descent had been a vital element in the formation of Mexican society early on, their only lasting legacy had been

²⁵⁷ Moises González Navarro, "Las Ideas Raciales de los Científicos," p.575.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

immorality and lust. The Indian and European, on the other hand, had contributed cultural and intellectual achievements in his view.

Despite racist attitudes toward both black and Chinese immigrants, officials knew that they needed to populate the frontier. As late as 1909, Andres Molina Enriquez, strongly advocated aggressive immigrant recruiting efforts because if the country did not have at least 50 million inhabitants, he could not envision it enduring much longer, as the United States had grown even larger by the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁵⁹ Many *hacendados* insisted that authorities be practical about their decision; in other words, the needs of the nation versus their personal convictions about certain racial groups.

Some *hacendados* and newspapers such as *El Universal* by the late 1880s had begun to plea with the government to permit blacks from the United States to enter the country in order for them to work in the cotton fields. These advocates argued that African Americans suited the cotton industry well since these individuals had experience in the U.S. South performing this arduous task. The supporters of this program added that these African Americans would form agricultural colonies along the gulf coast, an area only suited for these individuals able to withstand the intense heat and humidity. This sentiment echoed Spanish colonial officials who argued for the importation of black slaves because of their supposed physical or possible biological ability to withstand the harsh tropical environment with its diseases that had devastated the Spanish population.

²⁵⁹ Andres Molina Enríquez, *Los Grandes Problemas Nacionales* (México D.F., México: Imprenta de A. Carranza e Hijos, 1909) , p.358.

Senator Sánchez de Tagle strongly advocated for the admission of black immigrants on the grounds that their presence on the northern frontier could curtail the further invasion of Anglos into that territory.²⁶⁰ Not only did the government have the arduous task to contend with white squatters in the north, but also various indigenous rebels still refused to submit. Senator Sánchez de Tagle insisted that the arrival of black immigrants could also help authorities in their struggle against Indian rebels. When runaway slaves made their way into the country, they helped authorities in some 40 military expeditions against Indian rebels. As a result of their valiant efforts, some authorities welcomed these black immigrants with so much enthusiasm. Rhetoric expressed by some politicians and newspapers did not coincide with the enthusiasm uttered by other politicians, as a consequence of such divided opinion, not only blacks but also other potential immigrants began to question the sincerity of the government's willingness to welcome any immigrant willing to work.

Some politicians pointed to Peru as an example where the arrival of Chinese immigrants helped that country. As early as 1875 Matías Romero saw the need to populate the coast line and strongly advocated bringing Chinese immigrants. The astute politician requested that the president send an agent to China to recruit immigrants. Romero added that this special agent should have authority to negotiate labor contracts and government subsidies that included transportation fees. His suggestions brought a wave of harsh criticism. *El País* reminded its readers that the Chinese blood was “rancid and foul smelling”²⁶¹ Echoing *El País*'s sentiment, *El Partido Liberal Mexicano* argued that the country would be ridiculed on the international

²⁶⁰ Ben Vinson III and Bobby Vaughn, *El Pulso de la Población Negra en México: Una Historia Recordada, Olvidada y Vuelta a Recordar* (México D.F., México: Centro de Investigación y Docencia Economicas, 2004) , p.11.

²⁶¹ Moisés González Navarro, “Las Ideas Raciales de los Científicos,” p.577.

stage for allowing the miscegenation of its people with a degenerate race. Romero acknowledged that the European immigrant was more desirable than the Chinese immigrant but also emphasized that the Chinese had no intention of miscegenation; their stay would only be temporary. Without controversy, Porfirio Díaz created a task force in 1904 headed by José Covarrubias to study the impact of Chinese immigration.

Díaz, as early as 1877 had stated that one of the nation's most pressing issues was the need to introduce good quality immigrants. Covarrubias essentially following the popular sentiment of the time came to two distinct conclusions: first, he had no doubt that the Chinese immigrant was a degenerate man, full of immoral vices, disease ridden, and lacking the capacity to assimilate into the broader society; secondly, in spite of these deficiencies, Covarrubias emphasized the economic necessity of having them come to work in regions of the country where natives did not want to live or work. Therefore, Covarrubias proposed to Díaz that Chinese immigrants be allowed to enter the country as "external associates" of society. Under these circumstances, Covarrubias suggested that the Chinese immigrants should not get benefits from the federal government such as large tracts of land, exemption from taxes, tools for agricultural endeavors, or the full subsidy for transportation from China to Mexico.

Covarrubias's conclusions echoed the popular sentiment that sustained the argument that the Chinese immigrants had the ulterior motive of using the country's proximity to gain illegal entry into the United States.

Following Covarrubias's suggestions, the Díaz administration created the *Ley de Inmigración de 1908*, which prohibited Asian immigration, particularly those immigrants coming from China. Subsequent legislation in 1932 led to the expulsion of the Chinese. In a letter

published in *La Libertad* in 1907, Covarrubias insisted that in order to attract quality immigrants, the country needed to first invest in exploiting the country's resources and begin laying the groundwork for railroad tracks and then the immigrants would come in great numbers.²⁶² Justo Sierra as early as 1883, put faith in railroad development to attract immigrants.²⁶³

Carlos Pacheco, the Minister of Development during the early 1880s, argued that the government had no choice but to attract immigrants. Therefore, in some of the colonies that the federal government had assisted in developing, when natives arrived to the government sponsored colonies, they were surprised to find them populated with Italian immigrants since Pacheco had been an ardent supporter of this type of immigration. Pacheco, in similar fashion as other politicians, hoped that the physical proximity of the two racial groups would lead to *mestizaje*. In a state of panic, Pacheco pleaded to the government not to close its ports or borders to immigrants, because if the Díaz administration caved in to that political wing, then the depopulation of the territory would definitely take place. The Minister of Development based his doomsday predictions for society on his belief that the current *mestizo* ethnic group, which made up most of the country's entire population, could not survive on its own by simple natural birth rates alone. Pacheco added that the minimal increase in population had in large part to do with the arrival of immigrants, the reason he advocated for the government to more aggressively follow that course of action, in spite of what the critics said. Pacheco knew that his country could not compete with the U.S., Uruguay, Chile, or Argentina, countries often cited by his critics as points of destination that had attracted thousands of European immigrants, because the

²⁶² *La Libertad* (Mexico City), 21 February 1907.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 27 February 1883.

country did not have the private industry necessary to pay the high salaries demanded by the immigrants or the work ready agricultural lands that only required the workers to move in. That is why, perhaps, Pacheco, blinded by his own optimism that the many incentives the government offered, many of them already previously cited, were the only hope the nation had in attracting the European worker. He emphasized that these government incentives should be viewed as a down payment on an investment that would pay huge dividends in the near future, and that in fact, if he succeeded in selling the public lands deemed as *baldíos* to the immigrants, with the revenue generated, the country would be able to pay all of its national debt.

At this juncture in the state of politics, politicians that adhere to Minister Pacheco's ideals even considered bringing Greeks and coolies from India to work in the henequen plantations of Yucatán. To Pacheco's disappointment, Porfirio Díaz in 1888 stated that his government would no longer lead the enterprise to bring in immigrants, citing that the colonies that were thriving in the rural frontier had been induced to come by private companies that venture in agriculture and mining. Toward the end of the Porfiriato, Díaz's last *Ministro de Fomento*, Olegario Molina, reminded officials that the colonies erected throughout Mexico that had been initiated by private industry, for the most part, showed great progress, as had been argued by Díaz. He had come to the conclusion that both types of immigration, that sanctioned by the federal government and the one initiated by private industry, had failed to alleviate the country's great deficiencies in agriculture. To make matters worse, these colonization schemes had no net positive effect in the country's demographics, which both liberals and conservatives had acknowledge as a real problem.

Despite Díaz's change in policy, in 1900, he still ordered his agents in Paris to circulate some pamphlets exalting his country's great potential. The Díaz administration hired famed French writer Henry Lemcke, so that through his literature, as a result of his many travels through Mexico, he could serve abroad as a surrogate for the nation. The government probably believed that if investors attending the World's Fair in Paris read the work by Lemcke they could possibly be influenced to come. Porfirian officials no longer wanted to be directly involved in the business of bringing immigrants, and so they had resorted, to using influential surrogates that could appeal to potential immigrants and investors. Manuel Fernández Leal, also one President Díaz's *Ministro de Fomento*, emphasized that the best way the government could play a role in attracting immigrants was by an indirect means. Leal emphasized that the best pragmatic solution officials could do was to provide *orden*, meaning peace and security throughout the country, equal justice to all newcomers, and a financially stable government. The federal government did also make a concerted effort to attract many nationals living outside the country to come back and enjoy many of the concessions that had been offered to foreigners.

Inevitably the efforts exerted by the federal government under both President Manuel González and President Porfirio Díaz to attract immigrants by direct or indirect government intervention sent a mixed message to the state governors as to what role the government should play in this endeavor. Therefore, several governors decided to take their own initiative with regard to immigration policy, since at the more regional level they knew specifically what their individual state needed. In 1879, the state of Guerrero exempted all immigrants from paying state taxes for three years. A more generous offer than the state of Guerrero came in 1881 from the state of Veracruz, which offered to pay *hacendados* five hundred pesos for each colony that

had at least fifteen families living in it. State authorities emphasized that the families living in the hacienda should not be *jornaleros*, but rather true colonists that had every intention of residing in the country. The colonists in these haciendas would be exempted for a period of three years from paying any state or municipal taxes. Furthermore, the state of Veracruz would grant these individuals citizenship when they submitted the proper paper work. Moreover, each colony would have the legal right to create their own police force and the state would establish a primary level education school within the colony. Evidently state officials, such as those in Veracruz and Guerrero, felt that they could possibly do a better job than the federal government in attracting immigrants. In 1890, the governor of the state of Veracruz, Juan Enríquez, received praises from both Manuel Dublán, the *Secretario de Hacienda* and from Porfirio Díaz, for his efforts to attract immigrants.²⁶⁴ Only three years later, Governor Enríquez informed Díaz that he had not succeeded in convincing the big *terratenientes* to set aside some of their land to be distributed among the foreign immigrants.

Both state and federal officials knew that their best effort at attracting potential immigrants was by providing them with workable land; but to the government's misfortune, those lands were in the hands of large landowners and they had refused for decades to divide it up, allowing them in many ways to keep the debt peonage system to continue to thrive, with the Catholic Church being one of the big beneficiaries of the hacienda system. On the other hand, the public lands, often times referred to as *baldíos*, tended to be in remote regions of the country, with no water available to make them workable for agricultural purposes, essentially rendering them useless.

²⁶⁴ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 15, Caja 22, Documentos: 010585-010586; Documento: 010621; Documento: 010623; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos; Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

Therefore, the federal and state government not only did they have to contend with Indians raiding colonies in the north, but also an old feudal type of landownership system that had not assisted the country in any way in entering the modern era. The newspaper *La Libertad* reported that in 1883, the state of Yucatán, offered private colonization companies ten pesos for every individual between 8 and 50 years old introduced to that state.²⁶⁵ In 1893, the state of Campeche also offered colonization companies ten pesos for every immigrant over the age of ten years introduced, but the financial reward was contingent upon the immigrant remaining in the state at least two years. In that same year, officials also made the same offer for the introduction of immigrants from the Canary Islands between the ages of 16 and 40 years old. The governor of Campeche, in 1902, in a desperation move, implored colonization companies to urgently introduced Japanese immigrants, like other states such as Yucatán, Sonora, and Baja California had already done. Tamaulipas declared itself open to all immigrants from any nationality, with the incentive of tax exemptions if they formed colonies that lasted ten years.

At the beginning of the Porfiriato, the newspaper media pressure government officials with ideas of their own as to the best way to induce immigrants. *El Monitor Republicano* in 1877, pointed out that government officials should provide free education for the children of immigrants and create special juntas, where the newly arrived foreigners would be made aware of their religious freedom, exemption from military service, and absolve from paying any taxes for a certain period of time. The newspaper argued that once these individuals had been informed of the advantages the government provided; then they would tell their relatives back home in their native countries how splendid their current lives in their new home seem to be

²⁶⁵ *La Libertad* (Mexico City), 14 April 1883.

flourishing.²⁶⁶ In other words, the *Monitor Republicano*, believed that the country could not attain a better surrogate for their immigration enterprise than actually having the immigrants already living there to serve in an indirect way as agents for immigration recruitment, since their personal testimony would carry more credibility than a politician handing out propaganda pamphlets abroad.

The other influential newspaper, *La Voz de México*, joined the chorus that had been led by *El Monitor Republicano*, and urged officials to pay for the entire transportation cost of the immigrants and that would in no doubt lure the Europeans to come.²⁶⁷ *El Colono* suggested that all state governors should impose a one cent federal annual tax on their residents and with the population of the country near 12 million in 1897, with the money generated the federal government would be able to pay for the transportation of some 120,000 immigrants within a ten year period.²⁶⁸ The suggestion made by *El Colono* was based on the premise that the urgent need to bring immigrants should be a concern for all citizens and not just the government; the logic as to why it called for the federal annual tax on all citizens in order to secure funding for immigration purposes.

In 1906 *El Imparcial* had another idea for the government to ponder as it consider how to attract immigrants. Rather than trying to induce immigrants to come by offering them large sections of land, in order to develop an agro-business type of economy, *El Imparcial* believe that the government had the responsibility to try to match the immigrants with land that best resemble that of their native country so that they could be more familiar with the workability of that land.

²⁶⁶ *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) , 6 January 1883.

²⁶⁷ *La Voz de México* (Mexico City) , 29 January 1882.

²⁶⁸ *El Colono* (Mexico City) , 25 February 1897.

In addition, it was argued, that instead of granting these immigrants large sections of land, the best course of action lied in providing them with small plots of land so that they could become small farmers.²⁶⁹ Simply said, the government expectations had to be more realistic considering what the country had to offer to these potential newcomers. As a result of setting up more moderate goals, as *El Imparcial* suggested, in the case the scheme did not succeed, the government's effort would not appear as an utter failure; and the financial lost would obviously not be as great if the ambitions of state and federal officials correlated with the realistic funds and assets available for these immigrants.

Though large number of immigrants never came, government officials did receive plenty of interest from many private companies. In 1885 *La Compañía Agrícola y Colonizadora de Sotavento*, offered President Díaz to establish in Veracruz five schools to teach immigrants the art of cultivating cotton; in exchange, the company requested from the government a payment of 12,000 pesos per school, and the company stipulated that they would bring five hundred immigrants within a fifteen year period.²⁷⁰ In May of 1885, Matías Romero informed Díaz that several U.S. investors wanted to erect colonies but not in the country's northern frontier which raised some concerns. Later that same year, Julio Cervantes, the governor of the state of Coahuila, informed Díaz that he wanted to recommend W.A.P. Jones to allow him to introduce immigrants.²⁷¹ Several beneficiaries of the generous grants offered by Díaz complained to the president that they had received threats from many people who felt these investors had taken unfair advantage of the country's desperate plight. President Díaz responded to the pleas of

²⁶⁹ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) , 21 May 1906.

²⁷⁰ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 10, Caja 10, Documentos: 4672-4675; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos; Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F, México.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Legajo 10, Caja 10, Documento: 4908; Legajo 11, Caja 1, Documento: 000348.

these investors by telling them that he would gladly send a military commander to help alleviate their situation.²⁷² Clearly the public was not to thrill with the actions that federal officials had taken in order to attract potential immigrants and obviously Díaz did not take to kind to the attitudes of the rural masses; therefore, he persisted with his agenda to modernize the nation by trying to get European immigrants to interact with the nationals hoping this would inject them with the industrious spirit. For instance, Díaz informed the governor of the state of Michoacan that he would be sending him a group of foreign investors to help with the struggling mining industry and so that the nationals could associate with individuals that possessed the industrious character.²⁷³

Díaz's aggressive tactics to attract immigrants garnered the interest of many potential immigrants and investors. Throughout the 1880s the president received hundreds of letters inquiring about the generous concessions his government was willing to make to both the colonists and the businessmen who headed these colonization schemes. J.B. Abraham from the state of Florida in September of 1886 asked Díaz if he could become a recruiting agent for the government in the U.S. since he argued that he had received positive feedback from hundreds of interested parties that wanted to leave the U.S. for Mexico in search of better opportunities.²⁷⁴ A man from Los Angeles inquired about the prospects of settling English immigrants in the state of Durango.²⁷⁵ From Winnipeg, Canada, in December of 1887, Henry Ferguson asked Díaz about

²⁷² Ibid., Legajo 10, Caja 23, Documentos: 11423-11425.

²⁷³ Ibid., Legajo 11, Caja 1, Documentos: 000457-000458.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., Legajo 11, Caja 21, Documentos: 59435-59437.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., Legajo 12, Caja 25, Documentos: 1233-1236.

the opportunities available in the state of Baja California Norte, citing a significant interest from possible Canadian immigrants wanting to relocate.²⁷⁶

In March of 1898, newspapers reported that another group of Canadians desired to go to Tampico because they had been promised homes, a church, a telegraph system within the colony, and the opportunity to buy an acre of land at three dollars each with very generous payment plans. H.H. Martin, also from the U.S., in a letter written to Díaz in January of 1889, stated that a group of interested immigrants wanted to know if his administration would pay the travel expenses of a special commission envoy they wish to send to Mexico in order to investigate the suitability of the lands that had been promoted as concessions to foreigners by government officials.²⁷⁷ What is surprising about the hundreds of letters that President Díaz received inquiring about establishing immigrant colonies is that many wealthy domestic investors also tried to take advantage of the liberal colonizing laws laid out by his administration. For example, in September of 1889, writing from Hermosillo, Sonora, Pedro Galván and Tomás Valdespino, the former head of the country's consulate office in San Diego, California, asked the president if they could form a colony in Tijuana, near the customs house.²⁷⁸ As late as April 1910, on the eve of the Mexican Revolution, Agustín Piña, head of the consulate office in Chicago, notified Rafael Chousal, a cabinet member of Díaz's government, that J.C. Wilson, an investor, wanted to recruit from 10,000 to 25,000 families from Finland and relocate them to Mexico where they would dedicate themselves to agriculture and the cattle industry.²⁷⁹ Piña added that already in

²⁷⁶ Ibid., Legajo 11, Caja 26, Documento: 12591.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., Legajo 14, Caja 1, Documentos: 000516-000517.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., Legajo 14, Caja 21, Documento: 01045; Documentos: 01062-01064.

²⁷⁹ Archivo Rafael Chousal; Caja 32, Expediente 322, Fojas 37-38; Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México D.F., México.

the United States he had received word that at least 1,000 Finnish families desire to go to there, but wanted to weigh their options because the U.S. had also made an aggressive move to try to keep them; the official did not specify in his letter to Chousal whether the offers made to the Finnish families came from private companies or the U.S. government.

Not only families from Finland had shown interest, but plenty of other immigrants from other European countries as well. Both *El País* and *El Imparcial* reported in June of 1909 that 100 Italian families wanted to go to the state of Tabasco and that the Italian minister in the country had stated that he wanted to bring Italian capitalists that would pay off any land offer to them in a period of eight years.²⁸⁰ Furthermore, these Italian investors wanted to create a commerce steamship line between Mexican and Italian ports. In 1910, *El País* informed its readers that a French investment company with over 1.2 million pesos had an interest in establishing a colony in Palenque that would work in the lumber and rubber industries.²⁸¹ When news arrived that several hundred Belgium families wanted to go to Jalapa, Veracruz, their devout Catholic faith was emphasized as sufficient reason to why the government should support this colony.²⁸² By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, an ambitious plan surfaced to bring over 17,000 Russian immigrants, to reside in the state of Tampico on a 35,000 hectare land grant, with the idea that they would help build the railroad line between Guaymas and Guadalajara.²⁸³ *El País* pointed out that it had learned that as many as 20,000 Russian families wanted to come, but by 1908, only a year later after the initial interest, only 900 Russians still

²⁸⁰ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) , 23 June 1909; *El País* (Mexico City) , 25 June 1909.

²⁸¹ *El País* (Mexico City) 25 October 1910.

²⁸² *La Libertad* (Mexico City) 15 January 1879.

²⁸³ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) , 21 August 1907.

hoped to go.²⁸⁴ What is striking about those numbers is the massive decline in the number of potential immigrants that showed interest in wanting to come compared with the actual number that did relocate.

Maybe not as surprising as one might think, considering that for decades the government had waged an outright war of extermination against certain Indian tribes, several Native American Indian tribes also inquired about going south of the U.S. border in search of a better life. In 1898 hundreds of Cherokees, after selling their land in the U.S., estimated to have been worth 13 million pesos, asked the government for favorable conditions to move to the Yaqui River.²⁸⁵ The following year, state officials in Chihuahua reported that they had received news that hundreds of Delaware and Cherokee Indians were marching from the U.S. toward the states of Durango and Sonora. State officials were delighted in having these individuals come because they had demonstrated a hard work ethic and lacked the immoral vices of the Indian.²⁸⁶ Interestingly enough, as opposed to other American Indians that wish to reside in the country's northern frontier, 5,000 Cherokee Indians showed interest in going to Guadalajara.²⁸⁷ These American Indians specified that they wished to come because of the legal equality that existed for all individuals and their desire to buy over 600,000 acres of land on a border state.²⁸⁸

Only two years later, reports surfaced that Indians in Oklahoma had plans to sell their land there and move to Mexico and start a colony with the money they would bring; responding to this potential move, *El Imparcial* remarked that because the American Indians were coming, they

²⁸⁴ *El País* (Mexico City) , 5 October 1907; *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) , 6 February 1908.

²⁸⁵ *La Convención Radical* (Mexico City) , 2 April 1899.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 7 May 1899.

²⁸⁷ *El País* (Mexico City) , 21 April 1899.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 4 December 1906.

did not deserve to be treated with any sort of hate or indifference.²⁸⁹ What is interesting about those two previous news reports from *El País* and in *El Imparcial* is that not only European immigrants but even American Indians, an ethnic group that had been severely persecuted by the United States government, saw in this country an opportunity to start a new life free from racial discrimination and with equal justice before the eyes of the law. Moreover, the newspaper report makes it clear that there had been an underlining sentiment within the government that if immigrants that desired to come did not provide for most of the transportation cost for their migration trip and did not come with some capital to get started in whatever enterprise they had contemplated, then these potential immigrants should be viewed with a large degree of skepticism and with a wary eye. On the other hand, when news came that immigrants, such as the American Indians noted above, wanted to come and they were willing to sell their own land in their native country and bring that capital into the country and as an added bonus, had the will to pay for their own transportation, then officials, including the press, spoke highly of these individuals and, for all intent and purposes, had no quarrels about rolling out the red carpet for these newcomers. What the government wanted, no doubt, immigrants willing to risk their own money in coming, that way it would demonstrate their sincerity in their so-called interest to migrate.

Having many immigrants bring their capital put the country in a precarious scenario. On the one hand, the country needed the money these immigrants brought in order to pay the nation's debt and continue to grow financially. On the other hand, if the immigrants began to grow their commerce activities, then the country risked losing many key industries to foreigners as a result

²⁸⁹ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City), 8 July 1908.

of its insistence on aggressively pursuing foreign immigrants and their money. In 1880, a newspaper noted that Cubans controlled the tobacco industry, the best bakeries were now in the hands of the Spaniards, the restaurants had now passed to the French, the highest qualified dentists residing in the country came from the United States, and the Germans had the best skills in the art of watch repair. While many of these sectors of the national economy might have appeared as trivial to the federal government, numerous reports began to note since the early 1880s that a growing sector of the population, especially those residing in the urban centers, had begun to show resentment, envy, and a xenophobic attitude toward any foreigner that had now established himself in direct competition with a local or regional business offering the same product and service. Many concerned citizens pointed out that their anger did not arise out of a direct racial hatred toward the foreign immigrant per se, but out of an attitude of disdain or indifference by foreigners toward their new home country. In other words, people could not get around the idea as to how these foreigners had come to their country, made lots of money, in the case of some; because of the many generous concessions the government had offered them, and yet, according to many nationals, these foreigners still hated their host nation.

It had been pointed out that some of these same immigrants that had gone to the United States, made a conscious effort to assimilate into that American culture by doing some simple tasks such as sending their children to the same schools the other American children went to. On the other hand, when these same immigrants came to Mexico, no effort was made by them to assimilate, and it was not uncommon for them to build their own schools on the land concessions given to them. *El País*, therefore, called on the government to consider the moral character of the immigrant as prerequisite for admission into the country. Even Andrés Molina Enríquez

criticized the extreme xenophilia manifested by the Díaz administration, noting that at the rate the president was giving away land and concessions in mining and railroad development, the masses would soon appear to be foreigners within their own country.

President Díaz's replacement, Francisco Madero, also noted that the *extranjeros* had for too long enjoyed many generous benefits that had not been accorded to the country's citizens. The extreme xenophilia expressed by the federal government gave rise to a nationalist movement or sentiment led by people such as Ricardo Flores Magón that by 1906 had the U.S. press remarking that people south of the border had been plotting to launch an antforeigner revolution. It had been argued in the press that the anger felt by these people had deeper roots against the U.S. citizens living and doing business in their country, versus the anger felt toward European nationals who had relocated there. The U.S. press was correct in warning its citizens about the potential threats they could face. Since the early 1880s, conservative newspapers such as *La Libertad* had insisted that the government aggressively recruit European immigrants, rather than *gringos*, so that they could exploit the many unknown richness the country had not yet untapped.

Moreover, European immigrants did not manifest a repugnant sentiment at the idea of miscegenation with the rest of the population; as opposed to the U.S. immigrant who did not want anything do with the Mexican. In addition, the European immigrant's values on religion, education, and social organization, coincided best with those of the country's most conservative citizens, which could in the end, help the country create one homogenous nation. For instance, in 1896, Díaz received a letter from a Spanish official, telling him that if his country wanted to achieve the same success that Argentina had in terms of attracting the right European immigrants, then the government had the obligation to bring in European professors in order to

educate the masses on why these immigrants suited their country's best social, cultural, and financial interest, not to mention the nation's political standing in the world.²⁹⁰ Clearly since the 1870s, and not in the first two decades of the twentieth century, as is most commonly argued, did the call for miscegenation come to the fore front of the nation's political dialogue.

The federal government went through a period in which a European xenophilia phase reigned supreme. Díaz and his officials sought European immigration from very selective regions of that continent, such as trying to get Spaniards, Italians, and French immigrants, because as noted above, these particular immigrants embodied the right characteristics the country needed in the late nineteenth century. Nonetheless, liberal politicians faced a sharp criticism from "*los positivistas*," who maintained that federal authorities had gone too far in their almost fetishism admiration for Europeans, particularly Spaniards. Instead, the critics, such as Roberto Gayol, an engineer, said that officials should not focus their attention on the immigrant's ethnic background or country of origin, but rather on his or her profession and how that might be applied to a certain region of the country. Gayol argued that how could officials have a deep admiration for Spaniards when in many of their textile factories, they fired nationals for simply having a Protestant religious faith rather than a Catholic one. He insisted that an immigrant's skin color should not matter. Gayol, through his travels, had come across the so-called perfect white immigrant, but soon realized that he was nothing more than a man with white skin who hid a dark soul. For Gayol and his *positivista* allies, the country did not have the luxury of time to be

²⁹⁰ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 11, Caja 28, Documentos: 13843-13844; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

selective in its immigration selection process, the arms of the Japanese or Chinese suffice the national economy just as the labor produced by the white immigrants.²⁹¹

In fact, when the country celebrated in 1910 its one hundred year anniversary of the start of its Independence War from Spain, Gayol points out that, among the many international politicians in attendance, the U.S. ambassador was heavily taunted by the crowds in attendance at the parade while the Japanese ambassador received many cheers.²⁹² What Gayol describes clearly shows that people were not content with the Díaz policy of heavily recruiting white European or Americans simply for the capital they brought and their physical appearance. While no one denies that, for the most part, Asian immigrants, in particular the Chinese, received an onslaught of racial hatred and discrimination from both the general public and local, state, and federal officials, Joaquín Baranda, a good friend of Díaz and an *hacendado* in the state of Campeche, in a letter he wrote to the president in November of 1885, he truthfully had to admit that agriculture would develop in a noticeable way if the politics of colonization got resolved; and that Chinese immigrants were the only ones capable of adapting to our harsh tropical climate on both coast lines.²⁹³ While Baranda made it clear that he was aware that many of the Chinese that had come had many immoral vices such as heavy drinking, he insisted that since 1877, many *hacendados* in the states of Yucatán and Campeche had nothing but praises for the Chinese immigrants they had contracted to work in their large haciendas. In other words, Baranda simply

²⁹¹ Moisés González Navarro, *El Porfiriato: La Vida Social* (México D.F., México: Editorial Hermes, 1957) , p.166.

²⁹² Roberto Gayol, *Dos Problemas de Vital Importancia para México: La Colonización y el Desarrollo de la Irrigación* (México D.F, México: El Popular de Francisco Montes de Oca, 1906) , p.5.

²⁹³ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 11, Caja 28, Documento: 012550; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

wanted Díaz and his officials to proceed with caution and not to judge all Chinese immigrants in the same manner as countless examples had shown that their work ethic varied widely.

Mexico's *Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores*, Ignacio Mariscal, informed Matías Romero not to put any legal restrictions on the admission of Chinese immigrants into the country. Mariscal argued that while the Chinese immigrant had become a problem for the United States; that would not happen here because of the distinct situation. In the United States, the Chinese went to work directly competing against white Americans for the best jobs in the construction of the railroad, thus depressing the wages; much to the delight of the railroad magnates who rejoice in paying less in labor costs. Mariscal wanted Romero to understand that if the Chinese arrived in massive numbers, they would reside and work in remote regions of the country; therefore, they would not be in direct competition in either labor or commerce, with the rest of the population. Furthermore, Mariscal informed Romero, where as in the case of the United States, the Chinese had the intention of not leaving the country, in this particular case, the Chinese had shown a disposition to leave the country once they had accumulated a certain amount of money. Mariscal argued that his assessment as to what could happen in the southern region of the country with the introduction of Chinese immigrants had bases in what had already occurred in the state of Baja California Norte. What Mariscal omitted, however, whether on purpose or not, that is not clear, is that in states such as Sonora, large *hacendados*, such as Ramón Corral, had begun replacing their peon servants with Chinese immigrants citing that these new immigrants worked for a third less than Mexicans. A Guaymas newspaper, warned officials that if the Chinese immigration did not stop, the country would become a nation of dwarfs just like the people of Tibet.

Countering the racist argument made by the newspaper *El Tráfico* from Guaymas, was the field study conducted by José María Romero in 1904. Romero emphasized that officials and the general public had nothing to fear with the arrival of Chinese immigrants, emphasizing, as many had before him, that they had no intention of assimilating into the national culture, let alone marrying Mexican men or women.²⁹⁴ The author of this study also wanted to dispel the charge made by an American traveler who stated that in state of Yucatán, rich *hacendados* forced Yaqui women to have sexual relationships with Chinese men. According to this traveler, the sexual relationships served two purposes; first, they helped alleviate the strong sexual urge of the Chinese men, and secondly, they could possibly impregnate the Indian women and the result was a child which could be sold between five hundred and one thousand pesos.²⁹⁵ María Romero's report had a steep climb to convince the public that Chinese immigrants would not hurt the country, as national newspapers such as *El Tiempo*, *El País*, and *La Convención Radical*, all mounted a series of attacks, for numerous years I may add here, against the introduction of Chinese immigrants.

For one Catholic newspaper in 1907, from the state of Sonora, the people had tolerated for too long these Chinese immigrants working in the domestic shores industry, consequently, they had now displaced the women as *lavanderas*. However, what really infuriated these newspapers was that the Chinese had become *tamaleros* and *tortilleros*, forcing the women to enter into prostitution in order to survive. Not surprisingly, the *Partido Liberal* in 1906 also echoed the popular sentiment that the Chinese immigrant depressed wages and served no positive role in the

²⁹⁴ José María Romero, *Comisión de Inmigración. Dictamen del Vocal Ingeniero Encargado de Estudiar la Influencia Social y Económica de la Inmigración Asiática en México* (México D.F., México: Imprenta de A. Carranza e Hijos, 1911), p.84.

²⁹⁵ Moisés González Navarro, *El Porfiriato*, p.261.

national economy. Not only did the Chinese immigrant produced a negative effect on both the local and national economies, but perhaps even more importantly, noted *El País*, the Chinese presented a tremendous health hazard for the country. The Chinese had been accused for numerous years of being carriers of unknown diseases; this accusation had been rooted in the argument that the Chinese's lifestyle of living in very unsanitary conditions, such as 40 to 50 people in a small room, gave rise to *el mal asiático*.

The hatred expressed by the press against the Chinese went beyond just vile rhetoric; it had produced heated physical confrontations throughout the country. In Mazatlán in 1886, after the public left a bullfight, someone informed the crowd that a ship loaded with Chinese immigrants was about unload them in that port city; and so the infuriated crowd headed toward the port, but not before assaulting several Chinese men along the way. In that same year, in Mexico City, a Chinese man was almost beaten to death as rocks were thrown at him by an angry mob; his life spared only by the kindness of some folks, who accused the mob of a severe savagery. In the city of Monterrey, in 1894, a rumor circulated that the Chinese had kidnapped young children and made *chorizo* out of their bodies for human consumption. When people in Monterrey heard this terrible news, over one hundred men attacked any Chinese in sight.

While some officials insisted on bringing Chinese immigrants, others attempted to make a case for Japanese immigrants because they worked hard and did not possess the immoral qualities that had now being well established for the Chinese immigrants, whether true or not. Nonetheless, the plan to allow the admission of Japanese immigrants received some harsh criticism from the *Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores*, Ignacio Mariscal, in 1901, who pointed out that the Japanese produced half the work of the Chinese worker, demanded higher pay,

schools to be erected for their children, a physician on site, and the legal right to strike. For Mariscal, however, the greatest threat that came from the Japanese versus the Chinese immigrant was that the Japanese did have every intention of forming permanent colonies in the country. The possibility of Japanese immigrants wanting to make this their permanent home really scared government officials because the amalgamation of the Mexican with an Asian immigrant could only yield a horrendous outcome. Perhaps because of Mariscal's fears, Porfirio Díaz as early as 1890 denied a French capitalist in Paris the legal right to negotiate in Europe colonization contracts that involved Japanese workers going to haciendas in southern Mexico to work in the cultivation of tea, coffee, and silk.²⁹⁶ For the endeavor to bring Japanese into the country, P. Saltarel, a French capitalist, asked Díaz for a land grant of between 10 to 15 thousand hectares. The French capitalist even pointed out in his letter to Díaz that if the Japanese immigration yielded positive results, he would then attempt to recruit Korean immigrants. Despite having been denied in the 1890s his request to be an immigration agent for the Mexican government in France; Saltarel up until March of 1910 continued to petition Díaz for land grants to bring Asian immigrants.²⁹⁷

The private sector did not wait for the federal government to recruit Japanese immigrants, by the first decade of the twentieth century, 60 Japanese came to Tuxtla, and 600 hundred families went to work in the henequen fields of Yucatán.²⁹⁸ By 1906 it had been reported that 5,000 Japanese workers had been contracted to work on the railroad construction from Tuxpan to

²⁹⁶ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 25, Caja 32, Documento: 2000996; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

²⁹⁷ Archivo de Rafael Chousal; Caja 32, Expediente 320, Fojas 28-31; Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México D.F., México.

²⁹⁸ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City), 15 November 1900; 6 April 1902.

Manzanillo, Colima.²⁹⁹ In the state of Sinaloa, 1,000 Japanese received contracts to work in the cultivation of various vegetables and sugar cane.³⁰⁰ Even though the government tried fruitlessly to recruit European immigrants and even Asian immigrants in the late nineteenth century, the Americans arrived in such massive numbers, that it gave the general public a cause for concern. The federal government, on the other hand, having little money in its coffers, manifested a strong kindness bond, to say the least, toward potential U.S. immigrants or investors. For instance, when nine wealthy capitalists from Kansas expressed a desire to invest in Tampico, they requested further information on the concessions accorded to immigrants, such as the popular land grants. President Díaz responded to their inquiry by saying that “it would give me much pleasure to receive such distinguished gentlemen when they get to the capital.”³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 8 January 1906.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 20 January 1908.

³⁰¹ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 34, Caja 24, Documentos: 11659-11660; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

CHAPTER 5

Foreign Colonies in the Early Twentieth Century

This particular chapter continues the analysis of foreign colonies developing throughout the nineteenth century focusing on the Italian colonies that had both government and private industry support. The role of the newspaper press and how it unleashed tremendous criticism toward Díaz for his support of foreign immigrants receives attention. Nonetheless, the praises sung by some newspapers, such as *La Libertad*, which lauded the physical characteristic traits of the Italian arrivals, receive attention. Despite the warm reception given to some of the Italian immigrants, a detail description of the complaints uttered by the European immigrants which in some instances included charges of slavery, and the reaction given by government officials receives attention. The latter half of the chapter focuses on what some officials in the late nineteenth century called *La Conquista Pacífica por los Americanos*.

Under this new American capitalist threat, no longer did officials need to necessarily fear a possible filibuster movement, from a single individual, the danger for the country now arose out of the millions of dollars Americans, whether they be small or large investors, had funnel into the nation's weak economy. Americans no longer needed to contemplate illegally encroaching on Mexican land when their money had now in many ways conquered millions of acres of lands, often times the most fertile lands for agriculture endeavors, without them never needing to pick up a rifle for that soil. The masses, especially those living in rural regions, took note of this drastic economic and social change and so when the Mormon immigrants arrived, their isolationist mentality drew harsh criticism from the public; though government officials did not

like the lack of interaction between these new colonists and their neighbors. The government took comfort in the fact that these new arrivals transformed a desert like region into a productive agricultural area and in the process, their presence in Chihuahua also served as a buffer zone against possible encroachment from future squatters.

As the country entered the twentieth century and political chaos began to flare up in different regions of the country, such as the massive labor strikes in the railroad and mining industry, potential immigrants requested to know the true state of affairs. Even Mexicans living outside their home country questioned whether it was safe to return home. From New York City, a woman asked Díaz whether what Turner had published in *México Barbaro* in fact represented the state of the country. During this time period, Díaz did not lack for intellectual advice, as many *científicos* believed that they had the solution(s) to cure what ailed the nation. A case in point, in 1895, Wistano Luis Orozco, in his landmark work *Legislación y Jurisprudencia*, gave three suggestions to the government.

First, Orozco insisted that the government needed to restrict immigration to those individuals coming from the United States, and only admit those coming from Europe and Asia who had been deemed hard working, honest, healthy, strong, and civilized individuals. Moreover, he could not find any logic to the late nineteenth century policy that attempted to recruit foreigners by actually paying for their transportation, among other costs absorbed by the government. Thus, Orozco made the case that the government had it all wrong, because immigrants wanting to come should be forced to pay a tax upon entering the country; perhaps that would be the only way officials could ascertain that only immigrants who truly desire to make Mexico their home gained admission. Secondly, Orozco added that real estate sales to foreigners should be

restricted to those immigrants who had decided to make a commitment to the country by becoming naturalized citizens. Furthermore, like other social scientists of the time who subscribed to the eugenic ideals of European intellectuals, he also suggested that only the best immigrants should come so as to assure a strong homogenous society free of its weaker links, meaning Indians. Lastly, like others before him, he argued that the government had follow the wrong course of action in its attempt to address its financial strain by trying to recruit foreigners to relocate in order to establish colonies in the most remote regions of the country.

For too many years, it had been argued, the nation lacked a productive and industrious labor force. Nonetheless, Orozco felt that the country's financial duress did not lie in its population size, which many before him had pointed out as the root cause of the biggest social and economic problems afflicting the nation, but in the fact that it had failed to attract capital. So in other words, the problem lie not in the number of immigrants coming, but in the amount of money the immigrants brought with them. Orozco emphasized that when immigrants brought capital with them, that simple action, in effect, created a bond between the immigrant and his new home. The immigrant now had a vested interest in seeing that his new homeland succeeded financially, socially, and culturally.³⁰²

The Italian Experiment

³⁰² Wistano Luis Orozco, *Legislación y Jurisprudencia Sobre Terrenos Baldíos* (México D.F., México: Imprenta de El Tiempo, 1895), pp.822-24.

As a result of some government efforts to restrict immigration flow, in 1895, Mexico's population had 48,000 foreigners and that number rose to over 116,000 by 1910; nonetheless, to the government's dismay, only some 11,000 of these total immigrants dedicated their labor to agriculture. While the government needed industrious hands in basically all sectors of its economy, from day one of the birth of the nation, conservatives and liberals, and all of the other political factions in between, had emphasized that the greatest need in the economy was in the agricultural sector. When Italians began arriving in 1881, *La Libertad* expressed great pleasure in welcoming these immigrants, hoping that they would alleviate the country's crisis in agricultural development. *La Libertad* immediately pointed out to its readers the remarkable physical characteristics of these immigrants, citing that they were tall, well developed, and well educated.³⁰³ Some of the Italian women that arrived in October of 1881 had been characterized as having a good physical presence.³⁰⁴

Not long after the Italian immigrants settled into their new colonies did complaints from these settlers began to be manifested. The immigrants accused the government of only granting them six hectares and not the twenty that had been promised. Federal officials accused the Italian immigrants of abandoning their designated colonies. The Italians remarked that the few hectares that they had been given, lacked rich soil, no water for irrigation, and a harsh climate did not amount to a possible successful outcome. Consequently, many Italian immigrants decided that begging in the streets was the last option available to them; a painful decision, nonetheless, but one they felt they needed to employ in order to survive in a foreign land.

³⁰³ *La Libertad* (Mexico City), 27 October 1881.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 22 and 23 October 1881.

Moreover, the Italian immigrants, in statements given to *El Monitor Republicano*, stated that they had been badly treated by the Mexican public. This particular newspaper insisted that the federal government should have done a better job in the preparation of the land, the design of the colonies and the provision of the appropriate tools needed for the jobs that lay ahead.³⁰⁵

La Voz de Mexico, on the other hand, blamed the Italians for the failure of their colony. The Italian colonists had grown lazy, expecting the state and federal government to continue to provide them with all of their basic needs, argued some critics. Not surprisingly, then, when some of the colonists deserted the colony, government officials rounded them up and returned them to the colony so they could fulfill their contract.³⁰⁶ As a result of these government apprehensions, many Italian colonists, in statements given to Italian newspapers in Milan, said that they had been subjected to slavery. So what did the contract between the Italian immigrants and the government entail specifically? *El Diario Oficial*, wrote in February of 1882 that the government had committed itself to providing these Italian immigrants with mules, cows, chickens, pigs, an axe, a machete, and a home with some furnishings such as a bed. For two years, the government would provide a physician and a pharmacist for the colony; and for the education of the children, it would construct two schools, with all the teacher salaries to be paid by the government. In addition, the government installed a printing press within the colony so that bimonthly, the colonists could print their own newspaper. All that officials asked in return, was for the colonists to remain in their homes and to keep in good working order their government provided tools and animals, until their debt to the government had been eliminated.

³⁰⁵ *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) , 25 October 1883.

³⁰⁶ *La Voz de México* (Mexico City) , 3 February 1882.

The Italian immigrants could not abandon their colony without the prior consent of the *Ministro de Fomento*.³⁰⁷

When news of the government concessions to the Italian immigrants leaked out to the public, people grew increasingly upset at both the Italians and government officials.³⁰⁸ The Italian immigrant image took a blow when it had been reported that some of them had ended up as nothing more than criminals in the streets of Veracruz.³⁰⁹ Echoing *La Libertad*, *La Voz de Mexico* accused Italians of being dirty, lazy, and nothing more than beggars on the streets of Orizaba.³¹⁰ One particular newspaper accused *El Monitor Republicano* of not remaining loyal to the country because it published hundreds of complaints made by the Italian immigrants against both authorities and the public at large.³¹¹ Both authorities and the press knew well that not all of the over 5,000 Italian immigrants that came in the early 1880s had suffered the same disastrous faith as the deserters. Perhaps naive, the federal government wanted to remain hopeful that its investment in its officially sponsored colonies, such as the one named *Porfirio Díaz*, still had the potential to thrive within a couple of years. Another Italian colony, called *La Díez de Gutiérrez*, had begun to lose some of its colonists as they deserted to the state of Tampico and had begun to beg.³¹² *El Monitor Republicano*, surprisingly, expressed some sympathy for these Italian colonists by noting the following:

If the government has not paid its own employees in four months, do you think that it will attend to all of the needs and live up to the promises that it made to these colonists? Undoubtedly no. For the pride of México; no more colonists if the government is going to

³⁰⁷ *El Diario Oficial* (Mexico City), 23 February 1882.

³⁰⁸ *La Libertad* (Mexico City), 9 August 1882.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 9 April 1882.

³¹⁰ *La Voz de México* (Mexico City), 2 August 1883.

³¹¹ *La Libertad* (Mexico City), 29 December 1882.

³¹² *La Voz de México* (Mexico City), 22 November 1883.

bring them.³¹³

In the state of Veracruz, authorities gave the Italian vagrants on the streets eight days to find a productive activity to employ themselves in, or else faced apprehension and confinement in a government run hospice for the mentally challenge.³¹⁴ Another major newspaper of the time, *El Tiempo*, also harshly criticized the federal government for the fiasco that had been the Italian colonies. The newspaper stipulated that the government brought these imbeciles to the country's beaches with wonderful promises, only so that they could end up living out of the handouts the people gave them; the government has really outdone itself this time.³¹⁵

Clearly *El Monitor Republicano*, *El Tiempo*, among other newspapers and a large sector of the public, felt that the federal government bear the greatest responsibility for the failure of the colonies. The federal government, through its many surrogates throughout Europe and Asia, promised, in essence, a utopian dream, whether they did it maliciously or not, that it is impossible to determine based on the primary sources available, but in any case, European immigrants from many countries, though not in great numbers, did buy into the idea sold to them that an untold amount of untapped richness awaited them. To some degree, when one reads the statements in the various national newspapers and the outraged manifested by the public, one gets the sense that although some of them made no apologies for their xenophobic feelings toward the Italians, for the most part, they felt sympathetic to the plight of these poor Italian immigrants; and obviously made no reservation for their anger and disappointment in the actions taken by their government to attract immigrants and the capital they brought. The press,

³¹³ *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) , 10 June 1884.

³¹⁴ *La Voz de México* (Mexico City) , 6 February 1884.

³¹⁵ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 20 September 1884.

moreover, did not just hold federal authorities responsible for the faith of the Italians, it also vigorously went after the private sector, especially *hacendados*, who they accused of not sincerely desiring a better future for the country but only cared about enriching themselves at the cost of the poor Italians.

Another accusation rendered against the government for the failure of the Italian colonies was that it placed these colonies too near urban centers, rather than establishing them on the far northern frontier; consequently, many Italians soon realized that they could probably earned more money and better living conditions for that matter, if they went to the near by city and began to compete with domestics workers.³¹⁶ Nationals had reason to fear for their livelihoods. In 1883, *El Socialista* reported that a textile factory had plans to replace its entire workforce with Italian workers.³¹⁷ Adding insult to injury, some people did feel that the Italian immigrants had been ungrateful, because in early 1883, just as the federal government had established the official Italian colonies, near these colonies it also created three additional colonies, San Vicente de Juárez, San Rafael Zaragoza, and San Pablo Hidalgo, that were to be populated exclusively by Mexican *campesinos* with the strategy in mind that these workers would teach the Italian immigrants the art of cultivating crops under a harsh environment and rough soil. The federal government also hoped that by living and working side by side, a close relationship or rather friendship among the two groups would arise. Whether that friendship developed or not is not clear; however, what is certain is that many of the initial wave of Italians that came decided to abandoned their government designated colonies and head for the United States in search of

³¹⁶ Ibid., 13 May 1887.

³¹⁷ *El Socialista* (Mexico City) 21 June 1883.

work and a better life. Urging these Italians to leave were various Italian consulate offices, writing back to Italy and attempted to discourage future potential immigrants from coming. According to the Italian consulate office in Orizaba, Veracruz, only certain misery awaited them.

Responding to the strong allegations made by Italian officials, Mexican authorities out of frustration argued that only one out of one hundred immigrants had resulted useful for the country and the rest of the Italian pool of immigrants only showed ungratefulness, abuse, fraud, and a willingness to defame the Mexican people.³¹⁸ From that assessment made by Mexican officials, it is obvious that the government felt that it had been the true victim in the whole ordeal, blaming the Italians for using fraud and defamation in order to take advantage of what the government felt were generous concessions for the enterprise. In the state of Veracruz, the governor accused the Italians of abandoning their jobs only days after they had been hired, only to return to the streets and continue begging. The office of the *Ministro de Fomento*, insisted that although many Italians had abandoned the colonies, many of the Italian families that remained in the colonies became productive workers; thus, it unleashed a furious attack on the Italian consul office in Mexico City for misrepresenting the facts and sustaining the argument that all of the Italians living in the colonies had left—not true.

Government officials wanted to dispel the rumor that in great part the reason why the Italian colonies had failed was simply because the federal government had giving these immigrants the worst plots of land that could not possibly yield any crops for not even self sustainment, let alone for large scale agro-business. Asserting that in prior to deciding to recruit Italian immigrants, the federal government, vehemently argued that it selected the lands where the colonies would be

³¹⁸ *La Libertad* (Mexico City) , 19 July 1884.

established only after it assured itself that these lands would be productive in the endeavor. Therefore, before the Italians came, the government had scientists test the soil to evaluate its full potential. For instance in *La Colonia Manuel González*, it had been reported that the land produced two annual yields of maíz, beans, rice, tobacco, and coffee; while the land in *La Colonia Carlos Pacheco*, up to three annual yields of certain cereals was not uncommon. In addition, the government reported that the Mexican colonists living as neighbors to the Italians had begun to live off the land and pay their debts to the government for the tools and land grants provided to them. The office of the *Ministro de Fomento* also said that it had reports that some of the Italian immigrants had begun to send money back home, proving that with hard work and dedication, not only Italians, but other Europeans as well could succeed. According to *La Libertad*,

The Mexican government brought nearly 2,000 Italians, it supported them for nearly a year and half, and despite this generous assistance, they did not work. The Spaniards, on the other hand, came on their own, and within a ten year period, had accumulated enough wealth to be classified as rich.³¹⁹

What the government wanted the Italian officials to know was that plenty of evidence existed, such as the case of some Spaniards, that even without the government concessions that had been accorded, not only to the Italians, but other immigrants as well, such as the Chinese, wealth could be accumulated within a short period of time, when immigrants simply applied themselves.

The Government Responds to the Allegations

³¹⁹ Ibid., 4 September 1884.

The government pointed out that *La Colonia Carlos Pacheco* and *La Colonia Fernández Leal*, both populated with Italians showed remarkable numbers in some of their agricultural yields, such as wheat and maize.³²⁰ In an enthusiastic tone, the *Secretaría de Fomento*, mentioned that in *La Colonia Huatusco*, some of the 342 families living in that colony had in essence accumulated enough capital to be classified as rich. The government also reported, to its delight one may add here, that in the *Huatusco* colony, many examples existed that demonstrated that some of the Italian men had begun to marry Mexican women, precisely what the government had wanted for many decades. The miscegenation of the European, the supposed superior stock, with that of the general population had great potential. A popular belief among officials, maintained that excellent lands in combination with bad labor will never yield great agriculture results; on the other hand, terrible lands in the hands of those willing to work hard, bring prosperity to an entire town.³²¹ Through the 1890s, some of the Italian colonies had begun to show strong signs of prosperity and they demonstrated that success in local fairs, such as one held in Coyoacán in 1896.³²² *La Colonia Fernández Leal*, from the state of Puebla, also boasted about their great production yields in wheat production and their excellent cattle stock which had grown immensely since their arrival in 1882.

In the case of *La Colonia Manuel González*, once it achieved success, it published its own newspaper, *El Horizonte*, in which it lauded the colony's many accomplishments and advise Italians to come to this colony. So much success was achieved by this colony that in fact, many Mexicans, probably envious of the financial success of the Italian immigrants, wrote personally

³²⁰ *El Socialista* (Mexico City) , 31 October 1882; *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 15 June 1886.

³²¹ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) , 10 January 1905.

³²² *El Colono* (Mexico City) , 25 February 1896.

to President Díaz asking him to allow them to move to *La Colonia Manuel González* and to provide them with all of the concessions that had been given to the Italians. For instance, Fernando Vergara, in December of 1887, angrily wrote to Díaz that upon his arrival in the aforementioned colony, he had only been given 35 hectares, while the Italians had been given 100 hectares, while also citing that other Mexicans who had moved to the colony had also received more hectares than he had.³²³ The letter by Vergara demonstrates that certainly the Italian colony had garnered the interest of some local residents to want to move there, although the actual number of people that moved to *La Colonia Manuel González* or for that matter other Italian colonies is not disclosed in sources consulted for this work.

In the case of *La Colonia Díez Gutiérrez*, by 1904, the records show that even Austrian immigrants had moved in. By the late 1890s, nonetheless, this colony, after successful yields in bananas, oranges, and pineapples, among many other agricultural products produced, the records show that these Italian immigrants constructed their own church and court house, and they even thought about building railroad tracts that would connect them to a port in Veracruz. After 1896, however, no further record exists to determine the eventual outcome of *La Colonia Manuel González* and *La Colonia Francisco Leal*; some scholars speculate that the colonies evolved into pueblos. Out of the six Italian colonies fully sponsored by the Díaz government only the two mentioned above succeeded any degree of expectation, with the other four only managing to produce enough output to sustain itself but not in no way lucrative to enter into full agrobusiness. Despite the failure of most of the Italian colonies, throughout the 1880s and 1890s,

³²³ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 12, Caja 25, Documento: 12193; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

strong interest in immigrating to this country on the part of Italian investors did flourish. For example, in 1887, Villibaldo Sforzini, an Italian capitalist, head of the *La Sociedad Italiana para la Emigración y la Colonización*, based in Naples, notified President Díaz that if he was designated as an official immigration agent for the Porfirian government, he could assure him that at least 20,000 Italians would relocate.³²⁴

There are not many reports of private companies, such as those initiated by Americans, establishing Italian colonies in Mexico, but in the state of Michoacan, Dante Cusi, an Italian immigrant, who first arrived in Victoria, Texas, in 1884, decided to move to Apatzingán, Michoacan, because he did not like living among many blacks, in order to start a colonization endeavor. With the help of his good friend Aristeo Mercado, the state governor, Cusi established *La Hacienda de Zanja*. Cusi in essence rose to financial prominence by establishing the old labor system of debt peonage. According to newspaper reports, Cusi, with the assistance of governor Mercado, put over 300 prisoners to work in his hacienda. Contrary to the popular belief that these prisoners would be treated harshly and not paid sufficiently enough, Cusi, by all accounts paid them a salary equal to that of a free person, treated them well, and in fact boasted that many of them decided to remain on the hacienda after they had been released from prison.

El Tiempo reported that the relationship established between Cusi and his workers resembled those of the colonial period, in which the *hacendado* and his *peones* had a father and child like relationship, meaning that often times Cusi had to physically punish his “children,” not with the intention of hurting them, but to teach them a lesson, in a loving manner of course, as to how to behave themselves on the hacienda. After he slapped his undisciplined workers, like a father, he

³²⁴ Ibid., Legajo 12, Caja 14; Documento: 006830; Legajo, 13, Caja 21, Documento: 010248.

would later apologize to his children and even give them a couple of pesos to make up for his excessive physical punishment. Some of the workers on certain occasions would purposely not work so that Cusi could vent his anger on them and later pay them as his guilt got to him. Within the hacienda, Cusi provided the workers with a physician, ten days of paid vacation, various kilos of rice and meat, depending on the size of the family, a church, and even paid the priest for the services rendered, such as baptisms and marriages, and he even installed a telephone line on the hacienda.³²⁵ So by the 1890s, the federal government had come to the conclusion that when it came to recruiting potential immigrants, the private sector, with the help of the government, should take the lead in on this endeavor.

La Conquista Pacífica

Though the Italian colonies, for the most part, prove to be a huge failure for the government, during this same time period, Americans interested in moving to Mexico were beginning what some scholars called *La Conquista Pacífica*. For example, in 1881, Ernesto Madero, writing from the state of Chihuahua, informed Díaz that he had been notified by Miguel González, a man from the state of Coahuila residing in New York City, that he wanted to be an agent of immigration for the Porfirian government, alleging that he could recruit several thousand immigrants. Díaz responded to Madero's inquiry with enthusiasm, citing that he had interest in bringing immigrants to the state of Chiapas.³²⁶ In 1886, Teófilo Masac, from San Diego,

³²⁵ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City), 31 August 1893.

³²⁶ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 16, Caja 17, Documento: 3064; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

California, also informed Díaz that in conjunction with Luis Huller, he wanted to get a government concession in order to establish a colony of English immigrants in the state of Baja California.³²⁷ In 1889, Díaz received many letters expressing angry rhetoric from people as to why the federal government was willing to give too many concessions to U.S. capitalists. The letters stated that if President Díaz did not proceed with caution, then the country would suffer the same fate it did in 1848.³²⁸ President Díaz had given Luis Huller and his company over 15 million acres of land in the state of Baja California, to which *El Tiempo* sarcastically noted that the president should have given Huller the entire state, why just stop at 15 million acres.³²⁹

The public had reason to be concerned about the arrival of so many Americans; in the city of Ensenada by 1887, there were one hundred Americans for every Mexican citizen living there.³³⁰ A man of Mexican descent living in California had thought about moving to Ensenada, but once he got there and saw the predominance of Americans in the city, he sadly decided to return back to California “where it was better to be a foreigner in a foreign land, than to feel the sensation of being a foreigner in one’s own homeland.”³³¹ In the process of the massive land grants that were granted to Huller and other speculators, many domestic land owners, who legally owned their property, lost it by the unlawful practices that came out of the *Secretaría de Fomento*, headed by Carlos Pacheco at the time.³³² The federal government accused various newspapers such as *El Tiempo*, *La Voz de México*, *El Monitor Republicano*, of instigating the masses and just standing

³²⁷ Ibid., Legajo 11, Caja 28, Documentos: 13703-13707.

³²⁸ Ibid., Legajo 14, Caja 7, Documentos: 003447-003448.

³²⁹ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City), 29 November 1887.

³³⁰ Ibid., 6 December 1887.

³³¹ Ibid., 29 December 1887.

³³² Ibid., 13 January 1888.

in the way of progress for the country.³³³ Angry at the accusation made against it, *El Tiempo* asserted that what was needed in the country was a renewed sense of strong patriotism. It also stated that it had knowledge of many young students who opposed immigrants from the United States colonizing the country's northern frontier, but feared expressing their opposition because of possible government retaliation.³³⁴ *El Partido Liberal*, accused the Catholic Church of standing in the way of the progressive movement that country was going through. According to *El Partido Liberal*, the Catholic Church had made the case that the United States only desired the best for this country.³³⁵ This particular political party made a distinction as to the position of the Catholic Church hierarchy versus that of some lower clergy, who seriously despised the generous concessions the government had made to investors from the United States. For example, *El Partido Liberal* remarked that it heard Agustín de la Rosa, a priest from Guadalajara, state that, "our government signs ridiculous contracts, such as the one in Baja California and still shows tremendous kindness toward foreigners; and yet against its own people, like the Yaquis in Sonora, it wages an unjust and cruel war."³³⁶

Huller attempted to calm the fears of the local people by emphasizing that he planned to colonize Baja California with a large pool of both English and German immigrants. Luis E. Torres, the head of the government in Baja California in the late 1880s, informed Díaz that he had been in constant contact with Huller and had received many assurances about his strict

³³³ Ibid., 25 January 1888.

³³⁴ Ibid., 29 January 1888.

³³⁵ Ibid., 24 April 1888.

³³⁶ Ibid., 11 March 1888.

selective process to attract the right type of European immigrants.³³⁷ In 1889, several newspapers entered an almost year long battle with Matías Romero who they accused of selling out to the United States. Romero made no secret of his full support of the United States's Monroe Doctrine policy, because he believe that its core objective of autonomy from any European power gave Western Hemisphere nations the ability to retain the freedom they had so vigorously won some seventy years earlier. Even the *Partido Liberal*, tried to calm the fears of the public who still believed that the United States would sooner, rather than later, make an attempt at annexing the rest of the nation. The *Partido Liberal*, responded to these accusations by arguing that the best way to prevent this possible horrendous outcome was by opening the country entirely to colonization schemes and large scale investments in agriculture and mining. The logic behind *El Partido Liberal's* reasoning, as had been the case with some of the secret agents mentioned earlier sent by President Benito Juárez in the mid 1860s to attract U.S. capital to defeat the Emperor Maximilian, if the country opened itself up very liberally, to foreigners, especially Americans, then they would see for themselves that it was not in their best financial and cultural interest to want to take over its southern neighbor. Though the country may not have been inferior in culture, as *El Partido Liberal* maintained, but in essence it was different in almost every aspect of daily life. Thus immigrants from the United States upon full exposure to the culture south of the border, any serious discussion about assuming responsibility for the welfare of millions of Mexicans would lose legitimacy.

³³⁷ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 13, Caja 15, Documento: 7332; Legajo 13, Caja 12, Documento: 5985; Legajo 13, Caja 21, Documento: 1010260; Legajo 14, Caja 12, Documento: 000812; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

El Tiempo did not subscribe to the arguments made by both Matías Romero and *El Partido Liberal* calling them ridiculous; arguing that in the first place, the Monroe Doctrine, which Romero seems to have adore, no longer needed to be enforce because the threat from a European monarchy no longer existed, but that in fact, the sole purpose of the Monroe Doctrine was to prevent any possible expansion of commerce between European nations and countries in the Western Hemisphere, especially Mexico. In other words, this supposed protective policy on the part of the United States was simply about commerce and not about European monarchs threatening the sovereignty of Latin American nations, as *El Tiempo* alleged. Romero obviously did not share *El Tiempo*'s point of view that another possible Texas fiasco was imminent because any attempt by the colonies on the northern frontier to rebel against local authorities would quickly be confronted by three new upgrades within the federal government's arsenal; first a supposedly stronger military force; secondly, the new forms of transportation that had been developed with the arrival of the railroad, and lastly, through faster communication via the telegraph. These three improvements within the country's infrastructure gave Romero the confidence or rather peace of mind that any possible violent outbreak on the part of the newly established foreign colonies would in no way spread beyond the colony's boundaries. It is ironic that Romero tried to assure critics that the country did not faced a possible annexation threat from the United States because it now had a superior army and better technologies to prevent a rebellion in its northern frontier, when in fact, it had been the heavy capital investments made, mainly by U.S. investors, that had accorded Romero and his supporters that peace of mind. In fact, in a tone that added insult to injury, at least in the eyes of many Mexicans, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Herald* in many occasions thanked the Díaz government for welcoming

U.S. investors. In making reference to the *Conquista Pacífica*, *El Tiempo*, made an interesting point when it noted that although a total annexation of the country by the United States might not happen in a single instance, such in a large scale war; nonetheless, as had been vehemently argued by some politicians, the conquest was already taking place in what it called *anexiones parciales* that included the acquisition of large sections of land, the establishment of American colonies, and the constant arrival of hundreds of U.S. immigrants who had come on their own seeking economic opportunities that they had not found in the U.S., threatened the future sovereignty of the country.

The type of advantages that had been given to U.S. investors and immigrants versus other newcomers varied immensely, with people from the U.S. benefiting the most. For example, in 1881, Albert Kimsey Owen, from Chester, Pennsylvania, received a large scale government concession from the *Secretaría de Fomento*, to construct a transcontinental railroad line that would connect towns on the Mexican Gulf of California coast with Texas. The colony founded by Owen and his investors became known as the town of Topolobampo. *El Tiempo* assured its readers that Owen and the immigrants that he proposed to bring to Sonora would not find an eternal paradise in this location.³³⁸ In an accusation leveled against Romero, *El Tiempo* asserted that the colony to be developed by Owen was in clear violation of federal law because it would be situated near the coastline. To the satisfaction of the opponents of the English colony in Topolobampo, immediately after its founding, the colony suffered many setbacks. To begin with, many people opposed this colony because they felt that the federal government favored

³³⁸ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City), 3 December 1886.

colonists of Protestant faith.³³⁹ Moreover, the fact that the colony established itself in what experts deemed a very hostile environment, led the English vice-consul to criticize the colonists for their poor judgment in agreeing to accept that location to start their new lives; a government official said, “they chose the worse place along the coast to establish a colony.”³⁴⁰

Records indicate that the colony’s neighbors got along well with these English immigrants. Many children attended the schools that they built, and the widow of one of the English *hacendados* actually sent her neighbors large quantities of meat so that they could vary their daily diets with more protein. The English lived by the model “live and let live.” At their arrival, both the state governors of Sonora and Sinaloa received these immigrants, and on several occasions, the governor of Sinaloa visited the colony to assure himself that they were doing fine and not bothered by municipal authorities. President Díaz had heard that local authorities in Mazatlán, Sinaloa, extracted high penalty fees/taxes from new immigrant arrivals, treating them as though they were criminals. So Díaz in an aura of goodwill, as Argentina and Uruguay had done with their recent immigrant arrivals, sent his *Secretario de Hacienda*, to investigate any abuses and to warn the immigrants to avoid certain towns and ports so as not to pay outrageous taxes. What occurred to these English immigrants clearly demonstrates the politics at play between those politicians who wanted a strong central government dictating government policy to its states, and on the other side of the political spectrum, politicians, mostly at the state and municipal level, who wanted the government in Mexico City to back off their local politics and let them decide how to best govern for themselves, including letting them decide immigration

³³⁹ Ibid., 26 February 1887.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 22 September 1887.

policies to suit their particular needs. Caught in the middle of this political bickering were the immigrants who did not know who was truly in charge and who could assist them in their endeavor.

Some scholars speculate that it is possible that these immigrants did not suffer the onslaught of racial hatred on the part of the general public, as the Chinese and other racial groups had, because they did not succeed, at least in any meaningful way so as to arouse a sense of envy among their neighbors.³⁴¹ Though the Díaz government provided this English colony with many concessions, because of internal conflict the colony eventually failed. When the colony originated, Owen wanted the colony to be in essence a semi-communist experiment, where each of the colonists looked after each other. When Christian B. Hoffman, arrived in Topolobampo with over 160 colonists from Kansas in December of 1890 and the following year another 195 colonists joined Hoffman, they insisted on exploiting the natural resources, working on railroad construction, having the right to private property, and did not care for building an ideal communist society. Unfortunately for Owen, after 1891, many of the colonists abandoned his enterprise and joined Hoffman. *El Tiempo* made a reference in the summer of 1896 that by then only ten colonists remained in Topolobampo.³⁴² *La Convención Radical*, lamented the failure of Owen's colony because it had been boasted that Topolobampo would become the gateway for commerce with Asia.³⁴³

The Mormon Colonies in Mexico

³⁴¹ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 13, Caja 4, Documentos: 001746-001758, Documento: 001759; Francisco Xavier Clavigero, *Acervos Históricos*, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

³⁴² *El Tiempo* (Mexico City), 14 July 1896.

³⁴³ *La Convención Radical* (Mexico City), 6 February 1887.

As opposed to the Protestant colony in Topolobampo, better results accompanied the Mormon colonies that came to fruition in the 1880s in the states of Sonora and Chihuahua. When rumors circulated that hundreds to Mormons were coming, many politicians, such as the *Secretario de Guerra*, Pedro Hinojosa, immediately opposed their arrival, citing that their customs and tendency for isolation did not make them the ideal colonists.³⁴⁴ When in 1885 Luis E. Torres wrote to Díaz from Hermosillo to inform him about the arrival of Mormons to Sonora, the president responded by saying that would truly benefit the nation because they were hardworking people.³⁴⁵ The President added that the Mormons were not only hard workers but just as important they were tranquil people who did not bother anyone.³⁴⁶ The Mormon colonies immediately flourished and thousands of immigrants, including many Mexicans, went to live in the many colonies that developed quickly. For instance, the *Secretaría de Fomento*, in charge of keeping track of immigration arrivals, noted that in 1887, only 575 Mormons resided in *La Colonia Juárez*, the first Mormon colony; but by 1907, with over 11 Mormon colonies already established, more than 4,200 people called these colonies home. In large part the success of the Mormon colonies was do to their irrigation techniques that succeeded in turning desert like lands into rich and productive lands that yielded many crops.³⁴⁷ Toward the end of the Porfiriato, as

³⁴⁴ *La Voz de México* (Mexico City) , 4 July and 6 October 1883.

³⁴⁵ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 10, Caja 8, Documento: 3997; Legajo 10, Caja 26, Documento: 12836; Legajo 10, Caja 26, Documentos: 2911-2912; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Legajo 10, Caja 8, Documentos: 8597 and 8572; Legajo 10, Caja 26, Documento: 12879.

³⁴⁷ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) , 29 May 1896.

the best choice lands had been taken, many Mormon immigrants who could no longer find great lands in the northern frontier went to the state of Hidalgo, in order to pursuit their fortune.³⁴⁸

In spite of the success attained by many of the Mormon colonies, most of the sources consulted for this work, point out that the vast majority of officials and the public in general, did not feel comfortable having Mormons as neighbors. Various newspapers reported that the people, generally speaking, cordially received the U.S. immigrants, even going as far as to trying to interact with them and sending their children to their schools, as previously mentioned. An excellent assessment was made by governor Carrillo, from the state of Chihuahua, who stated that the relationships that had been established between the Mormons and the Mexicans, although they might have appeared to be sincere in their friendship with one another, underneath those relationships, the Mexican public resented their presence. Governor Carrillo could not specifically pin point the source of that hatred, but he supposes that the fact their faith was deemed a sect or simply out of pure racial hatred toward anything American inevitably played a huge role in the way Mexicans felt deeply about these Mormon immigrants. The governor characterized the interactions between the Mormons and the people of Chihuahua as relationships built out of simple courtesy and even deemed them as no different from everyday merchant transactions that inevitably involve some degree of interaction between the two or more parties involved. Taking into consideration what Governor Carrillo stated, as well as the opinions expressed by the press, the question still remains as to why the Mexican public would bottle up their anger against not only Mormons but other immigrants as well, and yet continue for many decades to publically embrace many new immigrant arrivals, attend their fiestas,

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 13 July 1906.

schools, and even marrying some of them, mostly women with the immigrant men. Can Governor Carrillo be wrong when he simply reduced the public showings of affection by his constituents toward the Mormons as “*relaciones de cortesía?*”

If one is to believe Carrillo’s argument, then one is left with no other explanation than to call the Chihuahuenses that received the Mormons as nothing more than hypocrites; but even digging deeper, and possibly just applying some common sense to what occurred in the country in the late nineteenth century, it might have been that people simply strategize their relationships with foreigners out of pure social and economic convenience and had nothing do with the immigrants racial or religious background. Many reports from the time period assert that when *jornaleros* and even Indians went to work for the Mormons in their large scale agricultural lots, they received higher wages for their labor than when they previously worked for *hacendados*. An excellent example as to the advantages for nationals to work for foreign companies owning millions of acres was a colony that developed in 1883 in Santa Agueda, Baja California. With the financial backing from Paris, the company bought over 40,000 acres and employed 646 domestic workers and 91 foreigners in the mining industry. By 1894, the company had grown the colony to over 4,600 inhabitants and by 1896, with the population reaching nearly 9,000, the colony split into four pueblos. The company built the homes for the workers, a hospital, and five schools for the children of the workers. In need of many workers, as early as 1886, the director of the colony asked Díaz to please send him hundreds of Indians so that they might be put to work in the copper mines, with an emphasis made that the Indians would be paid a wage. President Díaz was invited in 1900 to visit the colony, which eventually became the port of Santa Rosalía, Baja California, but instead sent his *Secretario de Fomento*, who remarked at the

prosperity of the region because of the doubling in the price of copper by that time.³⁴⁹ The popularity of this colony even attracted ninety Spaniards, that on their arrival in May of 1884, it was remarked that they were received with so much enthusiasm, impossible to describe with simple words said *El Tiempo*, that even the local town musicians played at the train station so as to welcome them in a fitting manner.³⁵⁰

Moreover, one can even argue that the masses that at times physically attacked foreign immigrants, regardless of their race, or harshly criticized their presence in the country through a very willing press, that in essence the attacks on these peoples were not personal per se. Rather, the immigrants served as the safety valve for the government in which the masses in the countryside could vent out their dire economic anguish against the authorities without ever daring to raise a rifle or machete against Díaz. Had there been a growing middle class in the late nineteenth century, the arrival of new immigrants, despite the many government concessions accorded to them; the general public, possibly, might have not grown envious of the success attained by the foreigners. It has to be mentioned that when people saw that some of the immigrants that arrived were willing to invest some of their money in order to make the excursion work, that action in it of itself, showed the masses the willingness these individuals had in making Mexico a better place not only for them but also for the rest of the people.

Therefore, when Russian immigrants arrived in the first decade of the twentieth century to the state of Baja California and they brought with them their own modern agricultural machinery and animals, both the government and the public rejoice as these immigrants prosper. Although

³⁴⁹ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 11, Caja 26, Documento: 01278; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

³⁵⁰ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 10 July 1884.

after the mid 1880s the Díaz administration had officially decided to no longer be directly involved in trying to attract large scale colonization schemes, at the state level, plenty examples exist that demonstrate that the government still played a leading role in bringing immigrants to their state. For instance, when Erneste Beebe and Hermann Freund in 1904 tried to bring European immigrants to Chihuahua, Governor Enrique Creel, gave the two investors a loan of 150,000 pesos to be paid over a twenty five year period.³⁵¹

Not all governors received their immigrants in the same manner as Creel; in the state of Chiapas, Governor Ramón Rabasa, took away a land grant that had been given to several hundred Guatemalan immigrants in 1900 and condoned the abuses unleashed by the colony's head agent. The colony's agent, protected by Governor Rabasa, even threatened to enlist the Guatemalan men in the Mexican army if they did not obey his orders.³⁵² What is interesting about this case is that it raises the question as to whether authorities, at all levels, mistreated people of darker skin color at a higher rate than lighter skin immigrants, such as the Europeans. The few Turkish immigrants that did come suffered an onslaught of criticism from the press. *El Tiempo* called the Turkish immigrants disgusting individuals, and emphasized that they were only good at begging for money.³⁵³ *El Imparcial* expressed that their presence was not appropriate for the country.³⁵⁴ The U.S. embassy asked the government not admit any Turkish immigrants, because they mostly arrived on the coastline severely disease infected and they quickly set eyes on entering the U.S. illegally.³⁵⁵

³⁵¹ *El País* (Mexico City) , 6 October 1905; *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) , 11 February 1905.

³⁵² Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 34, Caja 1, Documentos: 222; 000387; 000393; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

³⁵³ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 3 September 1889.

³⁵⁴ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) , 9 December 1905.

³⁵⁵ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 2 February 1907.

CHAPTER 6

The End of the Porfiriato and the Rise of Strict Immigration Policies

This chapter concludes the era of Porfirian politics, but not before analyzing the eruption of the labor strikes of the early 1900s, which indeed drew tremendous consternation from the public because in many instances, the federal government sided with the foreign capitalists, most of the times American investors. Thus, underneath those labor strikes and physical confrontations, which left many people dead, a strong sense of racial hostilities on the part of the mine workers toward their American coworkers seemed to have underlined the root cause of the protests. Following the discussion of the labor unrest and racial hostilities, the analysis shifts to the never ending saga of the Indian question.

Since the country won its independence in 1821, the first politicians questioned the loyalty of the Indian population. With the arrival of the twentieth century, the question as to what to do, if anything, with the Indians who still, in many instances, had no desire to assimilate to the more modern and progressive nation that had been crafted under the Díaz regime. As a direct consequence of the intellectual community having to grapple with the Indian question, a renewed discussion as to the issue of miscegenation, and the role of the mestizo in the nation's history and its placement on the social hierarchy in a country that was about to celebrate its one hundredth anniversary of independence from Spain. This dilemma gave rise to heated debates, some politicians still insisted on the idea that bringing European immigrants so that miscegenation with Mexicans could take place would allow the nation to finally enter the world stage as a true modern nation. On the other hand, a growing consensus among the public in general and a new

breed of young politicians had been calling for a conservative approach to the nation's immigrations policies advocating for severe restrictions as to who was granted admission into the country. Moreover, this new conservative movement in calling for the nationalization of the country's most valuable natural resources, at the same time, these individuals espoused a growing nationalist sentiment that had at its core a renewed sense of pride in the Indian attributing to him many virtues and qualities that rendered him not only a special place in the country's history but just as important, the intellectual capability to contribute in many ways to the birth of the modern Mexico.

The Hostility Torward the Chinese Immigrants

While many immigrant groups that came in the late nineteenth century, when their colonization scheme failed, in most cases, they often blamed the government for not assisting them in their economic hardship or simply their plight for food just to stay alive. The government, obviously, took issue with the accusation that it did not do enough to help those immigrants whose colonies had failed or had simply been abandoned by the colonization company responsible for their introduction into the country in the first place. For example, in 1886, in the port city of Mazatlán, Sinaloa, a group of human traffickers abandoned 150 Chinese immigrants, after they had been denied entry into San Francisco, California. The local population felt compelled to help those immigrants when they saw so much misery and pain.³⁵⁶ As a result of the misery the Chinese immigrants had suffered, authorities in Mazatlán provided

³⁵⁶ *El Socialista* (Mexico City) , 31 December 1896.

them with housing and a daily stipend of 12 *centavos*, as they awaited news from the Chinese consul office in San Francisco, California, as to whether or not they would be allowed to enter the U.S. Moreover, when many of the immigrants described their horrible experience, they tend to note that they were mistreated, abuse, held in bondage, and not paid the previously agreed amount, among many other charges. Interestingly enough, these immigrants do not often differentiate between the colonization company authorities and those from state and federal authorities. A case in point, in 1904, several hundred Chinese immigrants in the state of Yucatán, made an allegation that they had been branded as though they were no different from cattle upon entering that state.³⁵⁷

For the researcher it is difficult to assign blame as to who was the guilty party of branding these poor Chinese immigrants since neither the victims, who actually showed people their scars, nor the newspapers, stated who actually committed such barbarity. Therefore, many newspapers reported that the accusations leveled at the Mexican government had no merit. The true culprits of the Chinese immigrants' misery, was the colonization company that brought them to Yucatán. The Chinese immigrants were always fed rotten fish and a little bit of rice; and their living arrangement was horrendous, no less than 300 of them lived in a two bedroom house.³⁵⁸ Five years later, the Chinese in Tehautepec were starving to the degree that they would steal chickens and eat them alive, according to a report.³⁵⁹ As with many other immigrant groups that began their stay in Mexico working in the agricultural sector of the economy, the Chinese also quickly shifted their efforts from the cotton fields of Coahuila to other sectors of the economy

³⁵⁷ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) , 25 September 1904; *El País* (Mexico City) , 6 November 1904.

³⁵⁸ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 1 July 1886.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4 December 1891.

such as, domestic service, which included washing and ironing clothes for a fee, and as small merchants.

The governor of Yucatán, called the impressive growth of the Chinese immigrant in his state a “yellow threat.”³⁶⁰ Furthermore, as with many other immigrants that came with the sole intention using the country’s proximity to the U.S. as a means to enter that country illegally, *El País* echoed a popular sentiment of the time that argued that these immigrants were only looking for a chance to leave the country and enter the United States illegally.³⁶¹ Even as late as 1931, many conservative organizations, pleaded with government officials to stop the influx of Chinese immigration. Diputado Miguel A. Salazar, president of *Comite Director de la Compañia Nacional Antichina*, wrote on October 24, 1931, to the *Secretario de Gobernación*, Don Manuel C. Tellez, requesting to know from federal officials the real number of Chinese in the country as his organization had a plan of action that attempted to curtail further Chinese immigration.³⁶²

Another allegation against the Chinese colonists was that they were so sinister that they would actually marry Mexican women, just to facilitate their legal entry into the United States.³⁶³ The so-called “*peligro amarillo*” never actually materialized in terms of the numbers of the actual Chinese that came. In similar fashion as other potential immigrants that were supposed to arrive in large numbers, in September of 1890, 80,000 Chinese had been contracted to come and help build the Tehuantepec railroad line but only 500 made their way.³⁶⁴ A Chinese man, living in Mérida, Yucatán, who had attained Mexican citizenship promised to bring 200,000 Chinese

³⁶⁰ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) , 1 June 1907; 15 July 1907.

³⁶¹ *El País* (Mexico City) , 3 August 1907.

³⁶² Archivo General de la Nación; Dirección General Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales, 1920-1953; Caja 311, Expediente 12, Foja 132, 24 de Octubre 1931; México D.F., México.

³⁶³ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 14 August 1896.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 7 December 1890.

immigrants.³⁶⁵ The Pacific Charter company had mentioned that it hoped to bring one million Chinese workers to help in the railroad sector of the economy.³⁶⁶

Also aiding in the railroad construction boom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the arrival of Japanese immigrants. For example, in the spring of 1907, over 800 Japanese workers arrived in the port city of Manzanillo in order to work in the railroad industry, especially in those lines that brought the Gulf of California in connection with Guadalajara.³⁶⁷ Among the 800 Japanese that came in 1907, some of them actually made their way from Peru and settled in Mazatlán to work as mechanics.³⁶⁸ As these Japanese workers competed directly with national workers for railroad jobs, *El Imparcial* reported many instances of physical confrontations between the two competing parties that resulted in serious injuries.³⁶⁹ A Japanese representative in Mexico stated that at its peak, 6,000 Japanese immigrants had come but that by 1907 only 3,000 remained in the country.³⁷⁰ The decrease in the arrival of Japanese immigrants was attributed to the fact that the Japanese government prohibited its citizens from going to Mexico, and as some officials angrily manifested at the time, Mexico, by the end of the Porfiriato had suffered a setback in its world stage image as a result of the work done by John Kenneth Turner in *Barbarous Mexico*.³⁷¹

In 1908, Bernardo Mallén, lamented the fact that more Japanese had not come, because while troublemakers, transients, thieves, and drunks dominated the national landscape, especially

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 26 June 1894.

³⁶⁶ *El País* (Mexico City), 4 February 1901.

³⁶⁷ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City), 11 February 1907.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 22 November 1907.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 6 August 1907.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 6 July 1907.

³⁷¹ Ibid., 6 July 1907.

in the interior, the crops on the country's fruitful coastal lands rotted as the region lacked productive workers. Mallén added that the country's 15 million inhabitants did not have the will power to even produce their own maize consumption. He argued that the country had reached a critical juncture in its path to progress and it had to choose; stating that,

Just like in the laws of nature, the superior people dominate the inferior ones, and the strong rule over the weak; Mexico needs to choose if it prefers to be on top or on the bottom, between civilization and certain death. Countries are poor and weak when its children are indolent, but rich when its children decide to be hard workers.³⁷²

While Mallén's work did not shed new light on the social and economic problems facing the country; many other social scientists had echoed Mallén's sentiment many decades earlier, but what is surprising about his remarks is that they came toward the end of the Porfiriato, highlighting many of the challenges the Díaz regime had failed to take on and prevail. For instance, by end of the first decade of the twentieth century, deciding to live and work in Mexico equated to a certain death sentence for many potential immigrants, a sentiment that had long cast a shadow over the Aztec nation.

Though slavery had been abolished since 1829, in 1905, after the arrival of several hundred Korean immigrants destined to work in haciendas in Yucatán, many of them quickly complained of the harsh treatment they received and that they endured a faith similar to that of slaves.³⁷³ Even some of the 500 Italian immigrants that arrived in Córdoba, Veracruz, in 1900, to work in the hacienda Motzorongo, in the cultivation of coffee and sugar, made similar allegations as the Koreans. The Italians alleged that when they attempted to leave their job because of the low pay

³⁷² Bernardo Mallén, *¿En Donde Está Nuestra Riqueza?* (México D.F., México: Unknown Publisher, 1908), pp.177-79.

³⁷³ Wayne Patterson, *Korean Immigration to the Yucatán at the Turn of the Century*, 1983, pp.14-34.

or harsh treatment, they were apprehended and forced to continue working or else face jail time. It is critical to mention that this particular group of Italian immigrants, in expressing their discontent with their experience in Mexico, made it explicitly clear that at fault for their misery was the contractor that brought them to Veracruz and not necessarily the federal government *per se*. Some of the Italian workers that managed to escape their inferno in Veracruz and made their way to Mexico City said that when they departed from Italy, they had been misled about where they would be taken because the contractor had told them that they would be going to work in France. *El Imparcial* stated that many of the Italians pointed out that they had no idea that Mexico even existed.³⁷⁴ Nonetheless, thanks to the generosity offered by the people in Córdoba, the Italian immigrants did not starve; and this is a fact that the Italian workers acknowledged in their official complaint given to the Italian consul in Mexico.

Racial Tensions Amid Labor Strikes

It seems though, that regardless whether the government had anything to do with the abuses suffered by immigrant workers at the hands of the contractors or *hacendados* who brought them, Mexico, including its residents, usually, received the full blame for the misfortune of the immigrants; quite possibly the main reason the country struggled to attract any European immigrants. A lot of the criticism received by the government, however, was warranted. For example, on the one hand the Díaz administration wanted to appear before the people as though it did not favor foreigners over his own people when it came to concessions granted or in the

³⁷⁴ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City), 22 June 1900.

protection of foreign workers at the different railroad construction sites, mines, or haciendas versus the assistance received by national workers. Yet, by the first years of the twentieth century, when many labor strikes arose throughout the country, but especially at mining sites, Díaz and the state governors who subscribed to his way of ruling, in an obvious effort to appease the mine owners, most often U.S. or British investors, and add a sense of security, the government sided with the foreigners and allowed these wealthy investors to continue to abuse domestic workers. When in 1885 a labor strike exploded on the northern frontier Díaz ordered governor Ramón Corral to put down that strike and to protect “*dentro de la ley*” the mining company’s interests. According to reports, workers at The Trinidad Mining Company were pay in currency that they could only spend within store, which was owned by the company, located in the colony. Instead of the government advocating or rather demanding that foreign companies pay the workers equal pay to that of their foreign workers, it seems that the Díaz government caved in to the economic pressure exerted by the investors.

Then in 1906, in the infamous case involving U.S. capitalist William C. Greene, in Cananea, Sonora, the workers complained that they only earned three dollars versus five dollars received by their American colleagues for the same work. When matters could not be resolve peacefully, Governor Rafael Izabal, accompanied by several armed American men, arrived at the mine in an attempt to justify why the U.S. workers deserved to earn more. The local official press sided with Governor Izabal that the difference in salary pay had justification in the fact that the U.S. worker was more “*productivo*” than the Mexican worker. The Catholic press and the labor party indeed disagreed with Izabal and Díaz, and that disagreement led to violent confrontations that ended with many national workers injured or dead at the hands of authorities and armed

American men. Immediately after the Cananea tragedy, Díaz received a letter lamenting the fact that he condoned and did not punished Izabal or Greene for their involvement in the labor strike.³⁷⁵ The U.S. ambassador to Mexico informed Díaz that he believed that the various labor strikes happening across the country signaled that a revolution against his government would occur soon. According to the ambassador, the Mexican mine workers had the support from international labor unions such as the Western Federation of Miners, and that even some American miners working in Cananea sympathized with their colleagues but remained silent out of fear.³⁷⁶

President Díaz could not shake off his image as a staunch foreign investor supporter when, for instance, in August of 1886, Milton Green, an American, leading a group of Presbyterians who desired to build a church in the state of Tabasco, complained to Díaz that the governor and Colonel Eusebio Castillo refused to let him and his followers construct their proposed church. The president wrote back to the governor of Tabasco and angrily said that, “the complaints by the Presbyterians are legitimate.”³⁷⁷ The response given by Díaz to the governor left no doubt in the minds of the Catholic faithful, that not only did Díaz defend foreign investors but their religion as well, while sacrificing his own peoples’ religious beliefs, he had gone too far this time. The actions taken by Díaz, not only in this case in Tabasco but in many other similar instances, no longer had anything to do with money, but it now had become a cultural war in which the president had chosen to side with Mormon, Protestant and Presbyterian immigrants who had come to not only practice their faiths as they saw fit, but to engage in commerce as

³⁷⁵ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 31, Caja 19, Documento: 7418; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., Legajo 31, Caja 19, Documento: 7222.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., Legajo 10, Caja 16, Documentos: 7742, 7861, 9271-9273.

well. These pro-American decisions enacted by Díaz inevitably caused great resentment and anger within the Catholic hierarchy not to mention among the country's Catholics.

Obviously Díaz and his *científico* supporters did not see their support for these Christian denominations as unleashing a cultural war on the public; to the contrary, they had strong hopes that by allowing these religious groups to establish colonies in the country, perhaps, the masses, which had won an infamous characterization as being lazy, would begin to emulate the blueprint set forth by the American religious colonies beginning to spread across the country's northern frontier. Based on what had occurred in the state of Tabasco in 1886, many of the president's critics began to cry that it was the duty of the government to attend to the needs, in the first place, of the country's citizens.³⁷⁸ In a popular analogy, it was stated that, the poor Mexicans are like a child whose father denies him food, while at the same dinner table, he sits and feeds the foreigners at the table.³⁷⁹ Echoing what *El Tiempo* had argued, only nine years later, *El Monitor Republicano* added that officials needed to stay out of the business of trying to attract immigrants emphasizing that the private sector should take on that responsibility. Furthermore, the newspaper grew immensely critical of the government's insistence that the booming railroad industry would bring the desired European immigrants as the number of immigrants that did come did not correlate with the amount of capital the country had invested in trying to attract these foreigners in the first place.³⁸⁰

Critics of the Díaz's policy had begun to subscribe to the idea that it was best for the private sector to lead in the search for immigrants with the federal government only playing a secondary

³⁷⁸ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 27 March 1887.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 12 July 1887.

³⁸⁰ *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) , 11 April 1896.

role, as had been the case in Argentina. *Los jóvenes intelectuales* had gone as far as to accuse Díaz of an extreme fetishism for anything foreign.³⁸¹ By the numbers, the colonization projects of Díaz did not produced the results he desired. It is estimated that by 1900, according to the *Secretaría de Fomento*, only 7,962 colonists had established themselves in some 32 colonies in the entire country.³⁸² Nonetheless, despite the growing chorus that the *colonización oficial* had been a tremendous failure, intellectuals such as José Covarrubias, and Justo Sierra much earlier, still pinned their hopes for the arrival of massive numbers of European immigrants by arguing that Díaz had no choice but to lead in this critical endeavor.

Justo Sierra, known as “*el niño bueno*” of the Porfiriato, emphasized that though the public and government might feel resentment and envy at the foreigners living in the country, it had no choice but to recognize that it now had lasting bonds with foreigners that in essence forced the nation to be a subordinate to these heavy investors. In similar tone as Sierra, writer Toribio Esquivel Obregón, as late as 1918, remarked that, Mexico needs foreigners and their capital so that they can assist us in promoting the development of the richness the country has to offer.³⁸³ Arguing against Esquivel Obregón and Sierra, Francisco Bulnes maintained that he could prove that investors had actually lost money rather than accumulated large amounts of profits as many critics of foreigners had sustained for many years.³⁸⁴ Regardless of which political faction was

³⁸¹ Luis González, “El Liberalismo Triunfante,” in *Historia General de México: Versión 2000* (México D.F., México: El Colegio de México, 2007) , p.689.

³⁸² Jane-Dale Loyd, “Las Colonias Mormonas Porfiristas de Chihuahua: ¿Un Proyecto de Vida Comunitaria Alterna? in *Xenofobia y Xenofilia en la Historia de México Siglos XIX y XX* coordinación Delia Salazar Anaya (México D.F., México: Instituto Nacional de Migración, 2006) , p.208.

³⁸³ Toribio Esquivel Obregón, *La Influencia de España y Estados Unidos sobre México* (Madrid, España: Impresora Calleja, 1918) , p.350.

³⁸⁴ Francisco Bulnes, *El Verdadero Díaz y la Revolución* (México D.F., México: Eusebio Gomez de la Puente, 1920) , p.163.

right with respect to the degree of success the country had attained thus far and how it owed that to foreign investors and immigrants, foreigners, for the most part, especially the wealthy, adored Díaz. On the eve of the 1910 presidential election, as a sign of tribute, respect, and admiration, many bankers and industrialists, compiled a book paying homage to Díaz and his stellar political and military career.³⁸⁵ U.S. immigrants and investors had been so pleased with Díaz's policies that some of the immigrants from the U.S. living in Mexico City actually asked the president if he would grant them the privilege of being their *compadre*.³⁸⁶

In February, 1911, Díaz received a letter from an anonymous source, who stated that he had recently visited Mexico not because of the great capitalistic opportunities available to foreigners, as he had been personally informed by many investors of the richness of the Aztec nation; but because he simply admired him and as an impartial visitor wanted to observe for himself the marvels so highly spoken of Mexico among many circles in Europe. The writer added that the revolution that had just begun, bore out of a discontent segment of the population that did not tolerate that he ruled the country with an iron fist. Moreover, in the letter written to Diaz, the writer continues by saying that many in Mexico, especially those oligarchies in Chihuahua desire nothing more but to see him dead.³⁸⁷ President Diaz gave his critics plenty of evidence, at least from their point of view, that indeed he preferred to surround himself with foreigners and assist

³⁸⁵ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 31, Caja 19, Documentos: 7379-7380; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

³⁸⁶ William Schell, *Integral Outsiders: The American Colony in Mexico City, 1876-1911* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 2001) , p.4.

³⁸⁷ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 37, Caja 7, Documento: 3337; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

them and not his constituents in their time of need. In 1885, Diaz attended the inauguration of a Protestant temple but refused to do the same for a Catholic church.³⁸⁸

The Indian Question Revisited, Again

While the Catholic Church, since suffering a major defeat in the late 1850s, remained for the most part silent about the country's political affairs, it did criticize the Diaz government for not doing enough for the Indians, who for many decades had been accused as the main culprit for holding back the progress that politicians believed the country could attain. Some even accused the Indian of not knowing what progress meant.³⁸⁹ Liberalism, as had been conceived by the country's first politicians, had failed the Indians and that their only true supporter had been the Catholic clergy.³⁹⁰ For instance, despite the efforts made in the first Mexican Congress of 1822 that stipulated as one of its main tasks, to eliminate racial distinctions based on ethnicity, many government departments continued to distinguish between Mexican and Indian.³⁹¹ In defending the Indians, it had been pointed out that these peoples were not savages adding that if indeed the Indians were inferior to the white man, they would not demonstrate the generosity in forgiving those that steal from them and yet they turn around and continue to offer them a piece of bread; what a tremendous heart they had, said many.³⁹² *El País*, in similar fashion as *El Tiempo*, pointed out that human evolution did give rise to racial superiority, but that that same evolution

³⁸⁸ Moisés González Navarro, *El Porfiriato: La Vida Social* (México D.F., México: Editorial Hermes, 1957) , pp.471-73.

³⁸⁹ *El Colono* (Mexico City) , 10 August 1896.

³⁹⁰ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 3 June 1896.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 26 January 1891.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 8 May 1884; 12 November 1892.

came and went in phases; thus while at this particular point in history (late nineteenth century) the white race enjoyed an aura of racial superiority, that phase would soon pass and then again the Black, Asian, or Indian man would regain their status as the superior race and sit at the top of the racial hierarchy.³⁹³

The Indian had proven himself a worthy soldier, politician, student of the arts and sciences, all that needed to be eradicated from the lives of Indians in order to help them reach their full potential was alcohol.³⁹⁴ Writer Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, in an attempt to dispel the notion that the Indian lacked a work ethic, said the following about the Yaquis specifically,

In just one day, these Indians can easily double the amount of work that a white man can do. They are intelligent and are quick to learn anything that its taught to them. It is not rare to see some of these individuals operating some of the most complicated machinery with the same ability as a white man.³⁹⁵

Many resented that many Indians did not want to assimilate into the mainstream of society. Authorities had to fight the Yaquis and Mayos because these Indians did not recognize Mexico; in other words, they could not conceive of a higher authority than that of their tribal leadership.³⁹⁶ Thus, the indifference shown by these Indians, highlights a dilemma that neither conservative or liberal politicians for more than 70 years since Mexico won its independence from Spain had been unable to resolve successfully—national unity. As previously analyzed in this work, Paul Vanderwoord and Eric Van Young made the argument in their works about Mexico's inability to create a national identity with which most of the population could identify

³⁹³ *El País* (Mexico City) , 27 May 1899.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 30 May 1897.

³⁹⁵ Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, *Las Guerras con las Tribus Yaqui y Mayo del Estado de Sonora* (México D.F., México: Tipografía del Departamento de Estado Mayor, 1905) , p.23.

³⁹⁶ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 7 September 1893.

with; instead, as argued by these historians, many of the masses living in the countryside identified more with their local *patria chica*, or in the case of the Indians, their local tribe.

Interestingly enough, some politicians maintained that the greatest threat to the Indian did not necessarily come from the war that the government had waged against some of them, such as the Maya and Yaquis; but that miscegenation had now become the Indians greatest threat for sheer survival. On the eve of the Independence War in 1810, conservative estimates put the Indian population at about sixty percent of the total population, but that same percentage by 1893 had dropped to only thirty three percent. As a result of this alarming drop in the Indian population, some scholars at the time such as Andres Molina Enríquez, cautiously warned that the Indian might disappeared completely within a century.³⁹⁷ With predictions that no Indian dialect would be spoken in the country within two generations, Indian men and women beginning to dress like *gente de razon*, and some Indian tribes trying to sell their communal lands; the end, indeed, was near for the Indians. This supposed road to extinction that the Indians were on, however, did not appeared to bothered Andres Molina Enríquez, who informed Díaz that as a result of the rapid miscegenation taking place, the need for him to implement an aggressive tactic to bring immigrants would not be necessary.³⁹⁸ Some argued that the government had the obligation and patriotic duty to educate the Indians.³⁹⁹ Some supporters of the Indians remarked at the calmness with which they observed the government granting so much of the country's land in the northern frontier without them raising a rebellion in response to such disproportionate favoritism toward the foreigner.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 7 September 1893.

³⁹⁸ Andres Molina Enríquez, *Los Grandes Problemas Nacionales*, pp.270-71.

³⁹⁹ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 10 May 1890.

⁴⁰⁰ Andres Molina Enríquez, *Los Grandes Problemas Nacionales*, p.258.

According to Enríquez, the birth of the mestizo did not constitute the creation of a new race; rather the mestizo was simply a modified, with better ethnic blood, Indian.⁴⁰¹ He added, “The mestizo is the most interesting ethnic group of our country’s social make up. In them exists the unity of origin, religion, language, desire, and aspirations.”⁴⁰² By the late nineteenth century, politicians and intellectuals could no longer deny the country’s inherent Indian past; however, the political and social debate centered as to where in its young history as an independent nation should, for instance, the role of Cuauhtémoc and Hernan Cortés be placed in the hierarchy of historical importance. While both Justo Sierra and Andres Molina Enríquez agreed that the mestizo race constituted Mexico’s real ethnicity, they disagreed on which racial group played the biggest role in formulating the mestizo. Enríquez, as already mentioned, believed that the Indian was the father of the great masses, while for Sierra the European element was the decisive ingredient in the birth of the mestizo. Furthermore, as Enríquez opposed the government’s insistence on bringing European immigrants in order improve the nation’s economy and culture, Sierra supported and advocated the introduction of Europeans believing they could contribute valuable cultural traits in the formation of a new Mexican family.

At the centennial celebration of the country’s independence, according to newspaper reports, an orator repeated that, “we the Mexicans are not Indians, nor Spaniards; we come from the pueblo of Dolores and descend from Hidalgo.”⁴⁰³ The uncertainty, or rather different points of view, coming from politicians, intellectuals, and the public, as to the role of the Indian and Spaniard in the formation of the mestizo ethnic group, which by the late nineteenth century no

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² Ibid., p.306.

⁴⁰³ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) , 17 September 1910.

one doubted constituted the country's national identity; only helped retard the progress toward a national identity with which all segments of the population could adhere to. Yet, Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas, makes the case that what began in 1910 as a brutal decade long civil war, actually unleashed a longer cultural war that lasted well into the 1960s. Cuevas, who studies Afro-Mexicans and their contribution to Mexican society, argues that the revolutionary government had a systematic policy in place to try to erase any sense of blackness from the country's history. The government was convinced that in order to take the country out of the darkness and into the light, the population had to be whitened.⁴⁰⁴ Even the supposed nineteenth century Mexican liberal politicians, Cuevas points out, did not actually practice what they preached, because they had a blueprint in place that in essence eliminated the identity of the country's "*tercera raíz*," by refusing to acknowledge that aspect of the nation's history and making the assumption that *mestizaje* had washed away its African identity.⁴⁰⁵

While *El Tiempo*, as well as other newspapers, had begun to rally under the populist banner of *¡México Para los Mexicanos,!*; this populist sentiment still faced stiff opposition from government officials and some media, such as *El Universal*, which in the 1890s had vigorously opposed the call to grant *balíos* to Indians because it believed the "*regeneración*" of these savage individuals was an impossible task to accomplish. The concern was that if the Indians received the government land grants, then they would leave the haciendas, and then, who would work in them? In a sarcastic statement, it was pointed out that it was more difficult for an Indian

⁴⁰⁴ Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas, *African Mexicans and the Discourse on Modern Nation* (Dallas, Texas: University Press of America, 2004) , p.9.

⁴⁰⁵ Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas, *The Africanization of Mexico from the Sixteenth Century Onward* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010) , p.2.

to acquire an acre of land, than a foreigner acquiring four acres of *baldío* land.⁴⁰⁶ Advocating the *autocolonización*, *La Convención Radical*, emphasized that the country did not have a population crisis, as government officials had maintained for decades, but that with careful planning, the government needed to promote colonization schemes among its citizens so as to distribute the people in specific areas of the national territory where labor hands would assist the region in reaching its full economic potential. If the *autocolonización* project worked, then the country would begin the process of a strong nationalist sentiment, spearheaded by the socialist movement it called for, since some 30,000 Mexican *terratienientes* owned all of the Mexican territory, while more than ten million Mexicans had nothing.⁴⁰⁷

In many ways, the hatred and anger manifested by the public helped forged a stronger national identity. José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo astutely cited that, “the hatred toward foreigners became essential in the development of the communal conscious of the Mexicans. By hating and repudiating foreigners, we discovered ourselves as Mexicans.”⁴⁰⁸ Supporting *El Tiempo* and *La Convención Radical*, Luis Siliceo, director of *El Colono*, also followed the same line of argument calling for *¡México Para los Mexicanos!*. Siliceo argued how humane and patriotic the government’s response would be to provide generous land grants to its own citizens, including the thousands of Indians that were starving in remote and isolated areas, instead of giving them away so freely to foreigners who did not demonstrate any signs of appreciation toward Mexicans. Some supporters of this approach to the immigration issue sighted the tremendous

⁴⁰⁶ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 30 March 1897.

⁴⁰⁷ *La Convención Radical* (Mexico City) , 6 April 1887.

⁴⁰⁸ José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo, *El Movimiento Antichino en México (1871-1934): Problemas del Racismo y del Nacionalismo Durante la Revolución Mexicana* (México D.F., México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1991) , p.85.

work of Vicente Villada, the Governor of the state of México, who had worked arduously to promote the colonization of Indians to his state and the need to educate them because he saw tremendous potential in them.⁴⁰⁹

Matías Romero had made similar statements to those of Governor Villada since the early 1880s when he called for, “the great task of the Mexican government is to educate our Indians and make them productive citizens, consumers and producers, elevating their current condition; before thinking of spending more money in order to stimulate European immigration to Mexico.”⁴¹⁰ Nonetheless, critics of the *autocolonización* plan stated that this idea had no merit because of the incapacity and laziness of the Mexican worker.⁴¹¹ Many politicians, including newspaper editors, had come to the conclusion that the country’s biggest problem did not lie in the small number of people that were scattered throughout the republic; rather, the problem rested on the fact that it did not have good quality workers. With a well trained workforce, the population would be worth five times as much. The consensus was that regardless of the ethnic composition of the country’s workforce, if the *baldíos* were not properly irrigated, it would only be a dream to think that the Indians could become great colonists.⁴¹² What is striking about that argument is that it came on the eve of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, which it inevitably demonstrates that the Porfiriato’s attempt to attract the “right” immigrant had failed and that millions of people, including *los indígenas*, still clamored for a piece of the country’s land they could call their own. In that same month of February 1905, *El Imparcial* also reported that in the state of Tabasco, where government officials maintained that they had an abundant amount of

⁴⁰⁹ *El Colono* (Mexico City) , 10 April 1897.

⁴¹⁰ Matías Romero, *Mexico and the United States* (New York, 1898) , p.76.

⁴¹¹ *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) , 11 April 1896.

⁴¹² *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) , 4 February 1905.

irrigated lands ready for cultivation, they could not attract either Indians or nationals to come to work in that part of the country.⁴¹³

The lack of interest by people living in the country's central states to relocate to the northern frontier, when many government concessions had been offered to them, only helped keep alive the negative stereotype that the population was "*perezosa*," forcing both federal and state officials to resort to extreme measures in order to appeal to potential European immigrants. There is no denying that the government did attempt to colonize many of its own lands with its own citizens first; such as when José J. Rivas sent *latifundistas campechanos*, several hundred Oaxacan colonists to that part of the country.⁴¹⁴ One of the few notable successes of the government in this venture to relocate some of its citizens to regions in need of workers was when it succeeded in sending hundreds of artisans from Hermosillo to the Yaqui River. The government offered guns, seeds, money, agricultural tools and land; it was convenient to colonize with the country's own citizens.⁴¹⁵ In the state of Colima, some sixty Yaqui families were brought there by General Martínez.⁴¹⁶ In 1894, mine workers from the state of Leon, whose work had ended, were taken to the town of Ures in Sonora to work in textile factories.⁴¹⁷

Experimenting with Mexican Colonists

⁴¹³ Ibid., 13 February 1905.

⁴¹⁴ *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) , 2 March 1885.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 16 February 1888.

⁴¹⁶ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 10 September 1887.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 17 November 1894.

Beginning in 1878, just as the Porfiriato began, the *La Secretaría de Fomento*, erected five colonies that were populated by nationals. Almost immediately following their founding, accusations from both parties involved accused each other for the failure of the colonies. As in the case of many of the foreign immigrants that came, these colonists complained of bad treatment, no food, the location of the colony, which they alledged was not chosen wisely, and as a result only a couple of months after the founding of the colony, many of them returned to Mexico City.⁴¹⁸ The press that sided with the government stated that officials had gone out of their way to assist these individuals in every possible way, concluding that if this colony had failed it was because for the most part, these individuals were imbeciles not suitable for colonization purposes.⁴¹⁹ Supporters of the government's efforts also mentioned that, the government gave them plenty of land, food supplies for at least one year, medicine and all the necessary tools; but the colonists, on the other hand, did not even cut a single tree, or had begun tilling a single acre of land.⁴²⁰

Only three years after the failure of the Minatitlán colony, Manuel Sierra Méndez, an employee of *La Secretaría de Fomento*, attributed the failure, mainly, to the harsh environment of the colony's location, but still maintained that had there been that adventurer spirit, so common in the Americans that expanded westward, Minatitlán might have endured and thrive. Thus Méndez's assessment lays fault on both the government and colonists involved believing that both of them could have done a better job in their efforts to make the venture work.⁴²¹ Several government reports mentioned that many people opposed the government's efforts to

⁴¹⁸ *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) , 28 and 29 November 1878.

⁴¹⁹ *La Voz de México* (Mexico City) , 8 September 1878.

⁴²⁰ *La Libertad* (Mexico City) , 21 December 1878.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 28 January 1881.

grant some individuals financial assistance, land grants, agricultural tools, among other items, in an effort to get its own citizens to move to other regions of the country. Critics of this experiment believed that the government was favoring one group over another; in other words, choosing the winners and losers, among Mexican citizens.

For instance, in 1885, when a labor strike arose in Contreras, Morelos, the workers succeeded in getting the *Secretaría de Fomento*, to buy a large piece of land from the nearby Tlalpizalco hacienda so that they could establish their own colony. Encarnación Dimas, head of the *ayuntamiento* of the nearby town of Zumpahuacan, complained that his constituents did not sympathize with the strike workers new colony named *La Colonia Secricultora de Tlalpizalco*. In a letter Dimas wrote to Díaz, he informed the president the anger his constituents felt as they could not comprehend why the government had given these colonists many concessions, while the residents of Zumpahuacan lacked the basic essentials for survival as they only depended on their agricultural yields.⁴²² The first reports from people who visited this colony cited that it was thriving and that it showed tremendous growth potential.⁴²³ When this colony began to produced great agricultural yields, Díaz ordered that the colony's land be divided among all members of the colony so that each family might get a piece of land they could call their own, such as the 7 acres each family was to get for their own subsistence farming.⁴²⁴ This move to subdivide the colony infuriated the radical newspaper *La Convención Radical*, who saw in *La Colonia Secricultora de Tlalpizalco*, the possibility of creating a utopian socialist type of mini-society that could prove to the government that this type of society best suited the country as a whole,

⁴²² Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 11, Caja 20, Documento: 009970; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

⁴²³ *La Convención Radical* (Mexico City) , 9 January 1887; 10 April 1887; 6 May 1888.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 18 July 1887.

rather than trying to create a nation full of small scale farmers, as had been espoused by many federal officials who subscribed to the Jeffersonian ideal.⁴²⁵

When trouble occurred in the colony, the same newspaper reported that the problems had arisen because the nearby town residents accused the colonists of being Protestants and had grown envious of the achievements. Regardless of who was right, at one point during the hostilities, when Father Castañeda entered the town with several armed men in an effort to win over the colonists, one colonist ended up dead in the chaos when the people refused to listen to the priest. As a result of that incident, Díaz decided to provide rifles to the colonists so as to avert another confrontation.⁴²⁶ In a letter written to Díaz, a government official expressed that the colony had achieved so much success that, thanks to general Díaz, these people had passed from a category of slaves to that of citizens. The official insisted that it was unfortunate that this type of colonization cannot be made more extensive, because if it happened, then magnificent results would come to the country.⁴²⁷

Despite the optimism expressed by many government officials, by 1896, nearly twenty years after the colony had been founded, *La Secretaría de Fomento* reported that the colony found itself in a state of “*decadencia*.” The downfall of the colony has been attributed, among other key factors, to the fact that once the community property had been divided up among the colonists, a disparity among the colonists took hold and as a consequence, the colony no longer prospered as a whole and the sense of community unity and spirit dwindled.⁴²⁸ Insistent on his

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 12 June 1887.

⁴²⁶ *La Convención Radical* (Mexico City) , 15 November 1887; *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 10 November 1887.

⁴²⁷ *La Convención Radical* (Mexico City) , 6 May 1888.

⁴²⁸ Rosendo Rojas Coria, *Tratado de Cooperativismo Mexicano* (México D.F., México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1952) , p.240.

hope of colonizing *baldíos* with Mexicans and Indians, *La Secretaría de Fomento* in 1904, granted General Julio M. Cervantes 18,000 hectares, sold at a peso each hectare, provided that he colonize that area in Chihuahua with at least 200 families of which at least seventy percent needed to be Tarahumaras.⁴²⁹ For this colony, which was named *La Colonia Donato Guerra*, *La Secretaría de Fomento* did not provide the numbers of the actual colonists that relocated there. When the government realized that it could not get thousands of people to relocate to rural areas of the country; it tried to also repatriate thousands of Mexicans living in the United States to the northern frontier. *La Voz de México*, insisted that it was more just to offer concessions to those Mexicans in the U.S. than trying to bring Europeans.⁴³⁰ The popular sentiment at the time alluded to the cruelty of offering many opportunities to foreigners while forgetting that on the other side of the Rio Bravo, our own people are suffering conditions bordering on slavery.⁴³¹ For others it made no sense to offer generous concessions, such as those to the Chinese, while the Mexicans in Texas were repudiated and mistreated.⁴³² As the railroad construction and mining industry began to take off, an ambitious plan to bring 7,000 Mexicans from the U.S. to the state of Tamaulipas never materialized.⁴³³ Critics of the government said that authorities never planned the execution of such ambitious colonization scheme as had been the case with the European immigrants.

When more successful Mexican colonization schemes came to fruition, such as those in Tecate in 1879 and Ensenada in 1887, both in the state of Baja California, General Luis E.

⁴²⁹ *El Diario Oficial* (Mexico City) , 3 February 1904.

⁴³⁰ *La Voz de México* (Mexico City) , 9 August 1882.

⁴³¹ *El País* (Mexico City) , 5 June 1899.

⁴³² *La Convención Radical* (Mexico City) , 26 May 1901.

⁴³³ *La Libertad* (Mexico City) , 18 November 1881; *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) , 15 November 1881; *La Voz de México* (Mexico City) , 12 October 1882.

Torres, after receiving a letter from Manuel Sánchez Facio, head of the Mexican consulate office in San Francisco, California, wrote to Díaz that land in that part of Baja California should be set aside for the *autocolonización* purposes. Rumors had begun to circulate that U.S. investors now wanted to buy land near those two colonies and that possibility could inevitably lead to Mexico losing further territory to the United States.⁴³⁴ One has to keep in mind here that the concerns raised here by both General Torres and Facio to Díaz came in 1887, only forty years after Mexico had lost half of its territory to the U.S.

Attempts to Repatriate Mexicans Back to Mexico

Perhaps no other Mexican capitalist tried harder than Luis Siliceo to recruit his own people living in the U.S. to come back to their homeland and work in several of the land concessions, which totaled over one million hectares, that *La Secretaría de Fomento* had given him with the usual stipulation that over a certain period of time these lands be colonize with a certain number of colonists. Through the creation of his newspaper, *El Colono*, Siliceo promoted his colonization scheme, and that propaganda garnered the interest of many *hacendados* and the governors of Michoacán and Jalisco.⁴³⁵ By 1896, Siliceo reported that he already contracted 1,500 Mexican families that wanted to move from the state of Texas to better opportunities south of the border.⁴³⁶ He had found strong opposition from newspapers in Texas that advocated for

⁴³⁴ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 13, Caja 13, Documento: 6215; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

⁴³⁵ *El Colono* (Mexico City) , 10 December 1895.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 25 December 1896.

the families to stay citing that only misery awaited them back home.⁴³⁷ So optimistic about his repatriation efforts, Siliceo predicted that the Mexicans living in the United States would come in what he called colossal proportions.⁴³⁸ When 300 colonists arrived at their designated land grant, *La Sauteña* in the state of Tamaulipas, the local residents received these immigrants with much rejoice.⁴³⁹ When more Mexicans entered the country through Laredo, Siliceo stated that, there was ample room for more millions of Mexicans to come and become productive workers in agriculture.⁴⁴⁰ In similar fashion as the colonists that came to *La Sauteña*, the residents of the nearby colony bearing the name of *La Zacapu*, also received these colonists with much “*agrado*,” and going as far as local businesses extending credit lines to these immigrants.⁴⁴¹

I should point out here that neither did Siliceo or his newspaper *El Colono* speculated that perhaps the main reason residents near these colonies that had been erected, received the newcomers with much joy and with opened arms, layed in the fact that the racial composition of the immigrants was the same as theirs. In any case, it might be possible that *El Colono*, did not need to underscore the obvious—Mexico for Mexicans. Though the efforts exerted by Siliceo had been extrordianry, when problems arose in his two colonies, he threatened to abandoned this enterprise and dedicate himself to the colonization of the country but with Europeans.⁴⁴² Not wanting to admit defeat, *La Secretaría de Fomento*, in 1901 entered into an agreement with José María Porras Lugo to repatriate Mexicans to the *municipio* de Janos, Chihuahua, on 6, 325 hectares the federal government owned and had designated as *baldíos* for colonization purposes.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 25 April 1896.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 25 July 1896.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 15 March 1898.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 25 October 1896.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 25 March 1897.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 23 July 1898.

The actual number of colonists that did come is not known but *La Secretaría de Fomento* claimed that in 1908, 280 people resided in that colony, mostly dedicated to the cultivation of maíz, beans, wheat, various fruits and vegetables, sugar cane and had opened a small dairy production.

By 1910, after the residents had met the requirements stipulated in the *Ley Sobre Baldíos* of 1883, the Díaz government began to divide the land grant and give it each resident the title to their respective lot.⁴⁴³ The number of Mexicans that came back to the country in search of a better life never equaled the number of those that left for the United States, a fact that astonished the government because of the many reports that in the U.S. many Mexicans had suffered similar fates as African Americans—lynchings. For instance, through the first six months of 1910, over 7,000 Mexicans entered the U.S. through Ciudad Juárez.⁴⁴⁴ What surprised the Díaz administration was that most of the Mexicans leaving the country were coming from the central states of the republic, such as Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guanajuato.

Obviously the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution served as a catalyst for many of these poor campesinos to leave their home states, but several reports prior to 1910 also highlighted the fact that thousands of people were leaving their homes for the U.S.⁴⁴⁵ Quoting the Mexican consulate office in El Paso, Texas, *El País*, in an alarming tone stated that in 1908 2,562 *braceros* entered the U.S. through that port city alone and that number increased to 10,146 by 1909.⁴⁴⁶ From as early as 1887, *El Tiempo* argued that while the government preoccupied itself

⁴⁴³ Colección Porfirio Díaz; Legajo 36, Caja 11, Documentos: 005466-005467; Biblioteca Francisco Xavier Clavigero, Acervos Históricos, Universidad Iberoamericana, México D.F., México.

⁴⁴⁴ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City), 16 June 1910.

⁴⁴⁵ *El País* (Mexico City), 12 June 1907.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 22 September 1909.

in bringing European peons and paying them three times the rate than its own citizens for the same amount of work, the masses were leaving for the U.S.⁴⁴⁷ As noted above, the government could not comprehend why its own citizens were leaving their own country when so many barriers awaited them in the U.S., such as that restriction pointed out by *El Monitor Republicano* in 1894 that stipulated that in the state of Texas no Mexicans could be hired to work in the construction of railroad tracts.⁴⁴⁸ As a result of these obstacles faced by Mexicans in trying to enter the U.S., the Mexican consulate in El Paso, informed the government that many of these restrictions should be published in newspapers in the middle of the country because most of the Mexicans entering the U.S. originated from this region.⁴⁴⁹

El País added that although states such as Texas had imposed severe restrictions on labor hiring practices, people had decided to move beyond that state, such as to California and even Kansas which reported some 8,429 Mexicans by 1910, when it only had 71 in 1900.⁴⁵⁰ The newspaper asked its readers to adhere the government's advice not to go to the U.S. because the promises of better pay did not pandered out, citing that in El Paso, Texas, several labor recruiting offices promised to pay two dollars a day, but in reality they only pay half of that amount and the work was not consistent.⁴⁵¹ The Mexican workers would be accused of crimes they did not commit in order not to pay them their respective salary.⁴⁵² Some officials believed that the government could not prevent its citizens from leaving to the U.S., but insisted on the theory that

⁴⁴⁷ *El Tiempo* (Mexico City) , 9 November 1887.

⁴⁴⁸ *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) , 7 June 1894.

⁴⁴⁹ *El País* (Mexico City) , 6 February 1907.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 December 1907.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 20 October 1907.

⁴⁵² *El Imparcial* (Mexico City) , 15 August 1909.

the good workers never need to leave their country; and the lazy, stupid, and addicts, will always fail anywhere they go.⁴⁵³

While many speculated as to why these *braceros* wanted to leave their country, from as early as 1888, Francisco W. González, an ardent supporter of European immigration made the case that the government needed to immediately brake up the large haciendas and distribute those lands among the masses, and in the process, he felt that the population of the country would also increase.⁴⁵⁴ This statement by González was the result of his frustration as he saw many families from Sonora who left that state in order to work in Arizona and Texas; the main reason he had long advocated for European immigration. Agreeing with what Francisco W. González had referred to in 1888, some eighteen years later, *El País* also remarked that the old form of landownership was one of the main causes why the people were leaving as *braceros* to the U.S.⁴⁵⁵ In a harsh tone toward those officials who as late as the early 1900s still insisted in European immigration, it had been stated that, whom ever desires to invite strangers to his home, and you still have the audacity to ask yourself, why are your own people leaving his home?⁴⁵⁶ Furthermore, during this same time period, as the Porfiriato came to an end, it was argued that so many government concessions given to powerful foreign companies had only helped maintained a feudal society in the countryside in which the peons had no legal recourse to finding justice as the government preferred to side with “*los extranjeros*.”⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 10 November 1906.

⁴⁵⁴ *El Monitor Republicano* (Mexico City) , 27 October 1888.

⁴⁵⁵ *El País* (Mexico City) , 24 June 1906.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 7 March 1907.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 5 April 1907.

When the *braceros* made their way toward the United States, after having been advised that they might have been deceived in the promises made to them by the *enganchadores* as to the pay and living conditions in the U.S., these migrant workers responded by saying that the pain they suffered in their own country was real and so they were willing to take the risk by going to the U.S.⁴⁵⁸ A *bracero*, whose name was not disclosed, stated that he left for the United States because of “the lack of work and the preference for foreigners.”⁴⁵⁹ This same man also stated that they (*braceros*) were not hungry for gold or adventure, as they had been accused of; instead they hunger for basic bread, in the literal sense. These *braceros* had reached a point that they could no longer live and work under a labor system in which he argued treated them as though they were slaves.⁴⁶⁰ In trying to find a silver lining in the massive exodus the countryside was undergoing, some federal officials began to argue that as a result of these poor people leaving, many *hacendados* had been forced to pay higher wages to those peons left on the *haciendas* as the threat of them leaving for the U.S. inevitably put the large land owners in a dire situation in search of the cheapest labor possible, but while they search, their crops rotted in the fields.⁴⁶¹

In addition, by the first years of the twentieth century, reports had begun to surface at the *municipio* level, that some communities, such as that in Zamora, Michoacan, had reported some economic growth, not based on local economic development, but interestingly enough, because of the remittances sent home by former Zamoranos who had left their town for the U.S. In trying to maintain its objectivity, *El Imparcial* recognized the success that some *braceros* had achieved and so it reported that some returned with as much as 200 pesos. The *bracero* that triumphed

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 4 April 1909.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 13 April 1907.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 11 January 1908; 26 December 1908.

⁴⁶¹ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City), 27 February 1908.

was worth more than ten times as those that stayed.⁴⁶² While not advocating for the emigration of poor Mexicans to the United States, it did have to address why some rural communities with small populations had begun to prosper, if most of the town's men had left for the U.S. Surprisingly, when many people that did return from their work period in the U.S., some of them now spoke some degree of English, they dressed in American made wool shirts, cashmere pants, shoes and hats; they had also attained more technical skills, and even desire to play baseball on their spare time. Critics of these returning *braceros* accused them of arrogance, traitors, since some of them had now grown more suspicious of the federal government, national culture, and even the Catholic Church. Interestingly, in 1910 *El Imparcial* reminded its readers of a statement Matías Romero had made earlier in his political career when he had advocated for *autocolonización*, because that would equate to bringing thousands of immigrants to Mexico without any of their drawbacks and not to mention costs.⁴⁶³

While the original government proposal had been for *autocolonización*, the unintended consequence was that rather than thousands of poor campesinos deciding to relocate to the northern frontier, they instead went further north and brought with them valuable skills and some capital that allowed them to open up small factories dedicated to hat and shoe manufacturing. Some politicians, such as Francisco I. Madero, came to the realization, that emigration to the U.S. was a necessary “*viacrucis*” which both the government and some people had to go through in order to prosper. In 1908, Madero sadly lamented that, “the truth is *braceros* have a better future in the United States, than here in Mexico. This is the only country in Latin America,

⁴⁶² Ibid., 4 November 1907; 16 November 1907.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 12 November 1910.

where its nationals emigrate abroad in search of a better future that they cannot obviously achieve in their homeland.”⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶⁴ Francisco I. Madero, *La Sucesión Presidencial en 1910: El Partido Nacional Democrático* (San Pedro, Coahuila, México: Unknown Publisher, 1908), p.238.

CHAPTER 7

A New Century, Same Old Politics

The post Díaz era for both Alvaro Obregón and Plutarco Elias Calles brought intense political debates on immigration policy. Adding to the political stress that these two presidents endured, foreigners already residing in the country had been complaining of an onslaught of xenophobic politics unleashed by government officials at the local and state levels. Furthermore, the foreigners residing in the country alleged that they had also been the victims of physical violence from the public at large. Interestingly enough, these complaints came amid requests by foreigners who still saw their future taking shape in a post-revolutionary Mexico. Despite a new government era, many familiar threats remained a constant danger.

Attempts at filibustering, though not as intense as the early 1860s, continued to plague the revolutionary government, when rumors circulated that some U.S. politicians had contemplated the idea of taking over parts of northern Mexico as a sign of retaliation for unpaid debts. As a result of the possible threat of further soil being lost to the Americans and the country's biggest industries dominated by foreign interests, the 1920s gave birth to a new nationalist sentiment that bore out of a working class that did not have to go too far for their source of inspiration when in the popular culture of the time Diego Rivera, among other artisans, depicted their plight. Taking into consideration some of the citizens' discontent, the federal government heeded some of the concerns by actually drastically changing the method by which it would now recruit potential immigrants to come. Not waiting on what course of action the federal government would take,

angry citizens established *comités nacionalistas*, which served the purpose of xenophobic propaganda while also boasting a stronger nationalist sentiment.

With the ousted Porfirio Díaz out of the presidency, though the new wave of revolutionary politicians had avowed to follow a new course for the country, politically speaking, in the case of their immigration policies, which concerns this paper, it appears that this new revolutionary government did not differ much from that of Díaz. Still throughout the 1910s and 1920s Mexican intellectuals espoused the rhetoric that the country with the right type of immigrants and investors had the potential to be the richest country in all of the Americas.⁴⁶⁵ That sentiment, which was echoed by Rafael Téllez Girón, and ascribed to by many optimistic politicians; had been manifested by U.S. filibusters since the 1860s. The optimism about developing the nation's full economic potential, as manifested by the revolutionary leaders and the intellectuals of the time, had not changed since the Porfiriato. President Álvaro Obregón stated in 1920 that his country was one of the richest in the world with the best lands suited for agriculture. Nonetheless, Obregón reminded people that the country still lacked a respectable number of inhabitants, and that simple "fact" hampered the ability of the new government to prosper in a post Díaz era.

As a result of the violent and decade long Mexican Revolution, thousands of people abandoned their *ranchos* for the U.S., and as early as 1914, *El Imparcial* in a sign of desperation called for more foreign immigration even if they did not bring capital with them.⁴⁶⁶ The call to bring immigrants, even if they did not have a significant amount of capital to initiate their

⁴⁶⁵ Rafael Téllez Girón, *Estudio de Adaptación Correspondiente al Proyecto del Doctor Francisco Valenzuela Sobre la Inmigración y Colonización en México* (México D.F., México: Imprenta Victoria, 1918), p.6.

⁴⁶⁶ *El Imparcial* (Mexico City), 20 March 1914.

endeavor, demonstrates the dire situation in which the country found itself in the middle of the Mexican Revolution. Even during the Cardenas administration, the *Subsecretario de Relaciones Exteriores*, Ramón Beteta, expressed concern about the type of immigrants that should be allowed to enter the country, bearing in mind that the country needed workers. According to Beteta, “Though the country obviously needs more immigrants, we should be careful to only admit those that do not hold racist views.”⁴⁶⁷ Senator Pedro de Alba, in 1924, reminded his congressional colleagues that the country had not resolved its immigration issue, but insisted, just like Beteta, that the government needed to be careful in selecting immigrants that did not hold racial prejudice over dark skin people. As the world economy entered a crisis in the late 1920s, conservative politicians urged caution in selecting immigrants citing that only those of superior lineage should be admitted. The country’s need to “*mejorar la raza*,” had reached emergency levels, proclaimed the *Jefe de Gobierno* from the Distrito Federal in 1928.

Moreover, during this time period which gave rise to the *indigenista* movement, a growing nationalist sentiment, also gave birth to many *comités nacionalistas*, which had as their core value, to prevent any further immigration into the country. For instance, they attempted to persuade government officials to pass a law that prohibited Asian male immigrants from marrying Mexican women, along with requiring new immigrants that wanted to come to have at least 10,000 pesos as working capital for their venture in the country.⁴⁶⁸ The 1920s and early 1930s was an era in which politicians staunchly supported a series of laws that required that all labor

⁴⁶⁷ Memoria de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1939-1940; *Memoria de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Septiembre de 1939—Agosto de 1940, Presentada al Congreso de la Unión por el General e Ingeniero Eduardo Hay* (México D.F., México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1941) , p.22.

⁴⁶⁸ Memoria de la Secretaría de Gobernación; *Memoria de la Secretaría de Gobernación: 1 de Agosto de 1930 al 31 de Julio de 1932, Presentada al Congreso de la Unión por el Subsecretario Encargado del Despacho Lic. Octavio Mendoza González* (México D.F., México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1931) , pp.148-58.

forces be composed of at least 80 percent Mexicans; essentially forcing foreigners to the fringes with the hope that they would leave the country on their own.⁴⁶⁹ Luis Morones, leader of the CROM, in a speech shouted that “labor must be as Mexican as Popocatepetl or tortillas.”⁴⁷⁰ As in the past, the May 1, 1929, law that prohibited any further immigration from any part of the world, only 6 months later had to be amended as European immigrants, once again, received an exemption from the law allowing them to come.⁴⁷¹

Even as late as 1930, as president Abelardo Rodríguez raised the concern that besides the country not having a large enough population for the demands of the country, he was still very concern that the nation did not have a dominate social make up that could define the nation. Therefore, the concern raised by president Rodríguez clearly demonstrates that, at least in his view, his country had not yet achieved a solid unified national identity; whether that solidarity was based on a racial or an ethnic composite or possibly on a social make up is not clear from his statement. In any case, the simple fact that president Rodríguez wished for “*un tipo social definido*,” goes to the heart of one of this essay’s central arguments, that Mexico, despite the government’s persistent efforts through many decades to entice Europeans to come and invest their capital, and to start the process of miscegenation with the masses did not pay dividends. The population still held reservation, if not outright racist views, toward anything foreign. As a direct consequence of this reservation held by the public, the nation lacked cohesion based on several criteria. The rift in the solidarity stemmed from the fact that some government officials

⁴⁶⁹ Evelyn Hu-Dehart, “Racism and Anti-Chinese Persecution in Sonora, Mexico 1876-1932,” *Amerasia* vol.9 no.2 (1982) : p.16.

⁴⁷⁰ Carleton Beals, “Prospect in Mexico,” *The Menorah Journal* vol.20 no.1 (April-June, 1932) : p.54.

⁴⁷¹ Memoria de la Secretaría de Gobernación; *Memoria de la Secretaría de Gobernación: 1 de Agosto de 1929 al 31 de Julio de 1930, Presentada al Congreso de la Unión por el Secretario del Ramo Carlos Riva Palacio* (México D.F., México: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1930) , pp.253-54.

still clamored for European immigration, while some intellectuals, such as Andrés Molina Enríquez, advocated that citizenship should not be granted to those children born in the country whose parents were foreigners; because the majority of people were not content with the government granting citizenship to these individuals.⁴⁷²

The Revolutionary Government's Effort to Bring Foreign Immigrants

The population, post the Mexican Revolution, had reason to question the federal government's supposed new tougher stance on immigration, when in fact, during the 1920s, Obregón and Calles showed a similar disposition to that of Díaz when it came to foreign investment for the country. Adding to the similarities of the Porfiriato, both Calles and Obregón emphasized that in order to move the country into the modern era, emphasis had to be placed in not only attracting foreign capital, but more specifically, capital from the United States would help alleviate the economic crisis facing the country amid the financial crisis hitting many countries around the world in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In similar fashion as the 1860s and 1870s, which brought an era of filibustering to the northern frontier, even during the Mexican Revolution, Senator Albert B. Fall, from the state of New Mexico, asked the U.S. government to take possession of the state of Baja California in exchange for Mexico's debt to the United States. Critics of Senator Fall's plan, believed that his true motive for seeking Mexican territory was not to settle Mexico's debt to the U.S., but that instead, he along with his good friends and business partners, Charles Greene with his mining interest in the state of Sonora and the Terrazas

⁴⁷² *Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Senadores* (Mexico City) , 3 October 1933, pp.4-6.

family, planned to start a new republic in the northern frontier by taking over Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas. As far fetch as this plan sounds, even as late as 1931, Juan Andreu Almazán, the *Secretario de Comunicaciones*, while visiting the border town of Mexicali, remembers in his memoirs, with horror at the sight of seeing street signs posted in English and that distances were measured in miles. Moreover, he asserted as a fact that the large land owner, the Colorado River Land Company, in 1931, had organized its workers, including many Mexicans living on both sides of the border, to agitate authorities so as to start a filibuster movement to take over Baja California.⁴⁷³

The rumors of possible new filibuster movements and the fact that a lot of the national wealth was in the hands of foreigners, especially Americans and Spaniards, gave rise to a new wave of xenophobia, beginning with the revolutionary movement in 1910. As the new revolutionary presidents began the arduous task of land reform, not to the satisfaction of many, one may safely add here, many Mexicans retaliated their frustrations against Spaniards, which by the 1920s still possess immense haciendas. As a result of the immense disparity between those with land and those without it, the *Confederación Nacional Agraria*, which not surprisingly found a strong ally in Andrés Molina Enríquez, rallied behind the popular slogan of “*¡Más españoles, ya no!*”⁴⁷⁴ Further complaints alleged that in the state of Durango, in 1926, *agraristas* had had their homes and *potreros* burned down by the large Spanish hacendados who had the total support of the federal military.⁴⁷⁵ In a violent outbreak between peons and

⁴⁷³ Juan Andreu Almazán, *Memorias* (México D.F., México: Imprenta Victoria, 1941) , p.28.

⁴⁷⁴ Archivo General de la Nación; Ramo Obregón—Calles, Paquete 106, Legajo 6, Expediente 818/E-28; México D.F., México.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Paquete 104, Legajo 6, Expediente 818/A-59; Paquete 107, Legajo 3, Expediente 818/L-119.

Spaniards, at an hacienda near Toluca, the hacienda administrator, Napoleón Molina Enríquez, a Spaniard, was accused of prohibiting the *agraristas* from crossing certain roads.⁴⁷⁶

A Renewed Effort to Rid the Country of its Foreigners

In 1922, Ricardo and Roberto Fernández, co-authored the Plan de Linares which explicitly called for the expulsion of all Spaniards from the country until 1950.⁴⁷⁷ Among some of the specifics in this Plan de Linares, Spanish women married to Mexican men would be allowed to stay along with those older than 70 years. For those Spaniards fortunate enough to have accumulated a wealth of over 10 million pesos, before leaving the country, they would only be allowed to take out ten percent of their total capital. The *haciendas* owned by Spaniards would be passed on to its workers who would then divide the land equally. For those Spaniards that owned mines and other forms of industry; their businesses would legally be passed on to the workers, but not before these workers paid the *Secretaría de Hacienda* the taxes these new landowners now owe the federal government. Moreover, between 1923 and 1950, no Spaniard would be allowed to enter the country.⁴⁷⁸ The proposals stipulated in the Plan de Linares, leaves no doubt that the Revolutionary governments of either Álvaro Obregón or Plutarco Elias Calles had failed to address from the point of view of those supporters of the Plan, several key issues. First, too much of the country's resources and wealth still remained in the hands of foreigners; secondly, the large haciendas that had the best fertile lands and water access had not been

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., Paquete 60, Legajo 3, Expediente 707/A-37.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., Paquete I-A, Legajo 1, Expediente 104/G-19.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., Paquete 106, Legajo 5, Expediente 818/E-23.

allocated to the masses or the thousands of men and women that participated in the 1910 Revolution. Many of the revolution's participants, mostly poor peasants, had been promised a piece of land in exchange for their military service; as a result of this unfulfilled promise, the *agrarista* movement found resonance among thousands of landless Mexicans during the 1920s. Lastly, the Plan de Linares illustrates the strong racial overtones that had permeated the national political discourse at a time in history when, for instance, in the arts, Diego Rivera depicted murals highlighting the plight of the *obreros* against the tyranny of the heavy industry sector, which had a lot of foreign capital backing. Furthermore, the *agrarista* movement, the federal government's decision under Calles's administration to enforce anti-clerical laws which clearly aimed at riding foreign priests from exercising their profession in Mexico, among many other radical political and social changes, indicated the new direction the country wanted to go in the 1920s.

Making a case against the onslaught of xenophobia policies coming out of the state and local governments, Toribio Esquivel Obregón, wrote in 1918, that with the removal of Díaz and the assassination of Madero shortly thereafter, "we had returned to the stone age."⁴⁷⁹ Esquivel Obregón, like many other writers of the time, insisted that the country would not come out of its political and economic stagnation until the question of the Indian had been resolved. It was mentioned at the time that the black population in the United States were politically superior to the Mexican Indian, who had only shown indifference toward their willingness to participate in public elections.⁴⁸⁰ Esquivel Obregón thus felt that the country's woes did not lay in blaming the

⁴⁷⁹ Toribio Esquivel Obregón, *Influencia de España y Estados Unidos Sobre México* (Madrid, España: Editorial Calleja, 1918), pp.66-67.

⁴⁸⁰ Toribio Esquivel Obregón, *Influencia de España y Estados Unidos Sobre México*, p.76.

foreigners, but in looking inward as to what was wrong with the country. Supporting Esquivel Obregón's assessment only ten years later Miguel Alessio Robles stated that he personally saw Spanish men take up arms in defense of Mexico in the port of Veracruz during the U.S. Navy invasion in the middle of the Mexican Revolution.⁴⁸¹

Therefore, the story of the Mexican Revolution and the immediate years following that decade long civil war, is full of ambiguity with regards to the federal government's response to the thousands of immigrants that petitioned to come and the reaction, or lack thereof, to the hundreds of abusive cases reported by foreigners living in the country that fill the federal archives. For instance, G.W. Bartak, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court for the state of Utah, while traveling through Mexico reported many cases of abuses from locals toward U.S. citizens. In writing his formal complaint to the U.S. Senator from New Mexico, Albert B. Fall, Bartak wrote that "Leading Mexican generals proclaimed in public speeches to a large concourse of soldiers and nationals that the Americans must be driven from the country and their property divided among Mexicans."⁴⁸² Bartak added that race hatred had been created by the military forces. Another American traveler, George T. Summerlin, wrote to the Department of State on July 22, 1919, complaining of abuses he endured, as well as those suffered by other Americans. Only six days later, Salvador Diego-Fernández, head of the Department of Foreign Relations for the Mexican government responded to Summerlin's concerns by saying that, "the fact is that foreigners, through ignorance, the lack of prudence, or rash eagerness for profit, venture to

⁴⁸¹ Miguel Alessio Robles, *Las Dos Razas* (México D.F., México: Editorial Cultura, 1928) , p.68.

⁴⁸² Rio Grande Historical Collections; Albert B. Fall Family Papers; G.W. Bartak to Senator Albert B. Fall, Box 14, Folder 10, October 7, 1919; New Mexico State University Archives and Special Collections; Las Cruces, New Mexico.

remain or travel in dangerous regions, thereby incurring the risk of becoming the victims of offenses....”⁴⁸³

The response given by Salvador Diego-Fernández clearly indicates that the government desired to accomplish two very important tasks by answering to Summerlin’s complaints: first, having just gone through the Pancho Villa fiasco only three years earlier, authorities obviously desired to clean up their image before the eyes of U.S. officials as they would soon seek political recognition, as well possible financial assistance. Secondly, for purposes of recruiting potential European immigrants and investors in a post revolutionary Mexico, government officials needed to send a message to the international community that their country had reached a level of political stability and security that could accord newcomers many advantages; hence why Salvador Diego-Fernández swiftly attempted to put Summerlin’s concerns to rest. As a matter of fact, Salvador Diego-Fernández gave potential U.S. visitors a suggestion by insisting that it was his government’s “desirability that citizens of the United States concentrate in the populous places where complete guarantees may be offered to them...”⁴⁸⁴ That statement by a government official clearly indicated that instability, especially in rural and remote regions of the country still persisted, to the point that, not just Americans, but any other potential immigrant ran the risk of not only being robbed by an angry mob but even losing his or her life.

On the one hand, nationals persecuted Chinese, Spaniards, and obviously Americans, in retaliation for their atrocities committed against their compatriots living in the U.S, and cried loudly to the tune of Mexico for Mexicans. Yet, on the other hand, during this same time period,

⁴⁸³ Ibid., George T. Summerlin to the Department of State, Box 14, Folder 10, July 28, 1919.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

government officials, such as Diputado José González Rubio, apparently tone deaf to the anger manifested by large sectors of the public, in 1913 still submitted a plan in congress to colonize *baldíos* with both foreigners and nationals believing that this colonization scheme had the potential to solve some of the country's crises. In his own words, Rubio said that he hoped his plan, "would resolve simultaneously the problems of demographics and agriculture currently facing the country."⁴⁸⁵ Only six years later, president Carranza, after receiving thousands of petitions from Europeans trying to flee their war torn countries as a result of the devastation of World War I, he responded by granting these individuals *tierras baldías* that the federal government owned.⁴⁸⁶ For instance, the consulate office in San Francisco, California, reported that over 80,000 Portuguese workers wished to enter the United States but had been denied legal entry. As a result of that denial the Portuguese now had interest in coming to Mexico. Although the *Secretaría de Fomento* showed plenty of interest in these Europeans, the plan never materialized.

Writing in 1917, both Fernando González Roa and José Covarrubias emphasized that European colonization should still be a top priority for the new revolutionary government. Both of these men stressed that politicians should keep in mind that the sole purpose of allowing these immigrants to enter the country should be so that they could assist the nationals in exploiting the country's natural resources and not for the previously held nineteenth century ideal that immigrants, especially those from Europe, should be allowed to enter the country so that through miscegenation with the masses the country's population would increase with better biological

⁴⁸⁵ *Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados* (Mexico City) , 18 April 1913, pp.4-8.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 September 1919, p.30.

traits as a positive end result.⁴⁸⁷ Covarrubias in the early 1920s called for the brake up of the massive haciendas located in the country's central region because these large estates possess the best lands suited for colonization. Once the haciendas had been broken up, each immigrant should get no more than 200 hectares of land so as to avoid some of the pitfalls of the late nineteenth century in which some of the immigrants after receiving a few hundred hectares quickly accumulated large amounts of land and the government was once again at square one.⁴⁸⁸ The federal government listened to the suggestions given by intellectuals, especially from those that advocated no more foreigners. When in 1921, Antonio G. Canalizo, a Mexican capitalist, asked Obregón for a government subsidy for his plan to bring 10,000 European families, the president responded by saying that, "it was best to spend that money on Mexican people who lacked the financial means to employ themselves in agriculture."⁴⁸⁹

What further infuriated the public and government was the arrogance with which many immigrants behaved themselves. For example, in the state of Chihuahua, in 1926, hundreds of workers for the *Compañía Minera Asarco*, complained to local authorities that the head of the *Oficina de Trabajo* for the company, Harold S. Henry, had become hostile toward them because they refused to join "*corporaciones religiosas*," in this case, the Knights of Columbus.⁴⁹⁰ The workers also accused the *presidente municipal* of Santa Barbara, Chihuahua, of supporting Henry's efforts at the mining company. So no longer had foreigners simply taken the best choice lands the country had to offer, but in many instances they now had top level positions in the

⁴⁸⁷ Fernando González Roa and José Covarrubias, *El Problema Rural en México* (México D.F., México: Tipografía de la Oficina de la Secretaría de Hacienda, 1917) , p.105.

⁴⁸⁸ José Covarrubias, *La Reforma Agraria y la Revolución* (Unknown publisher, 1928) , p.246.

⁴⁸⁹ Archivo General de la Nación; Ramo Obregón—Calles, Paquete 113, Legajo 1, Expediente 823-C-2; México D.F., México.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Secretaría de Gobernación; Ramo 2.362.2, Caja 4, Expediente 3, 1926.

labor force that allowed them to force upon their workers their personal religious beliefs; thus, the Mexican workforce now felt that their cultural beliefs, if not defended vigorously, would be lost to those imposed by the new immigrants. Adding insult to injury, many foreigners boasted that they could bribe Mexican authorities to do as they please. Carlos Haegelin, a German-American and head of the *Cerveceria de Sabinas* in Gómez Palacio, Durango, publicly lauded his ability to bribe local authorities. Officials responded to Haegelin's assertions by stating that they felt sorry for this man because "his small brain has not yet fully evolved...he distinguishes himself by repudiating and insulting everything Mexican."⁴⁹¹

After the Mexican Revolution, the federal government's approach to colonization schemes had changed drastically; no longer would the government subsidize the transportation costs of potential immigrants. Moreover, instead of dealing directly with the colonization company's manager, the federal government would now negotiate directly with the incoming colonists.⁴⁹² The federal government's decision to amend the 1883 Colonization Law that stipulated the government would be responsible for paying the transportation costs for the immigrants came under fire from writers such as Gustavo Durón González who insisted that if the country was to move forward, it needed to vigorously pursue European colonists and provide for the transportation and that of their families arguing that European men that came alone had a higher probability of abandoning the country soon after their arrival. So in other words, paying for the transportation of an entire family equated to an investment that could yield an economic benefit in the long run.⁴⁹³ Not afraid to boast the racist rhetoric that had become prevalent with the

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., Ramo 2.362.2, Caja 5, Expediente 14, 14 de Septiembre 1931.

⁴⁹² Ibid., Ramo Obregón—Calles, Paquete 113, Legajo 1, Expediente 823-C-3.

⁴⁹³ Gustavo Duron González, *Problemas Migratorios de México. Apuntes para su Resolución* (México D.F., México: Talleres de la Cámara de Diputados, 1925), pp.60-63.

removal of Díaz, Durón González, still maintained that only a numerous white immigration could make any remaining visible presence of the African and Chinese immigrants disappear within a few years.⁴⁹⁴ Following Obregón's reluctance to continue a policy of assisting European immigrants in their plight to relocate to Mexico at the expense of the government, Calles also stated that any future colonization scheme should be study very thoroughly so as not to reproduce "the failures that we are all aware of."⁴⁹⁵

So after 1926, foreign immigrants had to prove that they had experience working in the agricultural industry, pass physical exams, and put a deposit of 1,000 pesos per family in the *Banco de Crédito Agrícola* so as to guarantee one year of work, just in case these immigrants decided to abandon their land and move to the city. Despite new more rigorous standards, as early as 1912, over a thousand Italian families showed interest in colonizing Baja California.⁴⁹⁶ In 1924, also in regard to Italian immigrants that had set up residence in the haciendas *La Sauteña* in the state of Tamaulipas and *La Capilla* in the state of Jalisco, Obregón insisted that state officials should give these immigrants guarantees so that they could remain at their job sites.⁴⁹⁷ In the case of the hacienda *La Sauteña*, prior to the Italians arriving there, several hundred Czechoslovakians wrote to Obregón asking him if he viewed their move to Mexico favorably. He responded by saying that, "he saw with kindness and very much welcomed their arrival, if they subjected themselves to follow the laws already in place."⁴⁹⁸ What is striking

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., p.70.

⁴⁹⁵ *Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados* (Mexico City) , 1 September 1926; Archivo General de la Nación; Ramo Obregón—Calles, Paquete 113, Legajo 2, Expediente 823-M-3; México D.F., México.

⁴⁹⁶ *El País* (Mexico City) , 7 January 1912.

⁴⁹⁷ Archivo General de la Nación; Ramo Obregón—Calles, Paquete 113, Legajo 2, Expediente 823-I-I; México D.F., México.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., Paquete 113, Legajo 1, Expediente 823; México D.F., México.

about that response by Obregón is that while he did not offer any special incentives to these possible Czechoslovakian immigrants, he showed a greater disposition to have his government assist the Italian immigrants.

There is plenty of evidence that suggest that both federal and state government while espousing a new more rigorous policy with regards to immigration, it did not practiced what it preached. When in 1906, for instance, a group of Russian colonists set up a colony near Ensenada in the state of Baja California, and as their colony prosper in comparison to the many that had been set up in that region and had failed, the Russians hired locals from the neighboring towns and although they did pay them a salary, the workers complained that the number of hours they worked did not equate to the money they earned. When the workers brought their complaint forward to local authorities, officials justified the long work shift by arguing that if the Russians did not use this method of pay, then they would not be able to compete with the big capitalists in the region.⁴⁹⁹

Another example that proves the federal government was willing to assist some immigrant groups while ignoring the plights or requests of others, was the case of German immigrants. In the 1920s, German immigrants established colonies in the northern frontier, but in the state of Sonora, the immigrants promised government officials that they would teach the locals their agricultural techniques and would commit themselves to a permanent residence in that region. President Obregón showed tremendous interest in these German immigrants believing that they could served as an excellent buffer zone against the United States and the never ending

⁴⁹⁹ Archivo Histórico del Estado de Baja California; *Memoria Administrativa del Gobierno del Distrito Norte de la Baja California, 1924-1927, 1928*; Mexicali, Baja California, México) , pp.205-6.

barbarous Yaquis.⁵⁰⁰ Furthermore, also in the 1920s, when the North American Indian tribe of the Kickapoo, which had been living in Coahuila since the early 1850s, petitioned Obregón permission to hunt deer, to which he responded with an affirmative yes and even granted them agricultural tools, valued at more than 5,000 pesos, all as a sign of gratitude by the president for the Kickapoo's military support during the Mexican Revolution.⁵⁰¹ Yet, in 1922, after Obregón had popularly become known as “*El Padre de los Indios*” among Indian tribes in the United States; when the Shawnee requested permission from the president to enter the country, he did not respond to their request.⁵⁰²

A Political Debate as to the Suitability of the Menonite Colonists

A colonization scheme that pinned the public against Obregón was his staunch support for the Canadian Mennonites colonization in the hacienda Bustillos in Chihuahua. As has already been pointed out, in the immediate years following the Revolution, officials vowed they would stop providing further financial support to any future foreign colony that wanted to set up residence in the country; the initiative would now rest on the hands of the potential colonists. Nonetheless, for some reason, Obregón felt that these particular immigrants could provide great advantages for the country; therefore, the president ordered that their transportation costs be covered along with mandating that the military provide them with all the necessary protection

⁵⁰⁰ Archivo General de la Nación; Ramo Obregón—Calles, Paquete 113, Legajo 1, Expediente 823-A-1; México D.F., México.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, Paquete 113, Legajo 2, Expediente 823-K-1.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, Paquete 113, Legajo 2, Expediente 823-P-2.

and promising them religious freedom.⁵⁰³ Though it had been rumored in 1920 that over 100,000 Mennonite immigrants would come, by 1923, only 5,000 had arrived, but they nonetheless established a successful colony in Chihuahua, appropriately called *Álvaro Obregón*, which turned a desert region into one of the most prosperous agricultural centers of the entire country. When news of this colony's success reached other Mennonites outside of the country, they asked President Obregón for permission to immigrate, to which he responded that he viewed their immigration with "much enthusiasm as he knew these were honest and hardworking people."⁵⁰⁴

The enthusiasm shown by Obregón toward these Mennonites, suffered a blow when soon thereafter, Calles's *Ministro de Agricultura*, Luis L. León, argued that the government should not provide so many generous concessions to these individuals because he believed that they did not possess the moral and religious characteristics that made them viable candidates for citizenship. To the contrary, León believed these Mennonites could not assimilate and had a tendency to form a state within a state.⁵⁰⁵ So in the eyes of Ministro León, the Mennonites, in similar fashion as some of the rhetoric espoused against the Mormon colonies, rather than serving as an excellent economic catalyst in regions of the country that desperately needed an economic influx of capital, these type of immigrants secluded themselves to the point that they did not share their economic success with their surrounding neighbors and from a social point of view, they did not marry with Mexican citizens, thus the reason León maintained that they were *inasimilables*. As

⁵⁰³ Harry Leonard Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country. Mennonite Colonization in Mexico* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1971) , p.40.

⁵⁰⁴ Archivo General de la Nación; Ramo Obregón—Calles, Paquete 113, Legajo 2, Expediente 823-M-3; México D.F., México.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Paquete 113, Legajo 2, Expediente 823-M-5.

a result of the pleas made by León and other politicians who subscribed to his point of view, the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, in 1931, restricted the immigration of Mennonites without them receiving prior congressional approval before moving to the country.⁵⁰⁶ Even president Abelardo Rodríguez in 1931 insisted that the country still needed a very healthy wave of immigrants, but noted that that these new immigrants needed to be “*asimilables*.”⁵⁰⁷ The political climate of the time period pleaded for immigrants that desired to immerse themselves into the national culture, and not simply for immigrants wishing to exploit the country’s natural resources to only then quickly pack their belongings and abandon the country that accorded them the opportunity to build that wealth.

Following Rodríguez’s lead, president Cárdenas, argued that the country should not colonize *baldíos* with foreigners as long as the Indians and mestizos still endured a social economic position that put them behind the new immigrants coming into the country.⁵⁰⁸ The economic inequality that grew between the Mennonite colonists and their surrounding neighbors led to some physical altercations during the 1930s; that as a consequence, forced the government to provide them with military protection. Moreover, as a result of the massive deportations in the U.S. that forced thousands of Mexicans to repatriate back home, people living near the Mennonite colonies exerted violence against these colonists, so as to hold them accountable for the abuses their brothers and sisters had endured in the U.S. Even in the urban centers, people began to resent the fact that many foreigners, especially the more wealthy ones, refused to

⁵⁰⁶ Memoria de la Secretaría de Gobernación; *Memoria de la Secretaría de Gobernación que Comprende el Periodo del 1 de Agosto de 1929 al 31 de Julio de 1932; Presentada al Congreso de la Unión por el Lic. Octavio Mendoza González* (México D.F., México: Tallares Gráficos de la Nación, 1931) , p.221.

⁵⁰⁷ *Diario de los Debates de la Cámara de Diputados*, (1 de Septiembre, 1933) : p.4.

⁵⁰⁸ Silvia Herzog, *El Agrarismo Mexicano y la Reforma Agraria: Exposición y Crítica* (México D.F., México: Editorial Cultura, 1959) , p.433.

assimilate into the national culture by operating their own exclusive churches, casinos, schools, hospitals, and cemeteries, allowing them to continue to enjoy their economic success without having to immerse themselves in the culture that surrounded them.⁵⁰⁹ In instances in which foreigners decided to naturalize themselves into citizens, even then, critics pointed out that this political move was only done so as to create a barrier so they could continue to protect their financial interests. In fact, the *Secretaría de Gobernación*, made it clear that a lot of these foreigners who had become citizens, only had a legal bond to their new country, as they still psychologically and morally deemed themselves citizens of the country from which they originally came from.”⁵¹⁰

In 1928, when more German immigrants asked the government for permission to erect a colony in the state of Nuevo León, the director of the *Banco Nacional de Crédito Agrícola*, wrote to President Calles and informed him that although he liked the idea of colonizing other regions of the country with more German immigrants, he cautioned the president to proceed carefully and proposed that any further German colony should be colonized with two Mexican families for every German family.⁵¹¹ Just three years earlier, the *Oficina Internacional del Trabajo* wished to send 150,000 unemployed Austrians to Mexico.⁵¹² When in 1922, officials received news that Armenians and later in 1926 that Scandinavians desired to come to this country, authorities manifested sympathy for these colonization projects; but unfortunately, they never came to

⁵⁰⁹ Jorge L. Tamayo, *Geografía General de México*, vol.3 (México D.F., México: Instituto de Investigaciones Económicas, 1962) , p.436.

⁵¹⁰ Memoria de la Secretaría de Gobernación; *Memoria de la Secretaría de Gobernación, Septiembre 1943 a Agosto 1944; Presentada al Congreso de la Unión por el Lic. Miguel Alamán* (México D.F., México: La Impresora, 1944) , p.54.

⁵¹¹ Archivo General de la Nación; Ramo Obregón—Calles, Paquete 113, Legajo 1, Expediente 823-A-1; México D.F., México.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, Paquete 133, Legajo 2, Expediente 823-J-1.

fruition.⁵¹³ It appears that by the 1920s, although officials still desired a healthy wave of productive European immigrants to enter the country, federal and state officials had grown disillusioned with that plan that had been bore in the late nineteenth century; by this time period, in a new more modern Mexico, miscegenation, between European immigrants and Mexicans as an actual form of government policy as a solution to the pressing issues afflicting the nation, seemed archaic at best.

⁵¹³ Ibid., Paquete 113, Legajo 2, Expediente 823-A-8.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I began this dissertation by trying to find answers to the following statement made by President Álvaro Obregón in December of 1921 to the *New York Negro World* newspaper in which he stated that Mexico did not need to write a law granting special privileges or protection for African Americans interested in relocating from the United States. As he remarked, current law did not favored one racial group over another because as stipulated in the constitution, all citizens had equal rights and protection before the law. With that strong and bold statement by the president, as a premise, I had an interest in finding out what degree of truth, if any, existed in what Obregón had said? Moreover, if what Obregón had asserted as truth, how far back in the country's history since the War of Independence could I find evidence that the country provided liberal immigration policies that invited anyone, regardless of their race, to come as they would be treated equally, and more importantly, a warm reception awaited any potential new immigrants? It had been argued for many decades that the population, because of their ethnic composition, mostly mestizo, felt inclined to sympathize with non-white racial groups. As with any work of this scope, many subsequent questions arose in trying to find an answer in what first appeared to be a simple question that should have an easy response; nonetheless, I began to ponder, as to why in the first place, did officials, both liberal and conservative, espoused in a desperate tone the rhetoric of the need to populate the country, especially its northern frontier with immigrants?

The essay began the discussion during the time period of the U.S.—Mexico War in the mid nineteenth century. I started the analysis at this juncture in the country's history because it helps

us understand why for instance in the decades that follow both political factions called for immigrants to come. During the war, through the use of personal diaries and accounts, I argued that U.S. soldiers in writing back to family members and friends, they mentioned in astonishment that the population, generally speaking, welcomed them as though they were an army of liberators. Some people had asked some soldiers not to leave the country and assist them in helping rid their country of the stronghold the Catholic Church still exerted over them, not to mention helping bring some degree of social stability to a nation that appeared on the verge of collapse with so much political chaos and thieves roaming the rural landscape.

I pointed out that many first hand accounts stated that Americans defeated the Mexican army not with their swords or guns but rather with their feet, as they simply walked into Mexico City with very minimal resistance from the people. In fact, one politician embarrassingly admitted that “*de los mexicanos nada podía esperarse.*” Under such scenario, it did not come as a surprise to find in the primary sources many examples in which the government had to put aside its pride and try to bribe the U.S. soldiers to turn on their own country in exchange for a piece of national territory and other incentives. In fact, I pointed out that some officials even had contemplated the possibility of enticing black slaves to runaway and come to Mexico. The plan call for the army to attempt to retake the state of Texas, and hopefully, the black population in the South would be motivated to join the Mexican army, knowing very well that Mexico offered them freedom. Officials had reached this level of desperation because as argued in the first several chapters, the population lacked a sense of nation, as cohesion had not developed even after thirty years had elapsed since the country had won its independence. Through the works of Eric Van Young and Paul Vanderwood, I made the case that a lot of people, especially those

living in rural regions, pledged allegiance not to the Mexican nation as had been hoped by the government, but instead, to their local *patria chica*.

Since the population lacked a nationalist sentiment, that in essence made the country vulnerable to future filibuster movements and left it defenseless against the constant Indian raids in the North. As a result of this nightmare possibility, I pointed to the actions taken by the governor of the state of Coahuila who invited the Florida Seminole Indians along with several hundred blacks to come in order to add a sense of protection in that part of the country, and in exchange for their services, Governor Vidaurri promised these immigrants a large tract of land, agricultural supplies, the construction of a school, along with other incentives. Chapter seven which analyzed this particular colony showed that both the government and the neighbors surrounding the black colony were pleased with the work ethic and commitment the black immigrants had shown to the country. In fact, John Horse, the leader of the black colony received so much praise from government officials because he had fought bravely in the early 1860s against the French invasion that he was awarded a colonel position within President Juárez's republican army. The case of John Horse and his people again proved this essay's central argument that the Mexican government and its people had no apprehension about welcoming people of color and even went as far as celebrating their dedication to their new country.

This essay never intended to suggest that all officials or segment of the population welcomed with open arms black immigrants, or for that matter, every type of immigrant that attempted to make Mexico his or her new home, but rather, that enough primary sources exist to draw a generalize conclusion that Mexico may have indeed been the land of "God and Liberty,"

as so popularly pronounced by many of the immigrants that went there. What the stories in the previous chapters revealed was that Mexicans did not resent the presence of foreigners per se in their country, instead, they rallied behind several nationalist movements, or as some have called it xenophobic waves that arose in the early twentieth century, because they resented the fact that in many instances, such as in the case of Spanish or Mormon immigrants, they exploited the natural resources of the country and as a result achieved a level financial success not possible in their native country, yet, they had the audacity to turn around and harshly criticize the people for their backward cultural traits, religion, and form of government. In other words, both the people and its government unleashed a racist rhetoric and often times physical confrontations on those immigrants that had been deemed ungrateful to the nation. Moreover, from the primary sources consulted, I also came to the conclusion that people began to grow resentful of new immigrants when these individuals refused to stay in the government assigned *baldíos* and they decided to move urban centers and began to directly compete in commerce with local businesses, at this point, the public felt that these immigrants, such as the Chinese as a case in point, had overstepped their bounds and their welcome in Mexico.

Furthermore, the essay made a point of emphasis to argue that at times the government did not necessarily desire for Chinese or African Americans to come, as pointed out, many of the country's *científicos* felt that a better type of immigrant, such as the many attempts made to bring Italians, could assist in producing a better citizen through the obvious process of miscegenation. Nonetheless, the government saw the need to introduce the aforementioned racial groups as an emergency to help alleviate the pleas of many *hacendados* who wrote to Díaz citing that their crops were rotting because they could not find nationals to relocate to those parts of the country

and work in the haciendas. In addition, since the 1850s through the 1920s, the threat of possible filibuster movements from Americans did not end, in essence putting the government in a paranoid state. With the introduction of either Chinese or African American immigrants on the northern frontier, government officials felt that these new immigrants now that they owned a piece of Mexican land, they would have a vested financial interest to assist the national army in trying to fend off filibusters or even the United States.

As argued in chapter two, the need for immigrants became so great for the government that during the 1860s French invasion, while in exile from Mexico City and attempting to run his country from Paso del Norte, President Juárez ordered three generals and Matías Romero, to aggressively recruit former American Civil War veterans to assist the republican army in defeating Maximilian, ironic as it appeared, many of these same U.S. soldiers that did go to Mexico only some twenty years earlier had fought against the same country they were now assisting. In the words of one politician, the need to introduce a less desirable racial group, or for that matter “*gringos*” into the country, had been categorized as “*un mal necesario para la nación.*” I believe, as I tried to make my case in all of the previous chapters, that government officials felt that by introducing what the public perceived to be questionable immigrants; that they hoped that this radical and desperate move would only be temporary. For example, in the case of the Chinese immigrants, many politicians insisted that the public had no reason to fear or hate these individuals as they had no intention of interacting with Mexicans and as soon as they accumulated a certain amount of wealth, they would leave the country, at least this had been the case made by those pro-Chinese immigration politicians. I stated that the governor of Chihuahua

at one point call the relationship between Chihuahuenses and immigrants as nothing more than “*relaciones de cortesía*.”

Now, I am not all arguing here that the government or the public for that matter, simply cared about taking advantage of the capital, labor, or for the sense of security these immigrants brought to Mexico; countless examples throughout the essay highlighted the many instances in which both the government and people showed a genuine concern for the well being of the immigrants coming. When a large ship dropped off a group of Chinese immigrants in the port city of Mazatlán that had been originally bound for San Francisco, California, the residents of this town came to the aid of these peoples that were of the verge of dying of starvation. Furthermore, when a group of black colonists from the Tlahualilo colony left in disgust feeling they had just broken the chains of bondage, they walked through the deserts of Durango and Coahuila and when they reached a nearby town, the residents came to their aid. In fact, these black colonists admitted to U.S. Department of State officials that had it not been for the kindness of the Mexican people, they would have indeed died in the desert. The people, therefore, did show willingness to care for people of color and different cultural traits, while at the same time, holding reservation as to how close they wanted to associate themselves with the new immigrants. In the end, I can safely conclude that an overt systematic racist agenda from either the government or the general public did not exist, what did exist, however, were isolated or random acts of racial hostility toward new immigrants that were located within specific regions of the country.

I want to conclude the dissertation by addressing the topic of where this work fits within the historiography of race relations and immigration politics in Mexican history. As stated in the

introductory chapter, many dissertations have been written on the immigration of the Chinese, as well as that of other ethnic groups. This particular dissertation departed from most of the works in the current body of literature by taking two distinct approaches. First, the central focus did not surround the study of one particular ethnic group, I instead tried to analyze several immigrant groups so as to get a better picture as to how the Mexican people and the government reacted to their presence, and in many instances, when the primary sources consulted allowed it, I also presented testimony from many of those immigrants. In other words, the historiography lacks works that provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding on the politics of immigration in nineteenth and early century Mexico. A discussion as to what drove the government in the first place to seek the introduction of new immigrants, including many of dubious character such as those U.S. Confederate soldiers that President Juárez had no hesitation in offering them national territory in exchange for their military service, has not been adequately addressed in the current historiographical works.

I made the case that the desperate need displayed by several presidents for the introduction of immigrants had strong ties to the failure of the government to secure a true sense of a national identity among the citizenry and its inability to break up the *patria chica* mentality. As a result of this national catastrophe, which still had some citizens in 1848 asking the U.S. soldiers to stay, Indians many decades after the country had won its independence, still believed the Spanish King ruled the nation. The intellectual community pondered what to do with the Indian population and how to improve its citizens' bloodline ascribing to the philosophy that through miscegenation with the right type of foreign immigrants, the population would be able to come out of darkness and into the light of progress and modernity. Officials needed an infusion of

capital and labor hands. The analysis I have taken forces future academic works to consider immigration politics in conjunction with the proper historical context that deals with other key issues such as, national identity, the *indigenismo* movement, the various filibuster attempts, along with the xenophobic wave that arose in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Furthermore, future works on this topic, should begin to seriously consider including black immigration as part of their overall analysis on the impact of immigration on the development of Mexico. As stated in the introduction chapter, almost exclusively, all works whether done by Latin American historians in the U.S. or in Mexico, have focused their attention on Mexico's colonial period, with no regard for the role that Mexico's black population has played in helping shape the nation's national period. As argued throughout this essay, but especially in the last chapter, the primary sources consulted revealed that a black immigrant presence did exist in the country and that for the most part the government and population in general received them well, confirming, as true, the statement that President Obregón made in 1921 regarding the country's liberal immigration policies.

The next logical research question that deserves follow up as it goes beyond the scope of this dissertation is simply why black people have been denied a voice in Mexico's great historical past? Why, for example, do current Afro-Mexicans living along Mexico's Costa Chica detest to be called *negros* and instead preferred to be recognized as *morenos*? As told by Chege Githiora, the Kenyan born black man who lived in Mexico for six years, after asking Mexicans about the presence of blacks in the country, they remarked that "*aquí no hay gente de color;*" a statement that completely left him in complete astonishment. Ted Vincent, one of the few scholars studying the presence of blacks in contemporary Mexico, echoing the same sentiment as

Githiora, argued that the main reason that blacks have not been accorded their proper role within the historiography lies in the fact that blatant racism accounts for much oversight and adding that Mexicans claim that their country does not have racial prejudice. Whether either Githiora or Vincent are correct on their assessment of why black immigration has been ignored by the scholarship, leading to one of the main reasons the current population lives in denial about their “*tercera raíz*,” remains a topic for future research. I only hope that this dissertation has given rise to new questions for future research and that it finds a proper place within the current historiography.

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