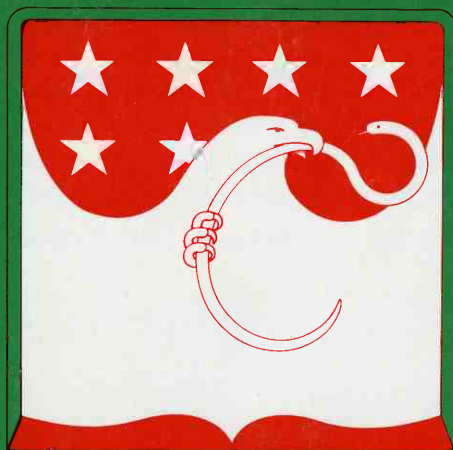


Perspectives in
**Mexican
American**
Studies



**Mexicans in
the Midwest**

Perspectives in Mexican American Studies is an annual series devoted to Chicano/a research. Focusing on Mexican Americans as a national group, *Perspectives* features articles and essays that cover research from the pre-Columbian Era to the present. All selections published in *Perspectives* are refereed.

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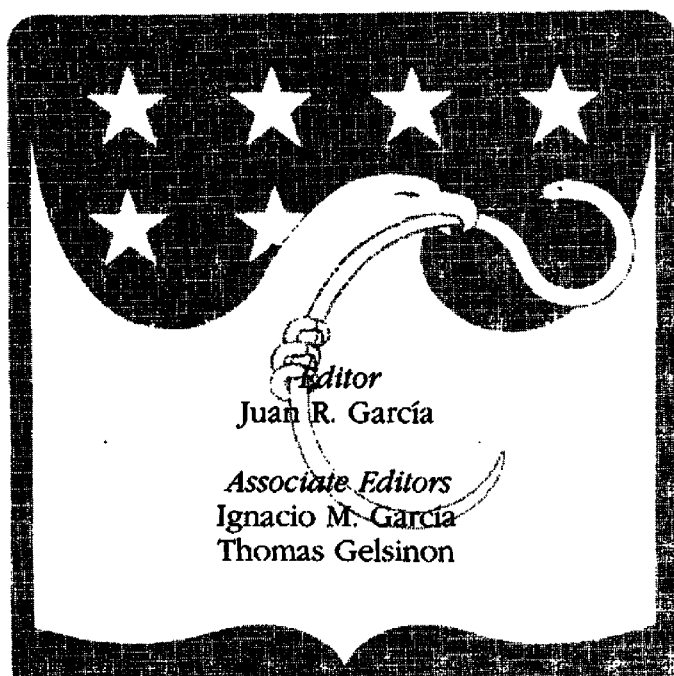
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MEXICANS IN THE MIDWEST



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INTRODUCTION

Between 1980 and 1988 the Hispanic population increased thirty-four percent, while the non-Hispanic population increased only seven percent. Numerically this means that Hispanics number 19.4 million, or 8.1 percent of the total population in the United States. Of these, fifty-five percent reside in California and Texas.¹ Predictions are that this growth, based on natural increase (that is, the number of births minus the number of deaths) and net migration from Mexico and other Hispanic countries, will continue.

This sizeable increase has drawn national attention, as educators, demographers, policymakers, economists, and political observers attempt to assess the implications and impact which this unprecedented growth will have on American society. However, even though the attention has been national in scope, the focus has largely been on southwestern Mexican Americans because they are the largest of the Hispanic groups and because the great majority of them are concentrated in that region.

The regional perspective has been reinforced by those who study and write about Mexican Americans. Despite the significant progress made by Chicano/a scholars during the past two decades in advancing new paradigms, theories and frameworks with which to understand the Chicano/a experience, much of their work has remained centered on the Southwest.² Thus, the purpose of this second volume of *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies*. It is hoped that in keeping with the stated goals of this issue, titled "Mexicans in the Midwest," greater interest among researchers, policymakers and students in this important region will be

promoted. In this volume the demarcation of the Midwest is based upon geographic location and prevailing definitions of the region. It includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

The foregoing is not to suggest that Mexican Americans and other Hispanics living outside the borderlands have been completely ignored or overlooked by scholars. As this volume on Mexicans in the Midwest suggests, the literature on midwestern Mexicans is growing. Within the last few years a cadre of scholars, building upon the pioneering works of Paul Taylor, Manuel Gamio, Anita Jones, and Julian Samora, have begun reassessing those studies, locating and identifying new primary sources of information, and developing research paradigms and frameworks.

In the first essay, Professor Dennis Valdés provides a framework for studying the history of Chicanos/as in the Midwest by examining how they fit conceptually into Chicano Studies scholarship and immigration history. In the process he delineates the differences and similarities between Midwest Chicanos/as, European immigrants and southwestern Mexicans. In part, he argues, the emphasis on social and labor history has caused broader issues in the study of Midwest Mexicans and Mexican Americans to be neglected or overlooked. The latter part of his essay provides a discussion of themes, models and periodization he believes are central to the reconceptualization of Chicano/a history in the Midwest.

It is important to note that not only does a sizeable portion of the Hispanic population reside outside the Southwest, but that many of their communities have deep and diverse roots. For example, significant numbers of Mexicans and Mexican Americans began working and settling in the Midwest during the early 1900s. Their incursions into the region, however, date back to the 1540s when Francisco de Coronado's band of Indians, *mestizos*, and Spaniards traversed the Great Plains in search of the Seven Cities of Cibola. That quest, which ended unsuccessfully in what is today the state of Kansas, added further to Spanish claims in the New World. In the 19th century Mexicans returned in greater numbers as guides, merchants, settlers, lawmen, *vaqueros*, and students.

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Included in the latter group were the children of prominent southwestern families who studied law, medicine and liberal arts at the University of Michigan, the University of Notre Dame and other midwestern colleges. In the early part of the 20th century, immigration into the Midwest continued. However, it differed markedly from previous migrations, not only in makeup, but in numbers and purpose. Between 1900 and 1938, the great majority of Mexicans who travelled to the Midwest were immigrant nationals who came in search of temporary work.

Mexican nationals began arriving in Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri and Kansas as early as 1903. Initially, much of this migration was migration by drift, as Mexicans entered the region as track maintenance crews for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe and other major rail lines. The beginning of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 and growing employment opportunities in the United States accelerated the movement of Mexicans across the border. Migration became more purposeful and directed as labor contractors in the Southwest recruited Mexicans to work in the sugar beet fields, meat packing houses and on railroads. Mexicans also set out on their own, following an ever-widening arc across the United States in search of better pay and more stable employment. Chain migration also channeled Mexicans into America's heartland as those who were already in the region sent for family members. Furthermore, news from Mexicans in the United States continually filtered back to Mexico via letters, contractors, and those who had returned home for visits. Armed with such information, emigrants increasingly set out on their own for specific locales and destinations. In some midwestern cities entire neighborhoods were populated by Mexicans from a particular community, state or region in Mexico.

The outbreak of World War I in Europe accelerated the need for American goods and also created a labor shortage, as unrestricted submarine warfare and the societal disruptions created by the war greatly curtailed immigration from the continent. To meet the demand for laborers, contractors intensified their recruitment efforts in Mexico and the Southwest. Soon, cities such as St. Louis and Kansas City joined the ranks of those American cities

which served as distribution centers for Mexican laborers. In the second article, Professor Michael Smith discusses the growth and development of the Mexican community in Kansas City between 1900 and 1920.

Although the census of 1910 showed only 335 Mexicans in the Kansas City area, that number had increased to almost three thousand by 1914. For most Mexicans life was difficult. There, as elsewhere, they encountered poor working conditions, substandard housing, overt hostility, prejudice and segregation. In order to combat the vicissitudes of life in an alien environment, the *colonia* established numerous organizations designed to meet their social, political and economic needs. The community also had a number of small businesses which catered to the needs of nationals, and boasted its own Spanish-language newspaper, *El Cosmopolita*. In describing the goals, leadership and makeup of these diverse elements within the Kansas City community, Professor Smith provides revealing insights into the internal dynamics of the Mexican colonia prior to 1920.

According to the Census Bureau there were more than two million midwestern Hispanics in 1988. Of these, approximately 801 thousand lived in Illinois, with the largest concentration being in the Chicago Metropolitan area. Since 1965, it has ranked second only to Los Angeles as the intended destination of legal immigrants from Mexico. Presently, Chicago has the third largest Mexican-descent population in the United States. Mexicans and Mexican Americans, however, are no strangers to the "Windy City." Hundreds were contracted to work in agriculture, meat packing and the railroad industry shortly after World War I began. In 1919 U.S. Steel recruited them as strikebreakers. During the 1920s the heavily industrialized region became the primary destination for Mexicans travelling to the Midwest. By 1930 there were over fifteen thousand Mexicans in the Chicago area.

The arrival of Mexicans in ever-increasing numbers in this country coincided with the re-emergence of nativistic tendencies among Americans. In part these anti-alien, anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic sentiments sprang from the emotions generated by the

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war. The cancellation of war contracts and the failure to formulate and implement a demobilization plan exacerbated the high unemployment, runaway inflation, and rampant shortages which swept the country after the war. Fears about alien ideologies such as anarchism and Bolshevism were reinforced by numerous strikes and the bomb scares which occurred in early 1919. In the hysteria that followed, immigrants and outsiders became the scapegoats for pent-up fears, anger and frustration.

The Red Scare ended in 1919. However, the intolerance it spawned continued throughout most of the twenties. Nativism manifested itself in a number of ways throughout the decade, including the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, the enactment of restrictive immigration laws, and inter-ethnic violence. More often than not the conflict between ethnic groups was fueled by economic issues involving competition for jobs and wages. Inter-ethnic violence and the central role that it played in the formation of ethnic consciousness among Mexicans in the Chicago area is the theme of Arturo Rosales's article.

The fact that few midwesterners had come into direct contact with Mexicans prior to World War I did not preclude them from having stereotypic notions about them. In fact stereotypes about the lazy, primitive and violent Mexican were prevalent in the history, literature and popular culture of America. Newspapers in the United States reinforced many of these negative images by focusing upon the violent nature of the Mexican Revolution. And Hollywood movies added to the misconceptions by their unflattering depictions of Mexicans as morally lax, unscrupulous, lawless and prone to violence. These negative stereotypes, according to Rosales, exercised a profound influence on how Mexicans were treated by the legal system in the United States. He argues that even though Mexicans were no more prone to criminal or violent tendencies than other groups, they tended to receive longer and harsher sentences than other groups for similar crimes. He also believes that inter-ethnic violence and the hostile treatment by the police and courts promoted ethnic consciousness within an ostensibly divided Mexican community by underscoring the idea

that they were all outsiders. The article by Professor Rosales offers insights into the dynamics of community development and the formation of ethnic awareness among Mexican immigrants during the 1920s.

By the end of the 1920s the Mexican population in the United States had increased to such great proportions that it attracted the attention and concern of groups and organizations as diverse as Protestant missionaries, settlement house workers, sociologists, restrictionists, labor unions and government officials on both sides of the border. One agency which exhibited a keen interest and curiosity about the nature and makeup of Mexican communities in this country was the U.S. Department of Labor. In 1926 and 1927 George Edson, a Labor Department investigator fluent in Spanish, was assigned to visit and report on dozens of Mexican immigrant communities extending from New York to the Imperial Valley of California. During the Fall and Winter of 1926 and 1927, Edson surveyed Mexican settlements in the North Central region, which encompassed much of the Midwest. He estimated that there were between sixty-three thousand and eighty thousand Mexicans in the region working in the beet fields, railroads and various industries. His detailed reports, based upon interviews with employers, their staffs, recruiters, public employees, priests, teachers, laborers, Mexicans and his own observations, contain information about recruitment practices, working and living conditions and social life in the places he visited. Despite occasionally quirky comments, Edson's reports provide perceptive and valuable details about the lives of Mexicans in the Midwest and the United States. "Mexicans in the North Central States" is the fourth article, and appears here essentially unchanged from the draft report Edson wrote in the late 1920s.

With the onset of the Depression in 1929, many of the communities surveyed by Edson were either depleted or had completely disappeared. Overall estimates place the number of Mexicans and Mexican Americans who returned to Mexico voluntarily or involuntarily between 1929 and 1937 at five hundred thousand, or about one-third of those in the United States in 1930.³ In the

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Midwest, Mexicans living in the states of Illinois, Michigan and Indiana made up about 10.5 percent of the repatriates even though they only constituted 3.5 percent of the total Mexican population in the United States.⁴ Those who avoided repatriation and remained in the United States found life in this country even more difficult than before. In the Midwest, where naturalization rates of Mexicans had remained among the lowest of all immigrant groups,⁵ the Depression exercised a profound influence. Although research about the era is scant, existing studies point to some interesting theories regarding the Depression, repatriation and Mexican socialization. For example, in East Chicago the greatest majority of repatriates came from the ranks of the most recently arrived and least rooted in the community. This, in part, led to the conclusion that the low naturalization rates among Mexicans had been a contributing factor to their repatriation. There were, of course, more compelling motives and reasons behind the repatriation schemes, as evidenced by the fact that not even citizenship precluded Mexican Americans from being repatriated. Nonetheless those who remained appear to have taken the lesson to heart. Depression-era residency and citizenship requirements which had to be met in order to qualify for relief of any kind, along with other developments in the 1930s, led to the adoption of new patterns of socialization among Mexicans, writes Rosales. These patterns further accelerated the process of acculturation within the Mexican community in East Chicago.⁶ Whether this process was evident in other midwestern communities, and what impact the depression era had on Mexican communities and institutions are only a few of the questions that need to be addressed by researchers.

In 1938 an improved economy, the existence of New Deal programs and the inability of the Mexican government to support those who had returned led to a renewed migration northward. That migration was accelerated with American entry into World War II and the inauguration of the Bracero Program. The size of the Mexican population in the Midwest also increased after 1941 as they streamed into agriculture and the war industries. Yet these immigrants were different from those who had journeyed to the region prior to 1930. Whereas most of the pre-Depression im-

migrants had been Mexican nationals, those who travelled to the Midwest after 1940 were Mexican Americans from Texas and the Southwest. For the most part they were displaced workers who had been pushed out of the region by the large influx of undocumented workers and *braceros* (contract laborers imported from Mexico). The promise of higher paying jobs and more stable work were also strong incentives for relocating. Interestingly, many of the Mexican Americans who initially resettled in the Midwest came primarily from four counties in south Texas—Willacy, Hidalgo, Cameron, and Nueces. In the late forties and early fifties, they were joined by other Mexican Americans from the Southwest, Mexican nationals, Cubans, Puerto Ricans and Latin Americans.

In 1941 the long and terrible depression years suddenly came to an end when Japanese forces bombed Pearl Harbor. Once again thousands of men and women entered the armed forces. Among them were Mexicans and Mexican Americans, eager to fight for democratic principles which had often been denied them. This sudden infusion of men and women into the military and the need to mobilize America's resources again created a labor shortage in agriculture and industry. As imported Mexican *braceros* harvested the crops and maintained the railroads, Mexican Americans moved to the cities to fill jobs in wartime industries. Among those who entered the workforce in increasing numbers were women of Mexican descent. Richard Santillán's article focuses on Mexican American women in the war industries of the Midwest. During interviews conducted by Santillán, women recalled their experiences on the job, the challenges they faced and the impact which the war had on their lives. According to Professor Santillán the war provided women with training and experience which they used in the postwar civil rights struggle, and altered traditional beliefs and practices about the role of women within the Mexican American community.

The initial migration to the Midwest was characterized by single or unattached men who had left their families in Mexico or the Southwest. Working long hours, moving frequently and lacking social outlets because of discrimination or segregationist practices,

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most of these *solos* frequented pool halls, bars or houses of ill-repute. The Revolution of 1910 added members from the *gente decente* and *gente preparada* to the migratory stream. These elites frowned upon the less socially acceptable outlets available to Mexicans. As more women and families arrived in the Midwest during the late teens and early twenties, the elites redoubled their efforts to create a social milieu and environment which presented a more positive view of their community. To promote the idea that Mexicans were a cultured and enlightened people, they sponsored literary and drama groups, lectures, and formal dances. They also joined forces with local consuls and formed *Comisiones Patrioticas*, whose function it was to plan the celebration of Mexican national holidays such as Cinco de Mayo and September 16th. Of course not all organizing activities emanated from the elites. Generally speaking, Mexicans in the Midwest formed a wide variety of organizations designed to cushion the shock of living in an alien and sometimes hostile environment. The most common were the mutual-aid societies (*mutualistas*), which were initially established to provide death and burial benefits to members. Membership in these organizations was usually open only to males over sixteen years of age. Those who joined were asked to pay an initiation fee and about twenty-five cents a month in dues. In the Midwest members were required to pledge their loyalty to Mexico and promise never to become naturalized citizens. This was in keeping with the strong anti-assimilationist stance commonplace among most midwestern Mexicans. The highly mobile nature of the population, small memberships, and the low wages earned by Mexicans minimized mutualista treasuries. One or two benefit payments often depleted their meager funds. Of greater importance to the community at-large were the numerous social events which the mutualistas organized and sponsored. These included dances, baptisms, bazaars and the celebration of Mexican national holidays. Religious groups, sports clubs, legal defense organizations, women's clubs and auxiliaries, and groups dedicated to social, political and economic reforms were also active in many communities.

The final selection attests to the large and diverse number of Mexican and Mexican American organizations in Joliet, Illinois.

Navor Rodriguez, a long-time resident of Joliet, published the chronological survey of Mexican and Mexican American organizations in his community between 1914 and 1953 in order to recognize the work and service they rendered to the people of Mexican descent over the years. His record sheds further light on the organizational activities of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the Midwest.

The history, legacy and role of Hispanics in the Midwest needs to be documented and preserved. The selections in this issue demonstrate that the process is under way. However, much remains to be done, including the development of a broader, comparative perspective on immigration, issues of ethnicity, the internal dynamics of communities, class and gender, international relations and life within a capitalist society. Research about Hispanics in the Midwest and other regions will place them within a national perspective, and provide the context and background in which to assess the needs, challenges and opportunities their growing numbers are creating in the United States. Without this perspective our understanding of Hispanics will not only be limited, but inaccurate and incomplete.

The editors wish to thank the contributors to this volume for their diligence and patience, and to the staff members at the Mexican American Studies & Research Center for their assistance. Special acknowledgement is made to Natalia Ochotorena for inputting the entire manuscript and to Thomas Gelsinon for his editorial and technical expertise. Thanks also to Macario Saldade, Director of MASRC, whose support and confidence has made this series possible. Finally my gratitude to my dear friend and co-editor Ignacio García, who has left the Center to pursue other goals and challenges. Over the years I have relied on his guidance, expertise and good humor, and it is hard to imagine working on future issues of *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies* without him. I will miss collaborating with you on the series, carnal. Ignacio, we all wish you the best.

Juan R. García
The University of Arizona
September 1989

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NOTES

- ¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No.431, *The Hispanic Population in the United States: March 1988* (Advance Report), (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988), p.1.
- ² Alex M. Saragoza, "The Significance of Recent Chicano-Related Historical Writings: An Appraisal," *Ethnic Affairs* (Number 1, Fall 1987) (Austin: Center for Mexican American Studies), pp.24-62.
- ³ Abraham Hoffman, *Unwanted Mexicans in the Great Depression: Repatriation Pressures, 1929-1939* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1974), pp.174-175.
- ⁴ Paul S. Taylor, "Mexican Labor in the United States: Migration Statistics," *University of California Publications in Economics* 12 (1934), p.48.
- ⁵ Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), p.111. According to Reisler, naturalization rates among Mexicans in the United States never exceeded six percent.
- ⁶ Francisco Arturo Rosales and Daniel T. Simon, "Mexican Immigrant Experience in the Urban Midwest: East Chicago, Indiana, 1919 to 1945," in *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXVII (December, 1981), pp. 333-57.

THE NEW NORTHERN BORDER- LANDS: AN OVERVIEW OF MIDWESTERN CHICANO HISTORY

Dennis Nodín Valdés

Chicano/a historical literature, mostly focused on the Southwest, has not yet incorporated the Midwest into its conceptual mainstream. Investigation of the region is sparse and uneven.¹ The lack of publications is itself largely a consequence of the relatively brief presence of Mexicanos/as in the region and the nature of the northward migration—by and large a movement of workers and not of formally educated people. This migration is just now producing a cadre of Midwestern scholars to recover the past. Midwestern Chicano/a historians, however, have faced additional problems because of sharp class and ethnic biases from within the dominant academic world from which they received their formal training. Most had to work against the current of major history departments in the region, which have tended to scorn their work and discourage their interest in Chicano/a history. Notwithstanding the problems in developing a historiography, these scholars have demonstrated the centrality of the Midwest on Chicano/a history, and its value as a corrective to many serious conceptual distortions in mainstream United States historical literature on immigration, ethnicity and race..

This essay provides a framework for Midwestern Chicano/a history. It has two major sections. The first examines how the Great Lakes Midwestern experience fits conceptually into scholarship on immigration history and Chicano/a studies theory. The second delineates a periodization for Midwestern Chicano/a history and some of the important themes discussed in recent scholarship.

A Conceptual Framework

Midwestern Chicano/a historiography to date has focused mostly on the social and labor history of a limited number of communities between World War I and World War II. It has not yet probed deeply into broader issues regarding the place of Midwestern Mexicanos/as. Two current approaches have been to discuss it within the context of foreign immigrants as part of immigration history, or as minorities within the framework of Third World colonialism.

Recent scholarship on United States immigration history has been erratic in its efforts to include Chicano/a history within its boundaries.² Chicano/a urban and social historians addressing immigration have compared the fate of Chicanos/as with European immigrants in the Southwest. They have effectively demonstrated that Mexicanos/as of the Southwest had an immigration history much different from that of the European-born. Although Mexicanos/as preceded European immigrants in the Southwest, they did not enjoy similar paths of mobility. Europeans moved upward and ahead of recent Mexican immigrants as well as United States-born residents of Mexican descent.³

Early twentieth-century Chicano/a history in the Midwest has more parallels to European immigration history than in the American Southwest. Like European immigrants, Mexicans arrived in the region as newcomers in a foreign land, but unlike Mexican immigrants in the Southwest, they found no buffer provided by a long-settled Spanish-speaking population. Furthermore, the Great Lakes region had a very diverse European immigrant population. The internal mechanisms that many nationality groups developed in dealing with each other were much more complicated than in the Chicano/a heartland where people of European background are less distinctive from each other physically or culturally. The widespread use of the term Anglo when referring to Euro-Americans in the Southwest reflects their greater commonality and weaker ethnic awareness than in the East and the Midwest. In the ethnically fragmented urban communities of the Midwest, the different European groups had to acknowledge each other and to a certain degree leave each other alone. Midwestern Mexicanos/as

also were an immigrant group who contributed to the diversity of the region. That diversity allowed them, especially in the cities, to lead lives that were in many ways less restricted and segregated than in southwestern communities.

Although they had similarities, midwestern Mexicans also had many different experiences than their European predecessors. For one thing, they were the last of the immigrants to the region; for another, they faced greater discrimination in housing and employment than Europeans. In many neighborhoods they were denied housing because they were Mexican and throughout the region they faced a wider range of hostile responses than did other immigrant groups. Furthermore, many employers who willingly hired Europeans refused to employ Mexicans. As Paul Taylor concluded in his study of Chicago in the late 1920s, Mexicans were "a race and class apart."⁴

Another midwestern reality was that the second- and third-generation population of Mexican descent could not shed its physical and cultural distinctiveness rapidly, as did the Europeans. The sharp differences were reinforced by immigration patterns. European immigration subsided after World War I, while Mexican immigration was just beginning. Later, it increased rapidly, and immigrants continued to represent a major portion of the Mexican-descent population. European ethnic diversity in the Midwest did not preclude a white identity shaped by the presence of a large Black population. Dominant color perceptions thus tended to be viewed in a dual framework in which Mexicans did not fit and were seldom perceived as a threat because of their comparatively small numbers. While Mexicans in urban settings were less sharply segregated than Blacks, they were not accepted as readily as the European ethnic groups. They were excluded from most neighborhoods by custom and because of financial considerations.

Distinct treatment of Mexicans as an ethnic group also surfaced during times of economic downturn, including 1920-1921, 1929-1933 and the early 1950s. They were the only foreign population group to be singled out for repatriation or deportation during "Operation Wetback" in 1954. Still another feature is that as a group Chicanos/as achieved comparatively limited upward social mobility. Late in the twentieth century, Mexicans continued to dominate the

most visible step of the bottom rung of the proletariat—farm workers. Part of the explanation is demographic. Unlike the Southwest, where Mario Barrera notes that a "subeconomy," or immigrant enclave makes possible a substantial petty bourgeoisie, such an entrepreneurial group historically has been very small in the Midwest.⁵

Another distinctive characteristic of midwestern Mexicanos/as has been their low level of formal schooling on arrival and relatively slow improvement in this area in succeeding generations. Even among children born in the region, the number attending institutions of higher learning has remained infinitesimal. As a result of political pressures generated during the 1960s and early 1970s, a handful of students finally entered the region's institutions of higher learning. However, since the Supreme Court's Bakke decision in 1977, Chicano/a academic programs and the number of students in higher education has again declined. Even in the 1970s and 1980s many major universities in the region did not have a single Chicano/a faculty member, thus indicating that midwestern Mexicanos/as have not assimilated to the degree of European immigrants and their descendants.⁶

A Third World-oriented colonial perspective helps inform us about many features of past and present Chicano/a life in the Midwest. "Internal Colonialism" models, relating to minorities within the nation's boundaries, have long been discussed, applied and modified by students of Chicano/a history. Recently, these models have been in retreat. Some have criticized internal colonial models as being useful only as metaphors, but it is wise to remember, as literary critic Terry Eagleton has observed, that "all language is in a way, 'metaphorical.'"⁷ Metaphors are the lifeblood of historians. Furthermore, an understanding of the Third World and of colonialism is essential to understanding Mexicanos/as in the United States. Many features of the colonial experience apply to the Midwest, a region where one might not expect them to serve any explanatory purpose. Cities throughout the region have districts that Mexicanos/as have referred to as *colonias* since their arrival in the early years of the century. In this sense the internal colonia is a central feature of Chicano/a life throughout the region.

If viewed from both national and international perspectives, colonialism applies directly to midwestern Chicano/a history. A neo-colonial viewpoint helps explain the migration of Mexican immigrants to the urban Midwest in the 1920s and in the 1980s. The labor migrations organized by capitalist employers in the Midwest, the Southwest and South Africa were similar in many ways. They received low wages and usually worked in the North for short periods, while their families remained in Mexico or Texas. Their lives were largely restricted to the confines of work. The cost of their reproduction as a labor force in Texas or Mexico was much lower than in the industrial heartland of the nation. Family members separated from them produced a major part of the total subsistence and received the rest from those who worked in the Midwest. Labor migration based on reproduction in a distant territory is an essential feature of midwestern Chicano/a history and of colonialism.⁸

A colonial perspective applies even more directly to the labor migration and continued presence of the large Mexican farm worker population in the region since World War I. It corrects popular perceptions that the midwestern Chicano/a experience has been overwhelmingly urban. Workers of Mexican birth and descent migrated north from their permanent homes in a low-wage region where they sustained their families. They left their "homelands" for temporary, seasonal work at wages that were below the accepted level of poverty. During their stay in the Midwest they remained separated from the permanent resident population, residing in special housing and camps for workers. Employers, with the assistance of government authorities, consciously isolated them from permanent Euro-American residents.

As farm workers they were denied by law and custom many of the explicit rights of permanent resident citizens, including New Deal legislation on welfare, insurance, health care and the minimum wage. They were also exempted from other legislation that guaranteed payments at regular intervals, as well as safe and healthy working conditions. Farm workers residing in camps did not have rights that other tenants enjoyed, and their landlords were not subject to the same responsibilities. Unlike other renters, their homes typically were barred to outside visitors and guests without

the owners' express permission. Migrant workers seldom ventured into town for fear of encountering unfriendly local residents, police and sheriff's deputies. Truant officers failed to enforce mandatory school attendance laws for their children, contrary to the letter of the law. Yet once the work season ended, police and other authorities helped the growers make sure the workers left their camps, using force when necessary, to ensure that they would not become permanent residents or receive welfare and other benefits to which they were entitled. In sum, the *campesinos* worked, maintained a separate social life, remained isolated and did not enjoy the legal rights of permanent residents during the long period they remained in the region each year.⁹

In the case of farm workers in the Midwest, an internal colonial model has greater applicability in some ways than in Texas, California, and other parts of the Southwest. In those settings large numbers of farm workers eventually settled and gradually became part of the economic, social and political life of agricultural towns and nearby cities. In the Midwest, settling in small towns and establishing a visible presence was much less frequent. The farm workers who stayed in the Midwest usually chose less hostile settings in larger towns and cities. Details of the patterns of the immigrant and colonial models will be further delineated in the periodization that follows.

World War I and the 1920s

Midwestern Chicano/a history begins in the twentieth century, when the region's population was growing more rapidly than any other in the country. Already known as the "Breadbasket of Europe" for its grain production, it soon became the industrial heartland of the United States as well. Several cities, among them Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, Minneapolis and St. Paul, grew at phenomenal rates. By 1920 Chicago and Detroit were the second and fourth most populous cities in the nation. Urban residents included immigrants from dozens of language and nationality groups from all parts of Europe. As late as 1920 more than one-third of the population of the major cities was foreign-born. This demographic feature had an important bearing on the

Mexicans who came to the region. The urban locations where they worked and lived were populated mostly by European immigrants and their children rather than citizens whose ancestors were long rooted in the United States.

Chronologically, the Mexicans' arrival occurred after the major European flow subsided during World War I. Facing labor shortages created by the curtailment of European immigration and a wartime boom, many labor recruiters turned to South Texas for replacements. The recruitment continued until 1920, when a severe depression occasioned a return flow of Mexicans to the South. It was a short-lived downturn, and by 1923 employers turned even more enthusiastically to the immigrant Mexicans they discovered during the war. The flow of workers increased rapidly and continued vigorously until the end of the decade. The earliest Mexicans recruited to the urban Midwest were born in Mexico, yet, most had experience working elsewhere in the United States before arriving. They came largely as single male workers to replace Europeans in the worst jobs: the generally seasonal and unsteady work in the railroads, packing plants, foundries, shops, automobile factories and streetcar lines. They were attracted by higher wages than those available in the Southwest.¹⁰

Mexicans faced a much higher cost of living and a more brutal work regimen in the Midwest, which offset those higher wages. Factory employment was unpleasant because it was strictly regimented and physically exhausting. Machines controlled the pace and nature of the workers' movements all day long. Being the most recent arrivals, they were assigned the most unpleasant tasks and the least steady jobs, and were the first to be laid off when there were seasonal cuts in the work force.¹¹

In most midwestern industries and factories, Mexicans represented only a small fraction of the total workforce, but there were some exceptions in several railroad companies and certain factories. Inland Steel in East Chicago was one of the few employers in the region that had a company town with a concentrated Mexican population. Henry Ford's automobile plants also hired thousands of Mexicans in their diverse work force. Inland Steel and Ford were the two largest urban employers of Mexicans in the country. In part reflecting their scattered presence in factories,

Mexican neighborhoods were not highly segregated as typically occurred in southwestern cities. Although not numerous enough to dominate entire neighborhoods, they tended to live clustered in ports-of-entry and places close to work. In a large city like Chicago, they concentrated in the Near West End, South Chicago and the Back of the Yards districts. In smaller cities like St. Louis, there were not highly visible pockets of Mexican concentration. In general, they resided in shabby, older districts as neighbors of poor European and Black workers. The heart of the colonia typically was characterized by a handful of small businesses that catered to a local clientele: a pool hall, barbershop, grocery stores, boarding houses and a small Catholic church or chapel inevitably named after *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*. While segregation typically was not rigid, restrictive renting practices, prejudice and financial limitations excluded Mexicans from residing in most parts of the city. Unlike European immigrants, they had great difficulty purchasing homes because of irregular employment and low wages. These same work and residential patterns enabled them and their children to gain facility with the English language more quickly than their counterparts in the Southwest.¹²

Because urban employers were more interested in hiring males than females, most early immigrants were single men. Yet once they found steadier jobs, many sent for their wives or betrothed. Women in the urban Midwest worked outside the home less frequently than the average European woman, in part because of employer hiring practices. Nevertheless, Mexicanas worked at "women's work" in industry, candy factories, canneries and as domestic workers and seamstresses. In general they did not work in heavy industry, where wages were higher. When they worked alongside men, they were part of a dual-wage system. Other women worked in small businesses controlled by families, including boarding houses and restaurants. In spite of the increased numbers of women by the end of the 1920s, midwestern urban colonias remained disproportionately male.¹³

In agriculture, Chicano/a work and settlement patterns in the Midwest and Southwest had much in common. The Chicano/a southwestern experience during the early twentieth century has been portrayed as predominantly rural, the Midwest overwhelm-

ingly urban. In fact, agricultural labor has been a major part of midwestern Chicano/Chicana history since the first World War. Another perceived difference between the two regions is attributed to agriculture in the Southwest being dominated by large ranches and orchards, the Midwest by modest-sized holdings. Midwestern agriculture was based on family-sized and family-owned farms. In the early twentieth century it had neither large ranches nor crops that demanded large quantities of seasonal hand labor, except in the sugar beet industry, the major employer of Mexicans. Sugar beet workers were scattered among farms rather than clustered in large camps. Despite the size of these farms, the sugar beet industry was large-scale, modern and corporate, aggressively adopting scientific methods of planting and cultivation. Until the curtailment of overseas immigration, Europeans dominated sugar beet field labor. Unlike their experiences in midwestern factories, Mexicans quickly took over the beet fields. By the late 1920s they comprised about three-fifths of the total number of *betabeleros* (beet workers) in the region. At the same time Mexicans also took over field labor in other major beet- growing zones in the Great Plains-Rocky Mountain area and California.¹⁴

The Mexican predominance in the ranks of sugar beet workers was the result of unpleasant working conditions and poor remuneration that discouraged Europeans from staying, and aggressive recruitment by sugar beet companies. It differed from urban employment because it depended on women and children as well as adult men. Women were central to survival strategies. They worked in beet cultivation and harvest, tended gardens and canned local produce for family consumption, and performed other tasks essential to the total subsistence of the family. This gave them a degree of influence less evident than in the city, where the "cult of domesticity" kept most of them from work outside the home. Generally there was a close link between the beet fields and the cities. Sugar beet employment was seasonal, lasting from early Spring until October or November, after which employers discouraged workers from remaining in rural areas. While many people returned to Texas or the Mexican border, increasing numbers headed to nearby cities. If they were still unemployed in the Spring, or they determined it preferable to engage in family

labor, where total earnings could exceed those of men working by themselves at urban tasks, they returned to the fields. Like their European predecessors, they generally abandoned the sugar beets as quickly as possible. But they were replaced by new arrivals of Mexican descent, who continued to perform the labor assigned to the most recent immigrants.¹⁵

Midwestern Mexicans were not simply the last of the immigrants in a European tradition. They were the first major foreign-born population to migrate to the region from a Third-World country. Unlike European immigrants, particularly Germans and Scandinavians, they had little money to buy homes and farms or start up businesses immediately. Few were able to follow the more typical European pattern of working and saving for a few years with the subsequent purchase of homes and businesses in the cities or farms in the country.¹⁶ Even those with middle-class backgrounds in Mexico seldom had sufficient funds to start up businesses. As a result, Mexicans had a much smaller merchant or entrepreneurial class to form social and cultural groups characteristic of other urban ethnic communities. These cultural functions were fewer in the Mexican colonia, and were more often created by groups of workers through their *mutualistas* or the Mexican consulate. Mexican *mutualistas* and groups like the *Cruz Azul* also had an essential economic purpose in the local community, to provide for welfare and similar needs. They were necessary since Mexicans typically were excluded from public assistance.

Mexicans had less success in establishing their own churches than Europeans. The chapels dedicated to *La Virgen Morena* could not compare with the massive and powerful institutions founded by European immigrants. Mexicans faced a further complication in the form of Protestant missionaries who were convinced that they had to be converted to "Christianity." In effect, neither their efforts nor those of the Catholic Church had much impact, as midwestern Mexicans remained generally alienated from church organizations dominated by Euro-Americans and Europeans.¹⁷

Mexicans were further distinguished from most European groups in that they were largely migrants who continued to live outside the Midwest. Mexico and Texas served as labor reserves for the North, where costs were much higher. Their conditions of work

and social life suggest a much lower degree of upward social mobility than that of the European working-class immigrants in Stephan Thernstrom's *The Other Bostonians* and other similar studies.¹⁸

Within the context of Chicano/a history, the Midwest was an entirely new experience, a story of foreign immigrants in a world of immigrants. It was unlike the Southwest, which according to Barrera was not qualitatively different in the early twentieth century than in the nineteenth. In this sense, the Midwest had more in common with Nebraska and Northern Colorado, where Mexicanos and Mexicanas were also beginning to migrate as a result of employment in beet fields and cities.¹⁹

The 1920s in the Midwest were a period of great expansion of the Mexican population in agricultural and urban employment. Many urban neighborhoods were formed and began to stabilize, and by the end of the decade had a much more permanent Mexican presence than even a few years before. They would again experience a rapid upheaval as a result of the economic turbulence of the early 1930s.

The Great Depression

As in other areas of the country, the Mexican-descent population of the Midwest was profoundly affected by the Great Depression. It was a time of retreat. As industrial production declined, unemployment rates rose sharply. In places where urban workers retained their jobs they were reduced to two or three days of work a week. In the sugar beet industry, Mexicans had to accept lower wages and work smaller acreages. When anti-Mexican nativism surfaced, as it did in the Southwest, it focused on Mexicans who, as a highly visible group, were particularly vulnerable to attacks. They were mostly foreign-born and had the lowest rates of naturalization among immigrant groups in the region. As a result of the economic turbulence of the decade, the Mexican-descent population in the region changed sharply.²⁰

Midwestern industrial employers fired Mexicans first, often under pressure from public welfare agencies trying to reduce their rolls

by finding work for citizens. Unemployment among urban midwestern Mexicans was much higher than that of the population in general, which typically fluctuated from about one-fifth to one-third of able-bodied workers. In Mexican urban communities unemployment often rose to rates of 80 and 90 percent. Survival for Mexicans was even more difficult than for others because so few owned land that would have provided subsistence plots for gardens and animals.²¹

As unemployment rose, many midwestern Mexicans quickly left the region permanently. Departure was easier for individuals with weak ties, particularly single or married men supporting families in Texas and Mexico. Those who remained soon encountered increasing pressure from welfare agencies and police, who busied themselves encouraging repatriation in Mexican communities throughout the region.

Repatriation pressures in the Midwest, as in other parts of the country, were localized and selective. Within the ethnically diverse Midwest, Mexicans were the only group singled out for removal, as is evident from repatriation brochures and bulletins that appeared only in English and Spanish bilingual editions. Welfare workers and police were particularly active in informal and unsystematic efforts to encourage Mexicans to leave. They also became involved in a number of formal deportation drives, as in the Southwest. The repatriation programs further confirm that public sentiments in the Midwest against Mexicans were more hostile than against any European group.²²

Organized repatriation took place in cities such as St. Paul, Gary, East Chicago and throughout Michigan and Ohio. Local, regional and state police and welfare agencies often cooperated with federal immigration officials and prominent local citizens. Inspiration for local campaigns varied from one city to another. In East Chicago, the American Legion played an important role in repatriation in the highly visible, densely concentrated community. Largely because of efforts by local reformers affiliated with the settlement project at Hull House, who opposed repatriation, no formal plan emerged in Chicago. Detroit Mexicans, on the other hand, faced the best coordinated campaign, partly because the city's economy suffered so badly and because Mexicans were concentrated among a

handful of employers. In relative terms, repatriation in the Midwest was about three times more effective per capita than in the Southwest. Still more striking was the effect of the Depression farther east. Many small communities that formed after the outbreak of World War I in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and New York simply collapsed after workers departed in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Most midwestern communities were severely weakened and fragmented, but did not totally disappear.²³

The impact of repatriation on midwestern Mexicans during the Depression was countered by the sugar beet industry. Beet companies suffered in the early years of the Depression, but reorganized and survived. They actually hired more beet workers in the 1930s than in the 1920s. The domestic sugar industry expanded production as a result of securing a higher tariff for imported sugar in 1930. As a result, sugar beet acreage in the Midwest increased by roughly one-third during the early years of the Depression. Simultaneously, midwestern beet companies reduced individual acreage allotments by approximately a third to spread the work to more people and further reduce wages. Many unemployed Europeans returned to the beet fields, but because of the sharp decline in earnings, others were reluctant to leave the cities even when unemployed. Beet wages fell to a point where people who received relief payments or secured employment on government work projects earned roughly the same as individuals employed by sugar beet companies. Furthermore, welfare and relief projects were steadier, and offered a higher total annual income. The alternatives were not available to Mexicans, for county welfare agents in the beet districts established a policy of excluding them from receiving benefits. They had to return to the beet fields each year if they wanted to remain in the region and survive. Many former betabeleros who lived in the cities and lost their factory jobs also returned to the farms. In the early years of the Depression, city dwellers, both European and Mexican-born, replaced out-of-state migrants. They performed beet work during the season and returned to their permanent homes nearby in the late fall.²⁴

Because of the increase in jobs and the reluctance of Europeans to take them, the number of Mexicans who worked in the sugar beet industry did not change sharply from the late 1920s. This

short-distance migration between the cities and fields helped ensure the survival of many urban colonias. After the threat of repatriation subsided in the mid-1930s, they joined urban Europeans in unionization efforts in the midwestern fields. The multicultural alliances represented an opportunity for a stabilization of the agricultural work force, but employers thwarted them. In 1938, the corporations successfully broke the major beet worker organizational efforts in the region and intensified recruitment in Texas, which enabled them to flood the fields with thousands of Mexican American workers. The corporations thus initiated another transformation of the beet worker force.²⁵

The End of the Depression to the 1960s

Shortly before the United States' entry into World War II, the Midwest entered a long period of prosperity, and for much of the time it had the highest per capita income of any region in the nation. In order to prevent it from rising even higher, midwestern employers once again recruited workers from poorer places. They were able to find a readily available source of workers in a belt of states extending from Arkansas and Texas to Georgia. The new migrants included Blacks and Whites, who were much poorer than the more established Europeans. They could be distinguished culturally, and formed visible segments of the midwestern working class. Mexicans from Mexico and Texas augmented this native-born labor pool, and often worked alongside the newcomers in agriculture and industry. The growth of available opportunities and the greater number of contacts resulted in an increasing diversity of social and work relations for midwestern Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

These changes signalled a new phase of Chicano/a history in the Midwest. If measured by the recovery of migration from the South, it began in 1938 with the entry of the Texas strike breakers. By 1940 recruiters in urban industry also turned to the South for workers. One feature of this phase was the continued massive migration from Texas and Mexico to meet the demands of a booming economy. Another was a shift in the cultural tolerance of the mid-1930s that made possible multi-ethnic worker organizing

efforts in the beet fields. Nativism gained strength during the War and intensified with the coming of the Cold War.

With the wartime boom and urban industrial expansion, workers from the South began to enter packing plants, foundries, automobile plants and related feeder industries and shops. During the war many companies recruited workers directly from Texas. In later years workers came increasingly because of expanding networks of family and community that linked Texas and Mexico, or via agricultural work.²⁶

Employment in agriculture increased sharply due to expanded plantings of labor-intensive fruits and vegetables. By the end of the 1930s southwestern Michigan already proclaimed itself "America's Fruit Bowl," while other locations also grew fruits and vegetables for the region's fresh produce market. In addition, canneries appeared throughout the region, packaging sweet corn, peas, tomatoes, asparagus, pumpkins and many other fruits and vegetables for national consumption. Agricultural employers, with the help of an expanded Farm Placement Service of the United States Department of Labor, devised an elaborate system of recruiting workers of diverse backgrounds from local and distant sources. Those who came from the outside included southern Whites and Blacks, individuals from the British West Indies, Puerto Rico, Mexico and Texas. Between the late 1930s and the mid-1960s, the number of Mexican nationals and Mexican American seasonal farm workers increased in absolute and proportionate numbers, from under ten percent of the smaller workforce of the 1930s, to more than three-fifths of the total by the early 1960s. By the end of the period there were about a quarter of a million out-of-state farm workers employed seasonally in the Great Lakes region.²⁷

The Mexican-descent workers originated in both Texas and Mexico. The former were largely children or grandchildren of Mexican immigrants who settled in Texas. The difference in earnings between Texas and the Midwest was great enough so that northern capitalists could recruit Mexican Americans as a low-wage reserve labor pool. *Tejanos* frequently came north first as farm workers, deciding one or more seasons later to settle in the region. Unable to sustain themselves on agricultural labor, they seldom remained in the Midwest permanently unless they found additional

employment. Demographically, Texas was the greater source of migration during this period. Historically, migration of Mexicans to the Midwest has funneled through Texas. The predominance of Texas-born newcomers as workers and settlers during this period, however, was an exception to the more common trend in which the majority of those migrating to the region were born in Mexico.²⁸

Mexican-born immigrants came to the region under several different arrangements. Between 1943 and 1964 thousands were hired as *braceros*, contract workers under the international agreement of 1942 between Mexico and the United States. During the war some of them were railroad and industrial *braceros*, but most worked in agriculture. Afterwards the *bracero* program was restricted to farm labor. Some *braceros* skipped their contracts and remained in the Midwest while others, impressed by the region if not the work, later returned and became permanent settlers under different arrangements. A larger number of Mexican immigrants went directly to urban centers, gaining employment in shops, factories and at menial tasks in service activities. A few were recruited in Texas, but more came through informal family and community-based networks.²⁹

In addition to the new arrivals from Texas and Mexico, a generation of midwestern-born Mexicans appeared, the second- and third-generation children of immigrants from Mexico. With greater numbers and diversity, there was an increase in the variety and size of settlements where people of Mexican descent lived. New *colonias* appeared in most medium-sized cities and many smaller towns, while many established urban neighborhoods expanded. A general logic could be discerned in the patterns of residential distribution of the different groups. Recent Mexican immigrants commonly moved to the largest cities, into the old *colonias* or what remained of them after urban renewal and the construction of freeways. In big cities, the heart of the *colonia* increasingly took on a Mexican character, with more shops and services catering to an ever larger Mexican community. It was characterized by a larger and more visible business district, reflecting the expansion of a business class in response to demands for service from the Mexican-descent population. It took on many of the characteristics of an immigrant enclave. In the larger cities

there were typically several concentrations of Mexican-descent population. In the most important city, Chicago, in addition to new settlements, the port of entry for Mexican immigrants shifted from the Near West Side to the Pilsen district. While immigrants tended to occupy the older and more established neighborhoods, their children, who were born and reared in the Midwest, tended to move into the industrial suburbs, where they found more attractive employment. Mexican Americans from Texas, meanwhile, frequently moved directly into neighborhoods close to work, in large cities, industrial suburbs, medium-sized cities and smaller towns.³⁰

An added element in several larger cities beginning in the early 1950s was the appearance of concentrations of other Spanish-speaking immigrants, particularly Puerto Ricans. In some places they shared the same neighborhoods with Mexicans, while in others they moved into adjoining ones. Their presence represented an early stage in the formation of visibly Latino communities that became more clearly defined in later years.

The economic lure contributed to rapid growth and diversification of the population, which was now able to assert itself more than before. Many new social clubs and cultural groups formed to promote activities in local communities. The diversity occasioned internal problems, as natives of Mexico, Texas and the Midwest sometimes had to confront each other because of their differences. The era was a time of identifying with symbols that were American, and midwestern Mexicans also identified as Mexican Americans and Latin Americans. Yet the thrust of this Americanism was nativist, and to the flag-waving Euro-Americans, Mexican Americans were Mexican and not American, and considered foreign and unassimilable. Long-established residents as well as recent arrivals from Mexico faced contradictory pressures to accommodate in midwestern society during this generation. Children of Mexican immigrants, much more numerous than before, were influenced by assimilation and Americanization pressures that encompassed their lives: at school, at work, in the media and in public places. They were immersed in a world where the Mexican world and values did not mesh with the Anglo-American world. Mexican immigrants and migrants from Texas in many ways were more successful in forging a social and cultural world through new organizations for

Mexican Americans or Latin Americans, forming chapters of national organizations like the American G.I Forum or creating local organizations, often through local churches. Louise Año Nuevo Kerr suggests that the nativism of the period and the more visible Mexican presence in the region combined to abort assimilation of Mexicans in the Midwest. Facing conflicting signals, midwestern Mexicans faced a time of uncertain identity.³¹

The 1960s to the 1980s

Between the late 1960s and the 1980s the Midwest was characterized by a general economic decline. Reflecting the hard times, detractors have characterized the region during this period as the "Rust Belt." The region probably suffered more continuously than any other part of the country, because of the rapid mechanization of factory jobs, plant closings and transfers of production to other parts of the country and the Third World. As a result, the demand for factory workers has declined sharply. Thousands of people long established in the region found themselves without employment. A parallel phenomenon occurred in agriculture. It was characterized by accelerated mechanization of planting, cultivation and harvesting and the transfer of production. The demand for farm workers, which had been growing continuously between the late 1930s and early 1960s, fell precipitously. The decline was sharpest in the period from the late-1960s until the mid-1970s.³²

At the beginning of the period, the national Chicano Movement began, and its influence quickly spread to the Midwest. In cities throughout the region Chicano groups organized to pressure city governments and educators to improve their neighborhoods and public facilities, and to establish educational programs where youth could study about Mexican and Chicano culture. They also created new social, cultural and educational organizations, opened schools, and published newspapers and newsletters. In many cases their pressure on universities located near large Chicano/a populations led to the creation of Chicano and Latino academic programs. In rural areas Chicano/a farm workers were also active, organizing several indigenous unions. The most successful was the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), which has survived and served its

members more than 20 years. It won worker contracts in the late 1960s for a brief period, and again in the 1980s. Together these efforts have heightened awareness among midwestern Chicanos/as of their past and present, and contributed to the increasing tolerance for cultural diversity evident during this period. In many midwestern cities the struggles took place through alliances involving Mexican Americans and other Latino groups.³³

The rising Chicano Movement faced a number of obstacles. One emerged in the challenge to employers over work sites involving control of production and the work force. It has had an important bearing on recent midwestern Chicano/a history. In cities dependent on heavy industry, thousands of people lost their jobs, and many departed. In some locations, work shifted from heavy industry to small non-union shops and circulation tasks rather than production-oriented activities. As a result, some urban communities grew slowly or ceased to expand. It also made available jobs for women in the small, unorganized shops. The consequences of the decline in agricultural employment were somewhat different. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, thousands of agricultural workers from Texas were displaced by the rapid mechanization of cultivation and harvest operations. Government and private employment agencies, reacting to criticism from farm workers and their supporters, became active in efforts to encourage their settling in the Midwest. They developed educational and training programs and sometimes helped to finance the purchase or construction of houses. Many former farm workers found employment in shops and food processing plants in small and medium-sized towns, or moved to established colonias. The economic decline of the region reduced the wage differential between the Midwest and Texas and the attractiveness for worker recruitment. Employers in urban industry and agriculture increasingly turned to Mexico. Consequently, the recent period has seen migration to the region coming more from Mexico than Texas. The Chicano/a population of the region continued to expand rapidly, but mostly by natural increase rather than migration.³⁴

The sharp population growth of the period made possible the formation and expansion of larger and more heavily concentrated urban colonias, the most visible in Chicago. The ethnic enclaves

and business districts served both immigrant populations and the larger native-born clientele throughout the metropolitan areas. Many such districts have also become clearly visible in smaller cities and towns throughout the region. Despite the continuing tendency of Mexicans to spread out, central neighborhoods have become more concentrated to serve the demands of the larger population.³⁵

The period has also seen more migration from other Latin American countries and the formation of a Latino identity in the region. With greater numbers, Chicanos/as formed many new social organizations, community groups, and educational programs geared toward Latinos/as. Many have been effective in promoting the education, social and cultural concerns of the Mexican-descent population in the region. But this period witnessed a white backlash. One feature that appeared in the late 1970s was the promotion of a "Hispanic strategy," intent on thwarting the aggressive Chicano Movement. By labelling all Latinos as Hispanic, and intruding on self-determination, it has been particularly effective in deflating militants and creating divisions among people of Spanish-language background. The identity crisis that faced previous generations continued into the 1980s, although the rhetoric changed.³⁶

Conclusion

A central theme of midwestern Chicano/a history, whether in industrial or agricultural settings, is that people of Mexican birth and descent migrated to the region because of work. They entered a zone of advanced industrial capitalism as a wage-earning proletariat, working in factories and shops alongside European immigrants, and later with Blacks and Whites from the South. They were not accompanied by a bourgeoisie that could quickly establish itself, as were their European predecessors. The formation of an established business class was slow and sporadic, and the immigrant enclave became clearly defined only slowly. The historical experience of Mexicans in the Midwest has included a much smaller number of shopkeepers and businessmen than in the Southwest or in earlier European immigrant communities.

One might have expected greater opportunities in rural settings because the organization of agriculture was different than in the Southwest, where large commercial holdings dominated production. In the Midwest the family farm was the norm and family members performed the majority of the work. Yet very few Mexicans in rural areas were able to achieve the middle-class status of independent family farmers. Throughout their history in the Midwest, Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans have been employees of farmers and corporations, working for wages, or, more recently, "sharecropping," a sophisticated form of wage labor that has hindered farm worker organizing.³⁷

The Mexican experience in the region shares many characteristics of European immigrant history. Compared with the migrants to Texas, midwestern Mexicans adopted English more rapidly, their children more frequently attended schools, spoke less Spanish, and associated more with the non-Mexican population.

Yet compared with Europeans, their assimilation was much slower, as they continued to face discriminatory treatment in schools, public places and at work. Labor migration from permanent low-wage regions, a feature of neo-colonialism, continues to influence the Mexican presence in the Midwest. The migrants remained isolated from the majority population. Even after they became permanent residents, they and their descendants remained predominantly in the working class and retained a clear consciousness of their working-class roots. This is not the case with most of their European and Tejano counterparts. After four generations, features of the internal colony have survived in the Midwest.

Migration to the United States in general, and the Midwest in particular, must also be examined from its point of origin in Mexico. From a Mexican context, the twentieth-century Chicano/a presence in the Midwest represents a new northern borderlands. It is not the first. From the time of the European conquest in the sixteenth century, people from the heartland of Mexico have engaged in a series of northward migrations as workers and settlers. The northern fringes of settlement were frontiers between Mexican minorities and others who preceded them. On the northern frontier, Mexican settlements were sparsely populated

and isolated from each other. Migration from Central Mexico had been taking place for three generations before Mexicans first settled in the upper Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries they established many scattered settlements in present-day Texas and California. In the twentieth century they have spread to the Great Plains, the Pacific Northwest and the Midwest.

There have been several common features to these thrusts. The first settlers in the northern borderlands region were migrants who followed material inducements, particularly work or the chance to acquire land. Their early years were tentative and hesitant, accompanied by frequent retreats. After the initial entry, several generations passed before they established firm population bases. The greatest inducements have taken place during the past century, as capital penetration from the United States induced and accelerated the flow of workers north from Mexico.³⁸ Despite the recent slowing of migration, the intensified flow of capital between Mexico and the United States suggests that the migration of workers from Mexico to the Midwest will not cease.

NOTES

- ¹ For overviews, see Juan Ramón García, "Midwestern Mexicanos in the 1920s: Issues, Questions and Directions," *Social Science Journal* 19, 2 (April 1982): 89-90; Gilbert Cárdenas, "Los Desarraigados: Chicanos in the Midwestern Region of the United States," *Aztlán* 7, 2 (Spring 1976): 153-86; Gilbert Cárdenas, "Who Are the Midwestern Chicanos: Implications for Chicano Studies," *Aztlán* 7, 2 (Spring 1976): 141-52.
- ² Important efforts to include Chicanos within immigration and ethnic history literature include Thomas J. Archdeacon, *Becoming American: An Ethnic History*. (New York: Free Press, 1983); and John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America*. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1985).
- ³ Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking, 1846-1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966; Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).
- ⁴ Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Chicago and the Calumet Region* 7, 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), p. 25.
- ⁵ Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), p. 63.
- ⁶ W. Kim Heron, "Study Seeks Reason for Drop in Minority Enrollment," *Lansing State Journal*, April 18, 1979; "Chicano and Hispanic Student Concerns Advisory Committee, Michigan State University, Interim Report," June 1988; Elia Basurto, Doris P. Slesinger, and Eleanor P. Cautley, *Hispanics in Wisconsin, 1980—A Chart Book*, (Madison: Department of Rural Sociology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Cooperative Extension Service, 1985); Kenneth A. Shaw, "Design for Diversity, University of Wisconsin System: A Report to the Board of Regents," April 7, 1988.
- ⁷ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 167.
- ⁸ Michael Buroway, "The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor: Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States," *American Journal of Sociology* 81, 5 (March 1976): 1050-87.
- ⁹ Dennis Nodín Valdés, *Al Norte: Agricultural Workers in the Great Lakes Region* (Austin: University of Texas Press, forthcoming).

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MEXICANS IN KANSAS CITY: THE FIRST GENERATION, 1900—1920

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Specialists in the ethnic history of the United States increasingly have come to recognize that persons of Mexican descent constitute a truly national minority whose presence extends far beyond the traditionally defined "Spanish Borderlands" region. In the Midwest and Great Plains, for example, significant Mexican¹ *colonias* have existed in Chicago, Detroit, Gary, Omaha, Kansas City, Oklahoma City, and numerous smaller urban areas for as long as 75 years. Despite the number and longevity of these communities, scholars have undertaken relatively few systematic examinations of their history and internal dynamics. One historian recently decried the lack of a comprehensive history of people of Mexican descent in the Midwest; he challenged his colleagues to revise and reexamine existing studies, seek additional sources of information, and develop research models in order to produce a more accurate and comprehensive history of this group.² Before such an encompassing synthesis is possible, however, considerably more spade work in specific localities throughout the region is necessary. An examination of the foundation and early development of the Kansas City³ colonia between 1900 and 1920 provides insights into the patterns and processes which marked the rise of significant Mexican immigrant settlements throughout the Great Plains, the Midwest, and elsewhere beyond the borderlands. This period witnessed the arrival and settlement of thousands of Mexican immigrants who, despite an alien and frequently hostile environment, survived prejudice and hardship, created institutions

which enabled them to maintain their cultural identity, and established an enduring ethnic community.

Although a few Mexicans lived in the Kansas City area during the 1800s, significant settlement did not occur until the twentieth century. This settlement was part of a broader pattern of Mexican migration to the interior of the United States. Before and after the turn of the century, Mexicans in their homeland experienced an oppressive combination of peonage, population growth, concentration of land ownership, stagnant wages, inflation, and general economic instability. These social and economic pressures annually forced thousands of *campesinos* to seek employment in the United States. Concomitantly, the rapid expansion of American agriculture, mining and industry, and growingly restrictive immigration policies created increasing demands for unskilled labor not only in the contiguous southwestern border states but also in the Plains and the Midwest. Mexicans conveniently and willingly filled these requirements.

The Central Plateau region in Mexico—which includes the populous states of Guanajuato, Michoacán, Jalisco, Zacatecas, and San Luis Potosí—most sharply felt the effects of Mexico's problems and provided the vast majority of Mexican workers and settlers in Kansas City and the Midwest during and after the period under consideration. Several Mexican railroad lines extended from the Central Plateau to Laredo and El Paso, Texas—major recruitment centers for Mexican labor along the border. When they reached the border, however, natives of the Central Plateau discovered that their countrymen from northern Mexico had saturated the labor market. As a result, labor agents recruited and dispatched them via the United States railway network to more distant distribution points.⁴ Kansas City emerged as the major interior employment and distribution center, feeding Mexican workers throughout the Plains, Midwest, and elsewhere.⁵

Three major waves of immigration between 1900 and 1920 created the Mexican community in Kansas City. The first group of new immigrants came between 1900 and 1910 and consisted primarily of *solos* (transient, unaccompanied males). They usually worked for railroads, industries such as meatpacking, or in agriculture and typically returned to the border after completing their labor obligation. Since the Kansas City labor market could

not sustain most of these workers on a year-round basis before World War I, the number of Mexicans in the city fluctuated greatly. During this prewar period, however, the permanent barrios of Kansas City originated. After their contracts expired, some workers remained in the city. Railroad companies such as the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (Santa Fe); Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific (Rock Island); St. Louis and San Francisco (Frisco); Missouri, Kansas and Texas (Katy); and Chicago, Burlington and Quincy (Burlington) permitted their workers to live in boxcar settlements. Other Mexicans in the urban area secured employment which allowed them to stay continuously, while some agricultural workers from the Plains and Midwest chose to winter in Kansas City rather than return to the border.

After the Mexican Revolution erupted in 1910, a second element, comprised of refugees seeking security, asylum, or economic opportunity, joined the migratory stream. The violence of the revolution discouraged many Mexicans from returning home or to the border and increased their tendency to remain. The upheaval, furthermore, expelled a more affluent class of Mexicans whose migration did not depend upon the labor market. Many of these immigrants were of the *hacendado* class or professionals, who commonly brought their families with them. Although they sometimes sought remunerative jobs during their stay in Kansas City, they did not engage in migrant labor and consequently augmented the more permanent Mexican population.

The third and most significant wave of Mexicans settled in Kansas City during World War I. After the outbreak of hostilities, immigration from Europe virtually ceased. Labor shortages and higher wages, plus an intensification of civil strife in Mexico, served to attract increasing numbers of Mexicans to Kansas City. The exemption of Mexicans from the Immigration Law of 1917, which had imposed a literacy test and a head tax, and assurances that Mexican men would not be required to serve in the armed forces of the United States further encouraged Mexican migration.⁶

During the war years, opportunities for better-paying, secure, and steady employment in meatpacking plants, construction, steel and automobile production, and other industries opened to Mexicans. Evidence suggests that this period was also an important

era of family migration and stable, long-term settlement in Kansas City. Judith Fincher Laird demonstrates that the social composition of the Argentine, Kansas, barrio changed dramatically as the relative proportions of females to males and children to adults increased sharply after 1915. She notes that children under eighteen comprised approximately 15 percent of the Mexican population in Argentine in 1915; ten years later it would reach 44.5 percent. Further indication of significant change in settlement patterns is the fact that in 1915 over 82 percent of the Mexican males in Argentine were boarders. By 1925, only 19 men in a total population of 566 held that status.⁷ After 1915, therefore, family units and extended family groups comprised the bulk of the Mexican settlement in Argentine. It seems reasonable to surmise that other barrios in Kansas City reflected similar characteristics as well.

The colonia in Kansas City encompassed six principal barrios—three in Kansas and three in Missouri. On the Kansas side, the largest was the Santa Fe railroad camp in Argentine. A second settlement arose along the tracks in the West Bottoms and Armourdale. A third was located in the old milling town of Rosedale, where the Frisco and the Katy railroads had established boxcar camps for their track workers. On the Missouri side, the barrios also had close ties to the railroad industry. The most important was an urban settlement on the Westside bluffs, overlooking the Kaw River. Mexicans first came to this area in 1909 to work on the construction of Union Station and continued to reside there after it was finished. The other barrios included a small railroad camp in the Burlington yard in North Kansas City and another in the eastern Sheffield district along the Blue River.⁸

It is impossible to determine precisely the number of Mexicans residing in Kansas City during the period under consideration. Laird's excellent study of the Argentine barrio clearly demonstrates the deficiency of federal and state census data. These decennial statistics serve only as rough approximations of population and immigration trends. In 1900, federal census takers reported that 27 Mexicans lived in Kansas City (three in Kansas and 24 in Missouri). The total rose to 335 in 1910, with 102 on the Kansas side and 233 in Missouri. By 1920, the official count had reached 3,836—2,039

in Kansas and 1,797 in Missouri. Laird believes, however, that the censuses of 1910 and 1920 significantly undercounted Mexicans, and she convincingly argues that a more accurate total for the metropolitan area in 1920 would be approximately 10,000.⁹

Contemporary Anglo¹⁰ observers uniformly depicted members of the colonia as representatives of the unlettered, impoverished, peon class. Even a longstanding spokesman for Kansas City Mexicans would later remark that his compatriots were "illiterate laborers who eked out a living by working for the railroad, in the packing plants, and at the most menial jobs."¹¹ Colonia residents, however, represented rather heterogeneous social and economic backgrounds. Though the large majority came from the campesino and laboring classes, Mexican immigrants included minor clerical, military and political functionaries, skilled miners and railroad employees, artisans, petty merchants, and other self-employed individuals. After 1914, a growing number of landowners, physicians, lawyers, engineers, and educators settled in Westside and elsewhere in Kansas City, Missouri.¹² Except for a fortunate few, however, migration imposed broad social levelling. Even those of the "middle class" seldom spoke English; few professionals could pursue their careers, and employment was available in only the least desirable jobs. One writer has noted that "whether they had lower or middle-class backgrounds, Mexican immigrants, with the exception of a handful of professionals, were virtually reduced to the same level."¹³

The Anglo majority perceived Mexicans in distinctly unfavorable terms. The comments of municipal welfare agents, private charitable and religious organizations, even elite members of the colonia itself, project a patently negative stereotype of the Mexicans' low status, appearance, personal habits, and general lifestyle. Dr. Thomas E. Purcell, a Catholic layman who devoted much time and effort assisting the Westside barrio, later reflected upon his initial encounter with Mexicans in 1914:

They were of the Peon class Their . . . clothing (the men) consisted of a pair of rough shoes, overalls, a shirt and a sombrero. It was their dress everyday of the week, including Sunday . . . they were curiosities, often not shaving or getting a haircut for weeks at

a time. The hovels in which they lived did not provide bathing facilities and with their dark coloring, they looked dirty and probably were.¹⁴

In August 1913, the Board of Public Welfare of Kansas City, Missouri, published a report delineating the city's major social problems. The report described the colonia as being

commonly composed of a class of people who are shiftless and improvident . . . not acquainted with American language and customs Other workmen hold a prejudice against them on account of their racial characteristics. When injured they usually do not receive sufficient treatment in hospitals They frequently do not receive justice at the hands of the police and courts because they do not have an interpreter of their language. They do not readily become acquainted with American institutions and customs because there are not sufficient means available for them to learn our ideals and incentives for right living.¹⁵

In surveying the "McClure flats" section of the city, the report stated that Mexicans were "for the most part, of low civilization They mingle and cohabit freely with negroes of the lowest type and frequently get into the courts."¹⁶ A group of volunteer social workers hoped that their activities would help the Mexicans "see standards of neatness and cleanliness" because "their ignorance and backwardness had affected their level of living, and values they placed upon hygiene of home and person needed to be raised."¹⁷

Since Mexicans were the last major immigrant group to arrive in Kansas City, they competed with or ultimately displaced other ethnic groups in certain low-wage occupations in transportation, industry, and agriculture. Contemporary accounts, recent studies, and interviews with long-standing residents of the colonia demonstrate that almost all Mexican men worked for a railroad at one time or another. Prior to 1914, they typically held short-term, seasonal contracts. As a group, Mexicans comprised the lowest-paid strata. They performed menial, dirty, repetitive jobs, gradually replacing both the "old" and "new" European immigrants as well as native-born workers, who disdained such unappealing tasks. Since the construction of most major railroad lines had been completed prior to the influx of Mexican workers, they came to monopolize track

maintenance operations. Initially filling positions on extra gangs, they shuttled from place to place. Extra gang employment, however, frequently led to more stable positions on a section crew. Less often, Mexicans obtained work in the yards and shops. Despite the fact that railroads paid higher wages beyond the borderlands, many track workers became dissatisfied with their nomadic life style, deserted the railroads, and took other unskilled jobs in the region.

Reflecting the Santa Fe's growing dependence upon Mexican workers and an alarming turnover rate, in 1912 the company began to provide more suitable living quarters on railroad property for Mexican laborers and their families.¹⁸ The following year, the Santa Fe issued English-Spanish dictionaries to all foremen in order to facilitate better communication with their crews.¹⁹ By 1917, wartime labor shortages had boosted the wages to \$2.25 per 10-hour day, and some railroad companies paid as much as \$3.00. Opportunities increased for Mexicans in the higher-status, steadier shop positions as well. During the war, the Santa Fe and Rock Island even employed Mexican women as unskilled shop workers and track laborers. All of these developments stimulated more permanent residency in Kansas City.²⁰

By 1910, Mexicans had also gained employment in Kansas City meatpacking plants. Although Mexican workers would not be numerous until after 1920, one investigator has aptly noted that meatpacking, as well as railroad employment, was "basic for Mexicans" in Kansas City.²¹ Again, wartime labor shortages increased opportunities for work in packing houses, which generally held the added advantage of year-round employment. Mexicans in Kansas City also found work in a wide variety of private and municipal construction projects, on the traction lines, with the terminal company, on nearby farms and ranches, in stock yards and rendering plants, in mills, and in sundry service jobs.²² In some instances, they brought indigenous crafts to Kansas City. In 1915, at least 15 immigrants worked for one of their countrymen producing and selling Mexican hammocks.²³

Thousands of itinerant Mexicans utilized Kansas City as a base for cyclical migratory work patterns throughout the interior of the United States. Kansas City-based labor suppliers and company-

operated employment agencies dispatched Mexicans to Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Colorado, Oregon, Texas, and all points in between for work in railroad construction and maintenance; cotton, wheat, corn, sugar beet, and fruit harvests; public work projects; and a variety of industrial jobs. After completing contractual or seasonal obligations, Mexican laborers returned to Kansas City to await the next assignment.

The place and nature of employment and economic realities determined the location and quality of the Mexican immigrant's residence. In general, they occupied the worst types of housing in the least desirable sections of town. Most lived in or near the bottom lands between the two cities. This rugged district contained railroad yards and shops, packing houses, oil refineries, mills, stockyards, and soap and glue factories. The air lay heavy with noxious odors, smoke, dust, and noise.

Most railroad workers typically lived in boxcar camps. In these crude settlements, situated in the yards or on sidings, workers slept on straw or rough bunks. Even the "improved" housing which the Santa Fe furnished for its workers after 1912 consisted of uncomfortable shacks made from scrap pieces and cheap, second-hand materials including old ties, rails, and sheet metal. The company supplied no furniture, plumbing, or electrical facilities. Workers assigned to the yards often lived packed together in a single large building called a section house; others crammed into small two-room section huts.²⁴ Initially, their peripatetic work life, low wages, and free or cheap housing restricted them to the railroad camps. Often, however, they were prevented from obtaining habitations outside the encampments. For example, the Burlington railroad provided boxcar quarters for its Mexican workers, but it did not permit them to live in a working-class residential district adjacent to the yard built by a concern of which the company was part owner.²⁵

The less spacially-segregated workers, who were not employed by the railroad companies, gradually replaced or joined other immigrant groups and a substantial Negro population in nearby neighborhoods, where they occupied small houses, tenements, cheap hotels and other flophouses. Many solos took lodgings with other Mexicans and their families. Public welfare officers in Kansas

City, Missouri, were appalled at the conditions in which Mexicans lived. In 1913, they determined that most Mexicans resided in "plague spots . . . cursed with crime, immorality, disease and contagion, bad housing and other evils."²⁶ Former one-family residences were filled with as many families as they could accommodate. In November 1907, the growing slum conditions in areas Mexicans inhabited had moved the West Side Council to request that police visit the houses and arrest those found living in unsanitary circumstances. A police raid of one residence resulted in the arrest of 13 Mexicans.²⁷ This action prompted an immediate protest from the Mexican consul. He complained that landlords refused to spend the money required to upgrade their substandard properties and ameliorate the miserable living conditions. He extracted a promise from the district attorney to prevent any similar raids in the future.²⁸

The worst living conditions existed in the cheap flophouses that Mexican transient laborers often patronized. These establishments were uniformly overcrowded, unclean, and unsanitary. They lacked privacy, bathing facilities, and toilet accommodations. With no place but their beds or cots to spend their idle hours, the men collected on corners and curbs or passed their time in pool halls and saloons.²⁹ The Westside barrio was a district that lacked paved streets, adequate garbage collection, and sewers. Along Twenty-Third and Twenty-Fourth Streets—the heart of the barrio—city welfare investigators reported:

. . . we find Mexicans living with their families. As their standard of living is so much lower than ours, the landlord keeps them feeling perfectly at home by lowering the standard of housing to that to which they are accustomed Needless to say, everything is filthy.³⁰

Low status, endemic poverty, poor living conditions, language barriers, an alien environment, and general insecurity led to sporadically aggressive, often violent, behavior. Although criminality was perhaps no greater among Mexicans in Kansas City than it was among the city's other groups in similarly depressed circumstances, robberies, assaults, murders, and other social disturbances were common in the colonia. Most reports of aggressive behavior involving Mexicans reveal that the conflicts arose among

fellow countrymen. A recent study of 43 violent incidents occurring between 1914 and 1920 indicates that only 13 cases involved one or more non-Mexican participants.³¹

Personal conflicts frequently had tragic results because many Mexican men carried some kind of weapon, usually a knife or pistol. Such a practice was a violation of local laws, and Kansas City judges imposed heavy fines upon transgressors because the incidents were so common.³² In 1916, the Mexican consul secured the release of several groups of Mexicans who had been arrested by convincing the authorities that the men were ignorant of the laws. He announced, however, that he would not continue to intervene if Mexicans continued to violate the law.³³

Robbery was a principal motive for serious crime in the colonia. The amount of money stolen was often trifling—one Mexican was fatally shot for the three dollars in his pocket.³⁴ On occasion, however, the sum was as high as one hundred dollars or more. Mexican workers' inexperience and inability to speak English often discouraged them from utilizing banking institutions. Consequently, they carried all their money with them—perhaps an entire season's savings—and were tempting targets. Since Mexicans commonly wired money by postal money order to support their wives, parents, or other dependents who remained in Mexico, such losses threatened not only the workers' own means of survival but also that of their families at home.³⁵

Other causes of violence in the colonia included romantic rivalries, family disputes, and drunkenness. Drinking was a pastime which frequently led to conflicts.³⁶ There were a number of *cantinas* in or near the Westside barrio, and they, along with billiard parlors, became the scenes of recurrent confrontations. A favorite gathering place among Mexicans was the Hotel Paraíso in Westside. The fact that a number of American prostitutes made the establishment their headquarters undoubtedly added to its popularity. Police raided the "Paradise" on repeated occasions and arrested numerous Mexicans on various charges. Its history of scandal and drunken revelry ultimately led local authorities to close the hotel in 1916.³⁷ Twenty-Fourth Street in Westside was another area which prompted considerable police attention and vigilance. Residents of the colonia, however, complained that overzealous law enforce-

ment officers mistreated Mexicans, accosted and frisked them without due cause, and harassed women and children.³⁸

Negative stereotyping, prejudice, and exaggerated reports of criminality engendered discrimination and segregation. Although the barrios were never completely enclosed ethnic islands, Mexicans remained physically and culturally isolated from the Anglo community at-large. They routinely faced exclusion from certain residential areas, restaurants, theaters, churches, and recreational facilities throughout the city. A Protestant missionary group working among the Mexicans declared that "they were hounded and ostracized, and no one apparently took any interest in either their moral or social welfare . . ."³⁹ Another contemporary commented that "they were not accepted by American society even in its lowest form."⁴⁰

The Mexicans' dark skin subjected them to racial discrimination analogous to that which Negroes experienced. In Kansas City, Kansas, Bell Memorial Hospital placed darker complexioned Mexicans in Negro wards and lighter skinned Mexicans in "white" units.⁴¹ In Kansas City, Missouri, Mexicans bitterly resented their assignment to Negro wards or annexes in the city's hospitals and clinics and the custom of burying Mexicans in segregated cemeteries. In January 1916, after the Mexican consul's intervention, Mayor Henry J. Yost proclaimed that such practices would terminate. Mexicans rejoiced that the "inhuman practice of treating Mexicans like Negroes" had ended, but they pledged further protests against the insulting portrayal of Mexicans in moving pictures and the actions of "police chiefs and judges who mercilessly mistreated" Mexicans.⁴² The new guidelines evidently did not endure. In the early 1920s, hospitals and clinics still refused to admit Mexicans as "white" patients. The institutions' personnel declared that the Mexicans' inability to speak English, rather than their race, had determined the policies.⁴³

Despite the fact that Mexicans were almost uniformly Roman Catholic, Catholic authorities responded belatedly and ambivalently to their spiritual and physical needs. Initially, religious officials did not promote membership in local churches. Established parishes lacked Spanish-speaking priests, and parishioners did not welcome the newcomers. Some Mexicans refused to attend Mass because

Anglos regarded them as curiosities and laughed at their dirty or unusual dress and disheveled appearance.⁴⁴ A year after he ultimately gave permission for a priest to begin a mission in Westside, Bishop Thomas E. Lillis revealed both a general ignorance of their circumstances and a clear intention to provide separate facilities for Mexicans. In response to the Spanish Discalced Carmelites' request to create a foundation in Kansas City, he stated:

I do not know how the priest is doing here with the Mexicans I will be glad to have you build a church and house to be for the benefit of the Mexicans. The church should be in the midst of the Mexican Colony and for them only There must be a great many of them in and around Kansas City.⁴⁵

In spite of widespread exclusion in other respects, Mexican children freely attended public and parochial schools in or near the barrios. Dr. Purcell commented that the two public schools near the Westside barrio were "filled with Mexican children."⁴⁶ After 1920, Mexican youngsters in Missouri continued to attend their neighborhood public schools, but Kansas City, Kansas, established rigidly segregated educational facilities for them.⁴⁷

One salient result of such prevalent discrimination and isolation was the colonia residents' marked disinterest in seeking United States citizenship—a common characteristic of Mexican immigrant behavior in other parts of the United States as well. In Kansas City, only Greek and Russian immigrants had a lower naturalization rate than Mexicans. Local government officials were clearly aware of this phenomenon. In 1919, a federal court officer in Kansas City, Kansas, stated that the naturalization of Mexicans was virtually an "unheard of proceeding." He estimated that only two Mexicans a year applied for first papers. Prior to 1920, not a single Mexican became a United States citizen through the federal court in Kansas City, Kansas. Apparently only about a dozen did so in the Missouri federal court during that same time.⁴⁸ This refusal to acquire United States citizenship placed Mexicans outside the local political processes and deprived them of an opportunity to exert pressure on local authorities to protect their rights.

Given the segregation and discrimination that citizen minorities—most notably Blacks—experienced in the Kansas City, Mexicans could not reasonably expect that naturalization would mitigate the prejudice and exclusion they experienced in housing, jobs, and social life. The few who did seek naturalization encountered ridicule and harassment from their countrymen. Even the Mexican consuls discouraged naturalization, believing that Mexicans enjoyed greater protection as aliens than as citizens.⁴⁹

As the official representatives of the Mexican government, the consuls were to look after Mexican citizens and business interests within their jurisdiction. Located in Kansas City, Missouri, the consular district included a portion of Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Since Kansas City had only limited business contacts with Mexico, especially after the outbreak of the revolution, the consuls' single most important duty was to oversee the needs of their compatriots.⁵⁰

The consuls performed this task with varying degrees of enthusiasm and success. After 1910, protracted political turmoil in Mexico and strained relations with the United States caused frequent changes in consular officials, reflecting the kaleidoscopic character of the Mexican government itself. This factor of instability alone limited the consulate's effectiveness in dealing with local conditions. Prior to 1914, consuls apparently concerned themselves with problems in the colonia only infrequently. In September, 1914, a group of Mexicans in Kansas City successfully petitioned the government of Venustiano Carranza to remove Consul Eduardo Velarde, charging that he was a counter-revolutionary and an opponent of the Constitutionalist program. More importantly, they complained that he was indifferent to the plight of Mexicans in Kansas City, "despised" and "did not appreciate" his own people, did nothing to combat the economic abuse of Mexican workers, used the consulate as a business office and commercially exploited his countrymen, and refused to promote patriotism in the colonia or cooperate with Mexicans who were trying to do so.⁵¹

The petition clearly outlines what the colonia expected of the consuls. Some of these officials were active in their support of local Mexican organizations and helped sponsor patriotic celebrations.

They also provided interpreters for Mexicans involved in court proceedings, helped secure insurance payments or indemnities for injured laborers and their families, supplied employment information, held money for safekeeping, and performed a variety of other services. The colonia residents clearly viewed the consul as their principal spokesman in Kansas City and official liaison to their homeland. It appears that most Mexicans were not so much concerned about a consul's particular political affiliation as his effectiveness and willingness to represent the interests of the colonia. They recognized that he, more than anyone else, had an access to the local power structure that no other Mexican possessed. Although consuls often did serve as effective intermediaries between the colonia and local officials and did help resolve particular disputes or seek redress for specific grievances, they did not measurably alter the essential status or condition of Mexicans in Kansas City.

The attitudes and conditions that diminished their opportunities to interact with Anglo society forced colonia residents to turn inward. Between 1900 and 1920, they relied primarily upon one another to seek and share the rewards and benefits of community life by developing their own ethnic institutions and activities. The arrival of Spanish-speaking priests, who had fled the virulent anti-clericalism of the Mexican Revolution, prompted the creation of the first Mexican Catholic parish in Kansas City. In 1914, Father José Muñoz, a Spanish priest who had escaped hanging and fled Mexico the previous year, and Father Cirilio Corbato, an exiled Spanish Discalced Carmelite, established a storefront church in a vacant house in Westside.⁵² When their cramped facilities could not accommodate the growing number of communicants, members of the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Men's Club helped the priests acquire a larger building.⁵³ Attendance at Mass soon grew to several hundred, as Mexicans from throughout the city "filled the street and adjoining yards and knelt during the entire ceremony on the sidewalk and pavement."⁵⁴ In 1917, the Men's Club acquired a second building to serve as a parish school. In September, two Mexican members of the Sisters of St. Joseph opened the school for 54 children in grades one through six. Female Catholic public school teachers offered English classes for children and adults in

the evenings and on Saturdays.⁵⁶ In 1919, the Men's Club purchased the vacant Swedish Immanuel Lutheran Church building in Westside and converted its large basement into a three-room elementary school. Dedicated on October 5, 1919, Our Lady of Guadalupe became the principal religious and educational center of the colonia.⁵⁶

In 1919, a group of Catholic laywomen founded the Agnes Ward Amberg Club, inspired by a Chicago woman's work among Italian immigrants. Devoted to both religious and social purposes, the club worked closely with Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, organized a Sunday school, taught English classes, conducted a health clinic and home visit program, created a lending library, and distributed food and clothing to needy families. They oversaw a variety of recreational and handicraft activities for Mexican children including sports, sewing, weaving, clay modeling, music, and folk dancing.⁵⁷

Various Protestant denominations also responded to the religious and social needs of the colonia. During the especially severe winter of 1912-1913, when many Mexican families suffered unemployment, hunger, and cold, a group of women associated with the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) of the Fifth District in Kansas City, Missouri, opened a soup kitchen in an abandoned store on Twenty-Fourth Street. They fed hundreds of men, women, and children and conducted a Sunday school. In 1917, the group established a permanent mission with the creation of the Mexican Christian Institute (commonly called the *Instituto Cristiano*) in Westside. Reverend and Mrs. R.G. Estill, a Spanish-speaking Anglo minister and former missionary in Mexico, oversaw the institute's activities. In addition to the customary religious services and classes, the institute supplied interpreters, offered job referrals, provided food, clothing, medical and dental assistance to the needy, and wrote letters for the illiterate. By 1920, membership in the congregation reached about 50.⁵⁸ Other Protestant churches established specifically for Mexicans included Westside's *Primera Iglesia Bautista Mexicana*; the Protestant Evangelical *Misión Mexicana* in the Sheffield area, which offered religious services, Sunday school, English lessons, and sewing classes; and the *Iglesia Evangélica Mexicana* in Armourdale.⁵⁹ Competing denominational

services apparently heightened religious tensions within the colonia. An Anglo Catholic layman noted derisively that

The non-Catholic church workers of the whole city were engaged in trying to save those poor 'benighted' people by trying to get them into their churches. Am glad to say that their converts were few and not of a type that were a credit to the Mexican people.⁶⁰

On the other hand, after a group of Protestants (Mexican and Anglo) acquired ownership of the colonia's newspaper in 1919, they initiated a scathing attack upon the Catholic church and clergy. One article condemned the Mexican practice of "rendering homage to the Catholic clergy." It charged that the church in Mexico had always cooperated with the great landowners to oppress the people, that priests had uniformly discouraged education and preached fatalistic submission to oppression and blind adherence to church dogma, and that priests were "enemies of the progress of our race" and desired only to keep the people "oppressed, ignorant, and passive."⁶¹ The paper accused priests in Kansas City of forbidding Mexican children to attend the public schools "because they are Protestant." It also charged that discipline in Our Lady of Guadalupe's parochial school was cruelly harsh: "We have seen three or four children with their little faces . . . red and inflamed as a result of the mistreatment received at the school." The paper claimed that the "black robes" wanted to withdraw the children from public schools in order to "continue holding this poor race, who has so long supported them, in ignorance."⁶² Although these sentiments reveal that religious differences did create divisions among Kansas City Mexicans, the paucity of available data on the subject does not permit a clear understanding of their extent or ultimate impact upon colonia society.

Despite such intra-ethnic conflicts, enforced isolation from Anglo society and institutions spurred Mexicans to establish a number of patriotic, *mutualista*, and social organizations to meet their fundamental needs for recognition, fellowship, recreation, and economic security.⁶³ In July 1914, during a celebration commemorating the death of Benito Juárez, a Westside group decided to establish the first exclusively Mexican national society, the *Unión Mexicana Benito Juárez* (UMBJ). They rented a place on Twenty-

Fourth Street and recruited members from throughout the colonia. The UMBJ later added two women's auxiliary groups—*Las Hijas de Juárez* and the *Sociedad Mexicana de Señoras y Señoritas*—and at least one branch organization in Topeka.⁶⁴ Although its leadership was comprised largely of affluent professionals and their families, the UMBJ professed the manifold goal of aiding Mexicans in distress, protecting their countrymen from abuse, combatting negative stereotypes, and promoting ethnic unity.⁶⁵

At the UMBJ's regular Sunday afternoon meetings, which commonly attracted 100 or more participants, members sang patriotic and popular Mexican songs, presented recitations, speeches, and musical shows, discussed literary works, and heard lectures on such wide-ranging topics as psychological disorders, personal hygiene, venereal diseases, the evils of alcohol, and infant care. The group held a variety of charity and fund-raising activities such as dances, concerts, and dinner parties. Although the organization did collect money for the needy, its leading members apparently required little charity themselves.⁶⁶ Another major activity of the UMBJ was the organization of festivities recognizing Mexican national holidays such as the *Cinco de Mayo* and *16 de Septiembre* (Mexican Independence Day). Hundreds of Mexicans from throughout the colonia attended these demonstrations of national celebration and allegiance.⁶⁷

Consistent with its goals of defending the rights of Mexicans and the honor of their homeland, over the years the UMBJ actively protested the Santa Fe railroad's mistreatment of Mexican workers, encouraged Mexicans to join labor unions, and established a commission to improve the teaching of Spanish in the public schools.⁶⁸ Although evidence indicates that the organization achieved few, if any, of its immediate aims in Kansas City, one of the group's initial activities did bring prompt, tangible results. In September 1914, the UMBJ spearheaded the movement to replace Consul Eduardo Velarde with someone more sympathetic to colonia needs. A petition drive seeking Velarde's removal was organized by Manuel A. Urbina, president of the UMBJ. The petitioners asked the Mexican government to appoint as consul Dr. Pedro F. Osorio, the principal founder and later president of the society.⁶⁹ In October, the Constitutionalist government acceded to

the demand by naming Osorio to head the Kansas City consular district.⁷⁰

A variety of other exclusively Mexican societies were formed before 1920. In 1917, the Kansas City chapter of the National Benevolent Society began to offer sickness and death benefits to its members. The *Sociedad Mutualista Mexicana*, established in 1918, provided its nearly 200 members similar services. The *Casino Mexicano*, which had well over 200 members, was an essentially elite social club. The *Club de Madres Mexicanas* studied English, sewing, and modern housekeeping methods. Women in the *Círculo Literario* discussed recent works written in both English and Spanish. The *Club Mexicano de Kansas City* (Kansas) held weekly dances, sponsored national celebrations, and established a small library.⁷¹

Although there does not appear to have been any attempt to unite these various groups into a single, more powerful organization, it is likely that there was considerable overlapping membership. The orientation and content of UMBJ meetings and the activities of such groups as the Casino Mexicano and the Club Literario, however, suggest a degree of educational and economic privilege enjoyed by only a small elite and inconsistent with the status of the vast majority of colonia residents. Except for the strictly *mutualista* activities, therefore, most Mexican organizations represented the interests of only a small segment of colonia society. The petition drive to replace Velarde does indicate, however, that the elite could marshal the support of their working-class compatriots. Many who supported the drive to remove the consul were illiterates who had someone else sign the petition for them. It is not clear at this time how long any of the various organizations endured, but they were, significantly, the only institutions in the colonia whose creative initiative came wholly from the Mexicans themselves.

As the establishment of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and the UMBJ reveal, by 1920 the Westside barrio had become the focal point of colonia institutions and activities. It occupied a key location beside the railroad and street railway systems and near places of employment in the industrialized lowlands and in downtown Kansas City, Missouri, whose well-integrated Metropol-

itan Street Railway System, which crisscrossed both cities, served to create a unified urban complex and made Westside a central location for all Mexicans in the greater Kansas City area. Since there was little vertical integration of the rail lines on the Kansas side, Mexicans in such places as Argentine could reach Westside and downtown Kansas City, Missouri, more easily than they could downtown Kansas City, Kansas. Colonia residents living in barrios outside the streetcar system could walk to Westside.⁷²

Because of its favorable location, Westside also became the preferred site for scores of Mexican-operated business enterprises that had primarily or exclusively Mexican clientele. The most intensively commercialized district stretched along Twenty-Fourth Street. Here, Mexicans patronized a wide variety of commercial and professional establishments. Hotels and rooming houses offered accommodations. Restaurants, confectioneries, pool halls, and movie theaters provided food and recreation. United States-trained Mexican physicians and pharmacies with Mexican personnel attended to medical needs. Mercantile companies and currency exchanges offered financial facilities. Lawyers, printers, labor agents, transfer and storage companies, bakers, barbers, and tailors supplied their services. Artists, musicians, voice instructors, photographers, book dealers, English and Spanish teachers, and many others sought the patronage of their countrymen.⁷³

The creation of commercial enterprises represents another phase in the transition of the Mexican settlements from a rough collection of work camps to a more unified ethnic community. The availability of goods and services within the colonia's familiar milieu diminished Mexicans' need to interact with the larger community and, as a result, intensified their psychological and physical isolation from Anglo society. Certainly, such separation further inhibited their ability to confront and resolve the problems Mexicans faced in Kansas City. But the nascent social infrastructure provided an environment which nurtured, supported, and protected the immigrants as they struggled to survive in an unresponsive and hostile setting.

El Cosmopolita, a Spanish-language newspaper published in Kansas City, reveals valuable insights into the dynamics of colonia life prior to 1920. In August 1914, Manuel and Juan Urbina founded

this four-page weekly, which for years proudly claimed to be "the only Mexican newspaper" published beyond the borderlands. Reflecting comprehensive objectives of ethnic solidarity, the editors sought to unite the Mexicans in Kansas City, inform their readers of Mexican and international events, protect the interests of the colonia, and defend and uphold the national honor and dignity of Mexico.⁷⁴ In addition to news items and editorials, the paper contained a literary page, cultural features, biographical sketches, classified advertisements, announcements, personal ads, and an extensive employment section which listed job opportunities, wages, and contacts throughout the United States. Although its editors consistently claimed to be absolutely independent of any political faction or party, throughout its entire existence *El Cosmopolita* was a decided, at times strident, supporter of Venustiano Carranza and his Constitutionalist movement in Mexico.

Over the years, *El Cosmopolita* devoted special attention to affairs in the colonia. Editorializing in front-page stories, the paper detailed the plight of immigrants who were victims of fraud, robbery, abuse, and discrimination. Editors exposed *enganchadores* (labor contractors) who exploited workers, insurance companies that cheated clients, *casas de cambio* (money exchanges) which defrauded Mexicans sending money to their families in Mexico, railroad companies that mistreated workers, police authorities who abused and harassed Mexicans, and public and private institutions that discriminated against them.⁷⁵

The paper frequently noted, however, that prejudice and discrimination in Kansas City often resulted from the Mexicans' own ignorance of the language, laws, and customs of the United States. Often adopting a moralistic tone, *El Cosmopolita* chastised Mexicans for wasting their time and money in pool halls, cantinas, and other centers of vice.⁷⁶

This critical editorial posture suggests that the elite believed that their compatriots' unacceptable behavior contributed to the prejudice and negative stereotyping that all Mexicans experienced. While elite-sponsored organizations and functions underscored their desire to promote the idea that Mexicans were an educated, cultured, and civilized people, the group condemned actions which

belied that image and diminished their own stature in the eyes of the Anglo majority.

Numerous editorial pronouncements in *El Cosmopolita* parallel ideas and programs which the American Progressives advanced at the same time. The paper encouraged immigrant children and adults to take advantage of educational opportunities, learn English, acquire business and technical skills, and develop habits of good citizenship.⁷⁷ The ultimate goals of the Progressives were to Americanize the newcomers, open to them a richer life in the United States, and allow them to become productive and participating American citizens. At no time, however, did *El Cosmopolita* actively promote either assimilation into American society or the acquisition of citizenship. The paper's constant theme was that Mexicans were in the United States only temporarily and would consequently return to their homeland. They should utilize their time effectively in order to develop new knowledge and skills that they could employ later to enhance the progress and prosperity of Mexico.⁷⁸

Unfortunately typical of most newspapers established by Mexican immigrant groups at the time, *El Cosmopolita* suffered from a precarious financial base throughout its half decade of existence. Within the colonia, the number of Mexicans literate even in Spanish was small. Local advertising revenue was inadequate, and the newspaper evidently always operated at a loss. During its most vigorous period, *El Cosmopolita* survived only through subsidization by its Anglo owners' other business interests.⁷⁹ By early 1919, when yet another group from within the colonia took over its operation, *El Cosmopolita* began a rapid period of decline. In November 1919, the paper ceased publication with its two hundred and seventy-fifth issue.

By 1920, Mexican religious, social, economic, and cultural institutions in Kansas City created a fragile network of relationships which formed the initial bonds of ethnic cohesion. Within this framework the conscious awareness that they shared a common tradition, culture, and lifestyle strengthened their resolve to develop and maintain an increasing degree of unity and fellowship. Between 1900 and 1920, the Kansas City colonia had gradually evolved from a crude collection of transient workers' encampments

to a readily identifiable ethnic settlement. Rapidly changing circumstances in the United States, Mexico, and Europe had provided a unique conjunction of forces that pushed and pulled thousands of Mexican immigrants into alien, and at times inhospitable, surroundings. Although most of these early immigrants ultimately returned to Mexico, a more extensive and permanent movement to Kansas City would follow during the 1920s. The "first generation," however, had marked the way, laid the foundations, and created the institutions that would provide an ambience of familiarity and security. The "second generation" in Kansas City would encounter natives—perhaps relatives and friends—from their own region in Mexico, who spoke their own language, participated in familiar social and religious institutions, and shared an environment that would facilitate permanent accommodation to, if not integration with, the dominant Anglo culture.

NOTES

¹ For the purposes of this paper, the term "Mexican" shall refer to both Mexican-born and US-born persons of Mexican descent, unless specifically indicated otherwise. For the period under discussion, evidence clearly indicates that the overwhelming majority of those in the colonia in Kansas City were born in Mexico. Their ranks clearly included an indeterminable number of persons who had been born in the United States—a proportion of the community that would increase greatly in the years after 1920.

² Juan R. García, "Midwest *Mexicanos* in the 1920s: Issues, Questions, and Directions," *The Social Science Journal* 19, no. 2 (April 1982): 89-90.

³ Unless noted otherwise, "Kansas City" will refer to the greater metropolitan area, which includes both Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri.

⁴ Recent studies of the causes of Mexican migration include Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897-1931: Socio-Economic Patterns* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980) and Arthur F. Corwin, ed., *Immigrants and Immigrants: Perspectives on Mexican Migration to the United States* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978). Less valuable is John R. Martínez, *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1910-1930* (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1971). Still indispensable are Manuel Gamio's *Quantitative Estimate, Sources and Distribution of Mexican Immigration to the United States* (México, D.F.: Talleres Gráficos y "Diario Oficial," 1930); *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Adjustment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930); and *The Mexican Immigrant: His Life Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931). Judith Fincher Laird, "Argentine, Kansas: The Evolution of a Mexican American Community, 1905-1940" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1975), 79-106, contains an extensive discussion of the origins of Mexican migration to the Kansas City area. A series of interviews contained in the "Trabajo y Cultura Project (Mexican Labor and Culture)," an oral history project of the Kansas City, Kansas, Spanish Speaking Office (1980) housed in the Manuscripts Department of the Kansas State Historical Society (Topeka), also demonstrates the significance of the migration from the Central Plateau region to Kansas City.

⁵ Victor S. Clark, *Mexican Labor in the United States*, Bulletin of the Department of Labor no. 78 (Washington, D.C., 1908), 475, first noted Kansas City's significance as an interior distribution center.

⁶ A number of excellent and informative graduate theses examine Mexicans in Kansas. These include Marian Braun, "A Survey of American Mexicans in Topeka, Kansas" (M.A. thesis, Emporia State Teachers College, 1970); Héctor Franco, "The Mexican People in the State of Kansas" (M.S. thesis, University of Wichita, 1950); Laird, "Argentine, Kansas"; Socorro M. Ramírez, "A Survey of the Mexicans in Emporia, Kansas" (M.S. thesis, Kansas State Teachers College of Emporia, 1942); Paul Lin, "Voluntary Kinship and Voluntary Associations in a Mexican American Community" (M.A. thesis, University of Kansas, 1963); and Larry G. Rutter, "Mexican Americans in Kansas: A Survey and Social Mobility Study, 1900-1970" (M.A. thesis, Kansas State University, 1972). J. Neale Carman, *Foreign Language Units of Kansas*, vol. 1, *Historical Atlas and Statistics* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1962) and his "Foreign Language Units of Kansas," vol. 2, Typescript, University of Kansas Library, Lawrence, Kansas, are indispensable for the study of Mexicans in that state. Robert Oppenheimer, "Acculturation or Assimilation: Mexican Immigrants in Kansas, 1900 to World War II," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (October 1985) is a fine recent contribution. Although very helpful in providing the general outlines of the Mexican experience in the Midwest and plains states, Paul S. Taylor's monumental ten-part *Mexican Labor in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928-1934) contains little specific information on the Kansas City area.

⁷ Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 162-163.

⁸ Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 42-50.

⁹ U.S., Department of the Interior, Census Office, *Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900: Population* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1901), 766-767; U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910: Population* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1913), 1095; U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920: Population* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1923), 565-567. Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 66-79, offers a fine discussion of the unreliability of census statistics. A further indication that federal census data is of questionable reliability for the Mexican population in this area is the Kansas City Board of Public Welfare's report that there were over 2,000 Mexicans there in 1913. Board of Public Welfare, *Social Prospectus of Kansas City, Missouri* (Kansas City, Missouri: The Research Bureau of the Board of Public Welfare, 1913), pg. 12.

¹⁰ "Anglo" is used in this paper to identify those people who were neither Mexican nor Negro.

¹¹ *Kansas City Journal-Post*, 26 August 1934.

¹⁴Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 91-100; *El Cosmopolita* contains numerous biographical sketches, personal features, and scattered references which reveal the varied social, economic, and political composition of colonia residents.

¹⁵Lin, "Voluntary Kinship," 58.

¹⁶Thomas E. Purcell, "Mexican Story," Typescript, Guadalupe Center Collection, Part III, File 11, Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, 1.

¹⁷Board of Public Welfare, *Social Prospectus*, 12-13.

¹⁸Board of Public Welfare, *Social Prospectus*, 69.

¹⁹Dorothy E. Hoffman, "Services Rendered to Mexican Groups in Kansas City, Missouri, Through Guadalupe Center" (M.A. thesis, University of Missouri, 1938), 52.

²⁰L. C. Lawton, "Erecting Mexican Laborers' Houses," *Santa Fe Employees Magazine* 5 (September 1911): 75-76.

²¹Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 125.

²²Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 132.

²³Carman, "Foreign Language Units of Kansas," 216, 893.

²⁴Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," passim; *El Cosmopolita*, passim.

²⁵*El Cosmopolita*, 3 April 1915.

²⁶Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 31-39, 121-127; Lawton, "Erecting," 75-76; Simeón Urende, interview by author, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 27 February 1979; Lin, "Voluntary Kinship," 27.

²⁷Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 47.

²⁸Board of Public Welfare, *Social Prospectus*, 6.

²⁹*Kansas City Times*, 6 November 1907.

³⁰Consulado de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Kansas City, Missouri, 7 Noviembre 1907, "Mexicanos. Buenos oficios del Cónsul de Kansas en su favor," Expediente L-E-1398, Archivo

Histórico de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (hereafter cited as AHSRE), México, D.F., 1-3.

²⁹Board of Public Welfare, *Social Prospectus*, 6, 36-37, 58, 69, 75.

³⁰Board of Public Welfare, *Social Prospectus*, 63.

³¹Suzanne Haynes, "A Quarrel Among Mexicans: A Study of Aggression in the Colonia of Kansas City," Typescript in possession of the author, 1982, 3.

³²See, e.g., *El Cosmopolita*, 20 November 1915; 11 March 1916; and 21 June 1919.

³³*El Cosmopolita*, 20 May 1916.

³⁴*El Cosmopolita*, 1 January 1917.

³⁵Haynes, "A Quarrel Among Mexicans," 5.

³⁶Haynes, "A Quarrel Among Mexicans," 5-9.

³⁷Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 52-53; *El Cosmopolita*, 22 October 1914; 29 April 1916.

³⁸*El Cosmopolita*, 6 March 1915.

³⁹"Mexican Christian Institute," Pamphlet in the Vertical File "Foreigners in Kansas City," Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, 1926, 2.

⁴⁰*Kansas City Journal-Post*, 26 August 1934.

⁴¹Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 192.

⁴²*El Cosmopolita*, 1 January 1916.

⁴³Sister Rodríguez [?], "History, Thesis, Partial Paper and Objectives," Typescript, Guadalupe Center Collection, Part III, File 7, Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, n.d., 11-12.

⁴⁴Purcell, "Mexican Story," 1.

⁴⁵Thomas F. Lillis, Bishop of Kansas City, to Fr. Cirilio Corbato, 21 November 1915, in Cirilio Corbato, "Relación del origen de estas casas de América según declaración del Padre Cirilio de la Virgen María," Typescript in possession of the author, n.d., 18.

⁶Purcell, "Mexican Story," 1.

⁷Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 193.

⁸Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 189-191.

⁹*El Cosmopolita*, 17 November 1917; 11 October 1919; Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 188-189.

¹⁰Luis A. Peredo, "Memorandum para el Lic. Eliseo Arredondo," 5 Febrero 1915, "Jack Danciger, su expediente personal," Expediente 31-17-19, Parte I, AHSRE, México, D.F., 53.

¹¹Manuel A. Urbina, et al., to Venustiano Carranza, Kansas City, Missouri, 11 Septiembre 1914, "Expediente personal de Pedro F. Osorio," Expediente 4-20-33 (I), AHSRE, México, D.F., 46-47.

¹²John T. Duncan and Severiano Alonzo, *Guadalupe Center: 50 Years of Service* (Kansas City, Missouri: n.p., 1972), 28; Corbato, "Relación," 7, 9-11; Lin, "Voluntary Kinship," 29.

¹³Purcell, "Mexican Story," 1-2; Corbato, "Relación," 11-12; Dorothy Gallagher, "Introduction to Scrapbook of Guadalupe Center, 1922-1944," Typescript, Guadalupe Center Collection, Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri, n.d., 3-4; Duncan and Alonzo, *Guadalupe Center*, 29.

¹⁴Purcell, "Mexican Story," 2.

¹⁵Purcell, "Mexican Story," 2; *El Cosmopolita*, 4 August 1917; 29 September 1917.

¹⁶Gallagher, "Introduction," 5; Purcell, "Mexican Story," 2-5; Duncan and Alonzo, *Guadalupe Center*, 21-29.

¹⁷*The Agnes Ward Amberg Club* (n.p.: December, 1919), 1. This bulletin may be found in the Guadalupe Center Collection, Missouri Valley Room, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri; Purcell, "Mexican Story," 4-5; Duncan and Alonzo, *Guadalupe Center*, 31-36; Hoffman, "Services Rendered," 30-33, 46-53.

¹⁸"Mexican Christian Institute," 1-2; Duncan and Alonzo, *Guadalupe Center*, 15-20; *Kansas City Journal*, 22 January 1922; Lin, "Voluntary Kinship," 31-32.

¹⁹See scattered announcements and advertisements in *El Cosmopolita*.

²⁰Purcell, "Mexican Story," 1.

⁶¹*El Cosmopolita*, 15 March 1919.

⁶²*El Cosmopolita*, 22 March 1919.

⁶³A good introduction to the mutualista societies is José Amaro Hernández, *Mutual Aid for Survival: The Case of the Mexican American* (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1983). Although focusing on activities in the 1960s and 1970s, Ricardo Parra provided a good introduction to mutualista and other societies in "Midwest Chicano Organizations: Past, Present, and Possibilities," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southwestern Sociological Association; Dallas, Texas; March, 1974.

⁶⁴*El Cosmopolita*, 22 October 1914.

⁶⁵*El Cosmopolita*, 28 November 1914; 2 January 1915; 13 March 1915; 6 May 1916.

⁶⁶*El Cosmopolita*, 1 October 1914; 7 November 1914; 27 March 1915; 1 May 1915; 15 May 1915; 5 June 1915; 3 July 1915.

⁶⁷*El Cosmopolita*, 27 March 1915; 18 September 1915; 9 August 1919; 20 September 1919.

⁶⁸*El Cosmopolita*, 22 August 1914; 22 October 1914; 19 June 1915; 3 July, 1914.

⁶⁹Manuel A. Urbina, et al., to Venustiano Carranza, Kansas City, Missouri, 11 Septiembre 1914, "Expediente personal de Pedro F. Osorio," Expediente 4-20-33 (I), AHSRE, México, D.F., 46-47.

⁷⁰Isidro Fabela to Pedro F. Osorio, México, D.F., 13 Octubre 1914, "Expediente personal de Pedro F. Osorio," Expediente 4-20-33 (I), AHSRE, México, D.F., 35.

⁷¹*El Cosmopolita*, 17 July 1915; 26 February 1916; 4 March 1916; 24 February 1917; 1 September 1917; 15 September 1918; 28 September 1918; Lin, "Voluntary Kinship," 92-93.

⁷²Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 50.

⁷³Between August 22, 1914, and November 15, 1919, sixty-six establishments advertised or were mentioned in *El Cosmopolita*. These enterprises included: Rooming Houses (7), Restaurants (5), Pool Halls (4), Mercantile Companies (4), Barbers (3), Pharmacies (3), Spanish Teachers (3), Labor Agents (3), Currency Exchanges (2), Hotels (2), Physicians (2), Lawyers (2), English Teachers (2), Tailors (2), Movie Theaters (2), Transfer and Storage Companies (2), also Second-hand Store, Painter/Decorator, Seamstress, Commercial Cooperative, Bakery, Book Dealer, Voice Instructor, Artist, Musical Group, Photographer,

Grocery Store, Confectionery, Tobacco Shop, Bible Salesman, Printer, Sewing Machine Salesman, General Merchandise Store, and Newspaper—all one each. It is, of course, most likely that a number of other concerns existed but did not advertise in the paper. See *El Cosmopolita*, passim, and Laird, "Argentine, Kansas," 51-53.

⁴*El Cosmopolita*, 22 August 1914.

⁵*El Cosmopolita*, 29 July 1916, 22 February 1919, 8 February 1919, 6 March 1915, 1 January 1916.

⁶*El Cosmopolita*, 25 May 1918.

⁷*El Cosmopolita*, 7 November 1914; 27 March 1915; 25 May 1918; 4 March 1916; 1 February 1919.

⁸*El Cosmopolita*, 11 October 1919; 7 October 1916; 15 June 1918.

⁹Jack Danciger, A Kansas City, Missouri, businessman, owned and/or edited *El Cosmopolita* between October 1915, and January 1919. The vast majority of advertising space during this time was devoted to promoting Danciger's mercantile company, distillery, breweries, and other enterprises. Danciger had business ties to Venustiano Carranza's family, actively supported the Constitutionalist government, and served as Mexican Consul in Kansas City between 1915 and 1916. Ignacio Richkarday, *Jack Danciger: His Life and Work*, trans. Ann Marie Swenson (n.p.: 1963) provides biographical data, but it must be used with caution.

MEXICANS, INTERETHNIC VIOLENCE, AND CRIME IN THE CHICAGO AREA DURING THE 1920s AND 1930s: THE STRUGGLE TO ACHIEVE ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS

F. Arturo Rosales

John R. Chávez in *The Lost Land* suggests that since Mexicans have been in the Southwest longer than Anglos, they have a similar claim to the land as the American Indian and that identification with the heritage of the old Hispanic Southwest remains strong. Mexicans who lived in the Mexican North during the early nineteenth century identified with the land, the flora, and the fauna as intimately as American Indians. He further asserts that as immigrants from Mexico arrived in the Southwest, they assimilated the "Lost Land" identity as though returning from a diaspora.¹

That notion is one of the most popular and enduring images of Chicano ethnic identity that has emerged from the Chicano intellectual community in recent years. The following passage by the sociologist Alfredo Mirandé reinforces Chávez's thesis:

Chicanos strongly resist the notion that they are somewhat transplanted or imported 'immigrants.' Not only has the Chicano been in America for a long time but . . . they did not come to the United States, rather, the United States came to them.²

There is no doubt that for many Chicanos whose ancestors have been in the Southwest for many generations, Mirandé's and Chávez's positing is relevant. This is not as true for recent immigrants from Mexico and their descendants who make up the

majority of the present Chicano population. Southwest Hispanic traits were important in influencing the identity of incoming immigrants only where a residue of old Hispanic culture remained strong in smaller communities in South Texas, southern New Mexico and southern Arizona. Ironically, few immigrants from Mexico settled in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, where traditional southwestern culture was even stronger.³

Chavez's "Lost Land" imagery is not as relevant in Mexican immigrant enclaves that mushroomed throughout the last decade of the nineteenth century and still continue to grow in Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, El Paso, and to a lesser degree in San Antonio. These cities were built by Anglos or were Mexican communities whose Hispanic character was greatly reduced by Anglo encroachment.

Consequently, Mexican immigrants in these cities found few familiar surroundings outside of their immigrant *colonias*. They looked back to their homes in Mexico for their roots, rather than the old Hispanic Southwest. A major source of ethnic identity stemmed from the perception of being foreigner in an Anglo America, where the core culture had become firmly entrenched in the early part of the nineteenth century.

Even in cities such as Los Angeles, where Mexican origins were still obvious in the 1920s, large-scale immigration was so intense during the decade that it buried the "Lost Land" consciousness held by native *Los Angelenos* and *Sonorenses* who arrived in the city before the 1880s. Ricardo Romo's study of Mexicans in Los Angeles demonstrates that immigrants knew they were in a foreign environment and that most intended to return to Mexico. The fact that Mexican immigrants in the early part of the century noted their presence in the United States as forming a colonia, suggests that they saw themselves as outsiders in a foreign setting.⁴

This essay, which looks at the rise of ethnic consciousness among Chicago's earliest Mexican immigrants in the 1920s as they responded to hostile treatment, relies on this premise. About 70 percent of the Mexican immigrants to Chicago were from the west central plateau states in Mexico and they had little kinship with the Southwest to begin with, unlike many immigrants from northern

Mexico. When they talked about leaving for the North, whether to Monterrey in the northern Mexican state of Nuevo Leon, or across the border to Texas and the Midwest, migrants from west central Mexico simply referred to the destination as *el norte*. In fact, many immigrants to Chicago indicated that they could not bypass Texas fast enough because of the reputation which the state had regarding the treatment of Mexicans.⁵

Once in the Chicago area, which between 1919 and 1930 acquired the fourth largest Mexican community in the United States, Mexicans were simply one more in a long line of immigrant groups who fulfilled the labor needs of the huge industrialized city. Like southern Negroes, they were recruited during World War I to work in railroads at a time of labor scarcity. Eventually both groups found jobs in the stockyards and in the steel mills, replacing American Anglos and European ethnic whites who were drafted into military service after 1917.

By the late 1920s, six identifiable immigrant colonias existed south of the Loop along the lake shore to the neighboring Indiana suburbs of East Chicago and Gary. Close to thirty thousand Mexicans were scattered in these communities, and they settled into neighborhoods already established by other ethnic groups such as Poles and Italians. Sometimes the older ethnic groups moved out as Mexicans moved in. More often they stayed, but not without reacting adversely to the new arrivals.⁶

In spite of their common origin, not all Mexican immigrants arriving in Chicago in the 1920s identified with each other. Like other newcomers to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, most Mexicans in Chicago came from an agricultural village environment and were from a part of the world which was barely acquiring a sense of nationhood.⁷

Even though Mexico acquired its independence from Spain in 1821, nationalism was slow to develop in the nineteenth century. What little nationalism there was, rose in response to the constant interference of outside powers, such as the invasions by the United States in 1846 and France in 1862. Limited economic modernization and integration during the *Porfiriato* (1875-1910) also played a role in nurturing this sentiment. But growing nationalistic feelings in

this early era mainly affected the urban upper classes, usually in Mexico City. The rest of the nation remained steeped in a *patria chica* (small fatherland) regionalism. A widespread national consciousness did not begin appearing in Mexico until the Mexican Revolution of 1910, reaching its zenith in the 1920s.⁸

For example, Luis González, in his classic study of San José de García, a village located in a primary immigrant-sending region of northern Michoacán, stated:

We can be sure that those who lived here before 1861 knew each other very well but had hardly any knowledge of human beings or events anywhere else. At the turn of the twentieth century not much had changed. On the eve of the revolution their lives were beginning to be affected by nationalistic sentiment, an interest in politics and an awareness of the outside world . . . but the majority were unaware of the move toward nationalism, or even toward regionalization.⁹

The majority of the immigrants who came to the United States were from the small towns, villages, and *haciendas* in the provinces, not the urban upper classes. They carried this sentiment of *patria chica* with them rather than a defined national identity. As a consequence, Mexicans did not arrive in Chicago, or any place else, as cohesive groups. Friends and relatives from the same village or province in the old country lived and socialized together forming parochial clusters within the large enclave. Often the immigrants would physically segregate themselves in sectors within the *barrios*. *El Michoacanito*, for example, a one-block area in the Indiana Harbor section of East Chicago, Indiana, acquired its name because of the large number of immigrants from Michoacán living there. In addition, some of the ethnic organizations had a preponderance of members who originated in the same province of Mexico.¹⁰

Explaining why it was difficult for Mexicans to form an umbrella ethnic organization which would represent all of the Chicago Mexican groups in the 1920s, a Mexican immigrant suggested that the provincialism of Mexicans from some states in Mexico and their antipathy for those from other states kept the Mexican colonia disunited.¹¹

Divisions based on regional origins were further complicated by significant class differences. During the Mexican Revolution, a sizeable portion of the Mexican urban middle classes and elites, who looked down on their poorer compatriots, immigrated to the United States. Some came to Chicago. The wife of a businessman who was one of many Mexicans from the middle classes in Chicago said, "The people from Old Mexico here disgrace the real Mexicans. . . . The people that are here were either servants or mountain Indians." This feeling was repeated often by many other Mexicans from her class.¹²

Since about ninety-five percent of the Mexicans arriving in Chicago were Catholic, there can be no doubt that religious homogeneity served as a cohesive factor carried over from Mexico. But sometimes even religion served as an obstacle to cohesion. Anglo Protestants successfully proselytized among Mexicans (many of whom were only nominally observant) and bitterly divided the colonias along Catholic-Protestant lines. This division also reflected the conflict in Mexico between ardent Catholics and anti-clerical liberals who had waged a battle against the church throughout the nineteenth century and who continued the struggle until the 1920s.¹³

In spite of these divisions, Mexicans acquired an exalted form of immigrant nationalism and cohesiveness very early in the formation of the Chicago colonias, a phenomenon common to other urban Mexican immigrant enclaves in the United States. Characteristic of this emerging identity was an exaggerated loyalty to Mexico coupled with a dutiful celebration of the Mexican patriotic holidays (*Fiestas Patrias*) and an overwhelming desire to return to Mexico. In short, a *México Lindo* (Beautiful Mexico) mentality absorbed the identity of the colonias.

This initial stance was crucial for political activity in later years among assimilationist-minded, second-generation Mexican Americans and immigrants who stayed in the United States. The transition from the *México Lindo* posture of the 1920s to an involvement in local politics and labor union activity during the 1930s and 1940s was accomplished on the back of a strong nationalistic base that was unwittingly laid by the immigrant generation.

But if on the eve of large-scale immigration into Chicago, nationalism was very poorly developed in immigrant-sending areas of Mexico, why was it evident in the Mexican colonias in Chicago and other cities almost as soon as the immigrants arrived? The answer to this seemingly paradoxical question is that the emotions associated with devotion and allegiance to the homeland were acquired in the United States by thousands of immigrants as they were confronted by adversity.

Paul S. Taylor, a University of California economist who conducted extensive studies of colonias in Chicago and other areas in the United States during the 1920s, noted that among Mexicans in Chicago: "First there is a strong emotional attachment to Mexico and patriotism is heightened as the Mexicans themselves sometimes note, by their expatriation."¹⁴ He also made a similar observation in South Texas: "Mexican citizens in the United States are very patriotic, with . . . an exaggerated patriotism of the reluctant expatriate."¹⁵ An editorial appearing in *La Prensa* of San Antonio during the 1920s echoed the feeling: "They [the Mexicans] know that patriotism augments and increases" in the United States. Taylor interviewed a Mexican in Chicago who told him, "The Mexicans become patriotic here and they want to celebrate but they don't even know the Mexican national hymn."¹⁶

A vehicle had to exist, however, for bringing nationalist ideology into the United States, and before it could be embraced, the sentiment had to cut across regional, religious, and class divisions within the colonias. As indicated above, many middle-class immigrants who came to Chicago had been, in Mexico, a "critical core"—imbued with nationalistic feelings. They appealed to their more provincial compatriots by manipulating cultural symbols from a blueprint with which they were intimately familiar. From the ranks of the more educated and refined immigrants, for instance, came the publishers of newspapers and officers in the immigrant organizations. They cajoled and harangued their countrymen, most of whom came from a humble background, on the necessity of maintaining *mexicanidad* (Mexicaness).¹⁷

In the 1920s, *El Amigo del Hogar*, a Spanish weekly published in East Chicago by conservative Mexican refugees from Jalisco,

expressed the following concern about the upcoming Fiestas Patrias in 1927: "We don't doubt that those persons who are patriots at heart and proud of belonging to the race of Cuauhtémoc and Hidalgo will know how to behave correctly and decently in accordance with the most august principles demanded by our national pride." (Translation by author.)¹⁸

But why would this class, who in Mexico was elevated above the common people, bother to unite with an element that back home they would have avoided? One reason is that immigrant identification with Mexico and fellow compatriots increased as they felt the rejection by non-Mexicans. An immigrant in Chicago, for example, told Taylor, "The more wrong they [non-Mexicans] say about Mexico the more I love it. On Mexican national holidays I may rub shoulders with a prostitute but on that day we forget it."¹⁹

Early in the history of the colonias, however, middle-class immigrants assumed the upper-class behavior which they themselves held in high esteem and felt would protect them from prejudice and rejection. When put to the test such optimism proved unwarranted. The son of a businessman who felt he was above the common immigrant said, "There are so many low-class Mexicans here it makes it hard for other Mexicans."²⁰

At times, immigrants who were white or from the upper classes were given preferential treatment, but this was an exception rather than the rule. A movie theater owner in Indiana Harbor explained that even though Mexicans from the better classes were not objectionable to his other customers it was easier to separate them in the theater based on their nationality. Subsequently, in 1927 *El Amigo del Hogar*, the Indiana Harbor colonia newspaper, advocated boycotting the Garden Theater, stating, "we should be treated the same as the white race."²¹ On another occasion in Chicago, a landlord was about to rent an apartment for \$25 a month to a racially white family not knowing they were Mexican, but when they spoke in Spanish, he immediately raised the price.²²

Then in 1929, the culture-conscious members of the Chicago Mexican elite complained bitterly about the manner in which a Chicago newspaper reported a major theatrical event taking place in their community. A *Chicago Daily News* review of the operetta

"*Marina*" began with the derisive comment that "This is the first time the residents of 'tamaletown' have done such a program." Similarly, an article in the *East Chicago Daily Calumet*, describing a cultural presentation held at the local Mexican Baptist Church, patronizingly described the success of the event by stating that "The Mexicans surprised everyone with their fine program."²³

Since Anglos did not readily recognize class differences and rejected Mexicans on racial and cultural grounds, middle-class immigrants found this constant discrimination humiliating and made common cause with their working class-compatriots. A former merchant who had an opportunity to go into business with an Anglo refused the offer because of the latter's disparaging remarks about Mexicans. "Even though he did not refer to me it hurt me," said the merchant. "I loved my country and respected my people. . . . I know many Mexicans who feel that way."²⁴

In Chicago, influences of the Mexican intellectual elites were felt from as far away as San Antonio, Los Angeles, and Mexico City. In the 1920s, through mail links, articles published in more established Mexican newspapers of southwestern cities were reprinted in the Chicago Spanish-language media. In addition, *La Prensa* of San Antonio enjoyed a wide readership in the Chicago area. And on more than one occasion, Mexican political and intellectual luminaries visited the colonias. In 1928, for example, José Vasconcelos, the famous Mexican philosopher gave a speech to Mexicans in Chicago in which he likened their situation in the United States to Jews in Egypt during biblical times.

We are but the children of Israel passing through our Egypt here in the United States doing the onerous labors, swallowing our pride, bracing up under the indignities heaped upon us here. If we expect to return and escape all this, as good Mexicans ought to, then we should show interest in the affairs of our country from this Egypt of ours.²⁵

Thus, in spite of the parochial outlook of lower-class immigrants, it was not difficult for the more sophisticated leaders to influence them, because accompanying all of the newly arriving Mexican immigrants were homogenous cultural traits that made it obvious

they were from the same Mexican background. Regardless of class origin, they spoke Spanish, and racially they were similar although many in the middle classes were lighter. And even though religious divisions did exist, the vast majority were Catholic. In addition, the majority of the Mexicans entering the United States between 1910 and 1930 were seeking neither refuge nor the start to a new life. They came to earn money and wanted to return home. Many did, but even those who remained harbored a dream of someday going back, an attitude which promoted immigrant cohesion based on identification with Mexican nationalism.²⁶

This common ground, then, promoted mutual identification for all immigrants regardless of their origin in Mexico. The process of coalescing was a salmon run nonetheless, as they encountered numerous setbacks. It was not easy to bridge all of the schisms which divided the colonias from the time the first Mexicans arrived, and, indeed, many were not. Often the resources mustered by the immigrants were insufficient to overcome the multitude of problems which they faced. But what is important, is that heroic attempts were made resulting in a strong, if not impenetrable line of defense. This allowed breathing spells when colonias regrouped to fend off anomie and resist being run out of the city.

There is no doubt that as Mexicans entered Chicago, they found themselves in a hostile environment, and to survive they resorted first to mutual aid, then to cultural reinforcement and/or the comforting thought that soon they would be back in Mexico. At times, however, they were violated to such a degree that initial adaptation postures were inadequate and problems had to be directly confronted, an effort which anticipated the assimilationist politics of a future generation.

In this respect the most frustrating and vexing challenges for Mexican immigrants came from an unjust court system, police brutality, and attacks by other ethnic groups—a set of abuses which were intimately linked. Many times the objective of the attacks was to run the Mexicans out of town. If that was not possible, other groups strove for social and economic dominance over Mexicans and each other by any avenue open to them. One way was for competing working-class sectors to manipulate the agencies of law enforcement to their own ends. The policemen on the beat and the

lower-level judicial bureaucracy, for instance, which came in direct and daily contact with Mexicans, were from the same ethnic groups which subjected the Mexicans to violence.²⁷

Newly arrived immigrant Mexicans quickly identified the law enforcement agencies with competing ethnic rivals and tormenters. Said one Mexican immigrant in the 1920s: "The average policeman's attitude is still against the Mexicans. The police are largely Irish and Polish."²⁸ Mexicans from all classes were subjected to these abuses, even though it affected the working classes in greater proportion. In response, Mexicans mobilized community resources for the purposes of self defense, a process hastened by this violent treatment.²⁹

As the number of Mexican immigrants increased in the Chicago area during the 1920s, they quickly acquired a reputation for criminal activity. During 1926, an editorial entitled "Banditry in Little Mexico," appeared in the East Chicago's *Calumet News*, and railed against the alleged high incidence of violence and drug use in the Mexican colonias of Indiana Harbor, a steel worker district. Another editorial in the wider circulating *Chicago Daily Tribune*, designed to alert the Chicago community to the threats posed by Mexican immigration, warned against the "tumultuous political tradition" which Mexicans would bring into the United States, implying a potential for violence. That particular editorial was sufficiently offensive to the Mexican community that it protested to President Calles in Mexico.³⁰

In daily news events, English-language newspapers chose to ignore positive cultural activities and accomplishments of Mexicans, emphasizing instead negative features of colonia life such as killings, shootings and stabbings, and crime in general. For example, forty-four of the forty-eight stories concerning Mexicans which appeared in the *Calumet News* during 1928 were crime-related.³¹ A white American admitted to Paul Taylor:

The Mexicans get a bad reputation through their drunkenness and court cases which are played up by the papers and are the only thing we hear about the Mexicans. Of course whites get drunk, too.³²

Middle-class Chicagoans, relying almost exclusively on mass media-generated stereotypes, attributed to Mexicans a natural proclivity for violence. On one occasion, for instance, the wife of a prominent university professor exclaimed to a researcher collecting data on Mexicans, "Don't you find that Mexicans are dangerous? They always look so treacherous."³³ A Mexican married to an Anglo American woman, also in the 1920s, said that educated Americans did not exhibit as much prejudice toward Mexicans as persons from the working class, ". . . but they let it out in the press."³⁴

White working-class views on Mexican immigrants were more diverse and not as focused on alleged moral, economic and intellectual deficiencies as were middle-class attitudes. Poles harbored animosity toward Mexicans because of labor competition. Mexicans were recruited into sectors where the predominant work force was Polish. This was especially true in South Chicago and Indiana Harbor where steel foundry employment dominated the labor market. As might be expected, interethnic violence was most acute in these neighborhoods.

Closely related to labor competition was the threat Mexicans posed to Polish neighborhoods, which one historian describes as "institutionally complete" by the 1920s. The origins of community building for Polish immigrants in Chicago date to the 1880s, but their success was based on the ability to resist outside intruders such as Mexicans who throughout the 1920s challenged their institutional completeness.³⁵

Members of the colonias admitted having a bad reputation because of drinking and fighting, but in most cases they did not consider themselves any worse than other ethnic groups. Community leaders and editors of Spanish-language newspapers consistently attributed troubles with the law to police hostility and general corruption in the law enforcement system, though the leaders also blamed the problems on alcohol abuse and social alienation, not innate cultural deficiencies.³⁶

Statistical information for this period shows that Mexicans in Chicago were frequently in trouble with the law during the 1920s. In 1929, for example, about fourteen percent of the twenty-

thousand Mexicans living in the city of Chicago were charged with crimes, in sharp contrast to the general rate of arrest which was six percent. Within the context of more defined immigrant groups such as Italians and Poles, the arrest rate for Mexicans was still high. Police apprehensions were only higher for Greeks and Negroes. Police in that year jailed a whopping forty percent of the Negro population while the arrest rate for Greeks was slightly above that of Mexicans.

Closer scrutiny, however, reveals that while Mexicans were arrested out of proportion to their numbers in the city, the crimes they committed were mainly misdemeanors. During the 1928-29 period, for example, jumping bail constituted eighty-eight percent of the felony charges directed at Mexicans. In the misdemeanor category, seventy-eight percent of the charges involved disorderly conduct, while the remaining twenty-two percent consisted of carrying concealed weapons, assault, gambling and traffic violations.

In the absence of similar data for other immigrant populations it is difficult to compare the seriousness of their criminal activities with those of Mexicans. Proportionately, however, felony arrests of Mexicans were smaller within their population than for native whites, which included second- and third-generation offspring of the new immigrants (eastern or southern European). In the 1928-29 period this figure stood at seven percent for Mexicans in contrast to eleven percent for the native white population of Chicago.³⁷

The fact remains that the arrest rate of Mexicans was inordinately high. One reason for this is the disproportionate ratio of Mexican men to women in Chicago (170:100) a common demographic feature in immigrant communities. Since Mexicans were the latest arrivals, this imbalance was even greater than that of other immigrants living in the city. This might have contributed to deviant behavior. Additionally, the majority of the men were young, between nineteen and thirty-five, an age group which is more apt to get into trouble with the law.³⁸

Nonetheless, this high arrest rate reveals less about the Mexicans' criminal proclivity than it does about the inferior position of the

Mexican community within Chicago's polyglot social structure, an arrangement based on a well-defined pecking order of ethnicity. Chicago ethnic groups carved out hegemonies for themselves in living quarters, jobs, government patronage, and recreational facilities. These gains were maintained once they were wrested from the system by any number of means. One method was through direct confrontation and terrorism. Another was to use positions obtained in the lower echelons of city bureaucracy, such as the police department, to check threats posed by the latest arrivals into Chicago, who in the 1920s were Mexican.³⁹

Mexicans encountered white working-class animosity soon after their arrival in Chicago. Unfortunately for them, their influx into the city was immediately followed by a slackening economy at the end of World War I and the return of thousands of soldiers who, resentful because former jobs and scarce housing had passed to these racial minorities, responded with acute hostility.⁴⁰ In the spring of 1919 thousands of discharged soldiers jammed employment agencies or were forced to panhandle in the street. As pressures mounted, Mexican workers were dismissed from their jobs in order to pass the jobs on to veterans.⁴¹

The end of the war also coincided with vigorous labor organization efforts by militant but chauvinistic labor unions which failed to bridge the racial gaps among the Chicago working class. Strikes in the steel mills and stockyards during 1919 were defeated by the importing of strikebreakers, most of whom were Negroes or Mexicans.⁴² These initial contacts inevitably created extreme racial tension. This became evident during the sensational race riots that rocked Chicago's stockyard neighborhoods between July 23 and August 8, 1919.⁴³

Although the main source of racial animosity was directed at Negroes, Mexicans also bore the brunt. On July 30, at the height of the riot, Federico González and José Blanco, two young Mexican stockyard workers, were attacked by Fred Schott and five other rioters. In the struggle both Mexicans were injured severely but Blanco managed to fatally stab Schott, and was promptly charged with first-degree murder at his hospital bedside. Chicago police, openly sympathetic with white rioters, arrested Blacks out of proportion to their guilt, prompting Black leaders to closely

monitor ensuing court proceedings. Ultimately this vigilance tempered further civil rights violations of the many Blacks arrested during the turmoil, and as a result the young Mexican benefited. Aware of the case, the Mexican embassy instructed the consul in Chicago to provide legal assistance. On September 15, after his recovery, Blanco stood before a grand jury, which acquitted him. The Negroes who were also charged with crimes relating to the riot were acquitted at the same time.⁴⁴

The Blanco incident magnified the futility which Mexicans experienced in Chicago during this early period. They could not turn to United States institutions, either local, state or federal for defense against abuses. Because Mexicans in Chicago were few in number and too new to the city to have developed solidarity for a united defense, they turned to the Mexican consul for support.

As late as 1924, the Chicago Mexicans still found it difficult to respond effectively to police violence. On November 8, Herminio Hernández and another Mexican, armed with guns, attempted to hold up the patrons of a saloon and killed an off-duty policeman who had drawn his pistol and shot at the robbers. Hernández was wounded in the exchange, but the other robber got away. Two detectives aggressively questioned Hernández at the Bridewell Lockup infirmary where he died without revealing the identity of his accomplice. It turned out that Harry Crowley, the dead policeman, had received a *Chicago Daily Tribune* award for heroism in another shootout during 1921, so in announcing Crowley's death on November 9, the *Tribune* used the banner headline "POLICE HERO AND BANDIT SLAIN IN DUEL."⁴⁵

In an attempt to find the second hold-up man, enraged policemen swept into the Hull House neighborhood and arbitrarily beat Mexicans and arrested fifty of them. But the general public, tired of the crime wave engulfing Chicago, demanded a crackdown on all gangsters, not just Mexicans. As a result, a clean-up campaign, one of many characterizing Chicago politics in the 1920s, was launched amid charges of police and judicial corruption. A few heads rolled, including the chief of detectives', but not before systematic police raids in different Chicago ethnic neighborhoods netted four hundred arrests of suspected hoodlums.

No sooner had the lockups begun on November 11 than ethnic politicians exerted their influence to have jailed suspects released. Even the Negroes, one hundred of whom were arrested at a festive gathering, were allowed to go home after Arthur Albert, a Negro Alderman from the South Side, protested.⁴⁶

Mexicans, on the other hand, did not have anyone to speak for them except the Mexican consul, who lacked political clout. The event clearly demonstrated that other ethnic groups who had already acquired respective niches in the Chicago political machine, were in a much better position than Mexicans to acquire protection.

Mexican immigrant nationalism, however, became more pronounced in the second half of the decade when animosity against Mexicans increased as more came to Chicago. One reason for the heightened consciousness is that before 1924 there were no Spanish-language newspapers; but at least six were published during the remainder of the decade. While some of these publications became financially insolvent they were still crucial to the heightening of ethnic consciousness. Every altercation between Mexicans and other ethnic groups was described as racially motivated violence, and the police were consistently accused of siding with the attackers.⁴⁷

The years 1926 and 1927, a time of the greatest immigration of Mexicans, produced such intense violence that Paul S. Taylor even labeled the period, "the era of Mexican-Polish troubles."⁴⁸ When these clashes resulted in a killing, the mutual animosity felt by Mexicans and ethnic whites heightened. Predictably, each group blamed the other for provoking the fights, but according to the Spanish-language press, Mexicans were the ones who were arrested by the police. "The police in the districts inhabited by Mexicans were often (the) first or second generation of the very nationalities which feel themselves in competition with the Mexicans," wrote Paul Taylor, explaining police hostility.⁴⁹

The belief in the colonia that there was collaboration between the police and ethnic Europeans was reinforced during this era of Mexican-Polish troubles. "The police searched the Mexican houses without warrants . . . and let the crowd hit their Mexican prisoners

while they were in custody," one Mexican claimed.⁵⁰

Acute antipathy was demonstrated towards Mexicans even after this era. A dramatic example, was an incident occurring in the steelworker neighborhood of South Chicago during February 1930. According to an account in the newspaper, *México*, and a report from the Mexican consul in Chicago, Apolonio Castellanos, an elderly Mexican, was walking down a South Chicago street when a group of Poles attacked and injured him. He was taken to a hospital but after being discharged he was attacked again. This time, however, his friends intervened, and a young Pole named Zarnowski was stabbed to death by José Torres.

The newspaper charged that twenty-four Mexicans attracted to the scene were promptly arrested and charged with murder, even though they were not involved in the fracas. But *México* went even further, condemning the official police report, which accused the Mexicans of deliberately seeking out the Poles in retaliation for the initial affront.⁵¹ Immigrant nationalism clearly ran through this incident. In depicting the campaign to raise funds for Mexicans who were jailed in the killing, *México* led off the story with the headline "The Spirit of Solidarity of the Colony."⁵²

Mass arrests were sometimes designed, according to Spanish-language newspapers, primarily to extort bribes or simply to harass Mexicans, and they were particularly vexing. The roundup of Mexicans following the killing of policeman Crowley in 1924 was a harbinger of a continuing trend throughout the 1920s. In 1924 a Gary, Indiana, police officer was shot by a Mexican and immediately four hundreds others were rounded up "in an avowed effort on the part of the police to run all the Mexicans out."⁵³

Another Spanish-language newspaper claimed that in the fall of 1926 policemen arrested, without cause, twenty-eight Mexicans waiting in line for a dance at the Hull House settlement. During an effort by federal agents to smash bootlegging activity in 1929, scores of Mexicans were rounded up, provoking a commentary in *México* that "Those charged with enforcing the laws contribute to the lawlessness."⁵⁴

Similarly, in January 1931 *El Nacional* complained that policemen entered El Gato Negro Billiard Hall and abused innocent

Mexicans and arrested them for no apparent reason. Six months later the newspaper reported another raid on a poolroom and an adjoining barber shop in which eighty Mexicans were arrested. One man was even taken to jail with shaving cream still on his face. Even whites were sometimes appalled at the treatment of Mexicans by the police as was the case in 1926 with an Irish woman who called the authorities to quell a fight at a Mexican party being held next door to her home. A Mexican was stabbed to death in the incident but the woman was outraged to see the police indiscriminately arrest all the Mexicans in the vicinity.⁵⁵

One of the most dramatic examples of mass arrests occurred after a sensational gun battle between Chicago police and Mexican railroad workers in December 1926. In the melee two workers and one policeman were killed at the Proviso railroad camp. *México* claimed the police reacted with such vengeance that subsequent to the gun battle 38 Mexicans were arrested and beaten, even though involvement in the riot was not proved.⁵⁶

Not surprisingly, the Mexican community became cynical towards the justice system and fearful of their white neighbors. They were besieged on all sides. In 1928 a Mexican leader speaking at the Hull House settlement appealed for unity. "Let us unite . . . to protect each other's interests," he said, "Why must we suffer this curse of disunity which lays us so open to the attack of our enemies."⁵⁷

Seeing themselves surrounded by an "enemy," Mexicans mobilized their mutual-aid societies and Spanish-language newspapers into agents for defense. Of utmost importance was obtaining the release and defending the rights of the many prisoners constantly being taken into custody. This concern translated into organizing legal defense drives, the effort which became the most common form of mobilization. In the case of the mutual-aid societies, this incipient political activity transcended the initial objectives which were to provide financial or recreative benefits for their members. Donating hard earned dollars required a sacrifice which drew Mexicans into the political arena of protest. While this response can hardly be considered political action, within the context of the early formation of ethnic consciousness, the initial posture was crucial.

An early mutual-aid society in the Chicago area, *La Sociedad Protectora Mexicana*, was formed in Gary, Indiana, after a 1924 mass arrest of four hundred Mexicans. The society provided bail money and helped offset legal fees for some of its members. *La Confederación de Sociedades Mexicanas de los Estados Unidos de America*, founded in Chicago on March 30, 1925, served as an umbrella organization for the thirty-five or so mutual-aid societies that existed in Chicago's Mexican colonias. It lasted for a year and one-half, a long time for any immigrant institution to exist in such unstable conditions. One of its major objectives was providing legal services to Mexicans caught in the court system.⁵⁸

Considering the feelings of colonia inhabitants toward law enforcement officers it is not surprising that any Mexican who shot a policeman was considered a hero. Community leaders and the Spanish-language newspapers often sided with "cop killers," who in mainstream society are greeted with the greatest amount of hostility and repugnance.

Victor Torres, a retired steelworker who came to South Chicago in the 1920s, and who helped organize various Mexican organizations, unknowingly summed up this sentiment in an interview given in the 1970s. A mild mannered, elderly gentleman in his late 70s, he said that as a young man he had never been in serious trouble with the law. "But the Ayala brothers," he continued proudly, "they came from San Antonio, I think. They would not take any guff from the cops. They would shoot those *cabrones* [bastards]."⁵⁹

The killing of policemen by Mexicans exacerbated both ethnic and police enmity against the immigrant colonias. This was the case in 1924 when José Castro killed East Chicago policeman Paul Budich, a detective of Polish descent. Because police-Mexican relations had become so strained, the Mexican consul in Chicago arranged a mass meeting at a local theater between the chief of police and the Indiana Harbor colonia residents in a futile attempt to mollify the animosity.⁶⁰

One of the most widespread responses in the Mexican community to a "cop killer" incident occurred in South Chicago in the winter of 1930. As Alfonso Reyes and Max and José García walked

home on the night of January 15, 1930, two plainclothes detectives stopped them for suspicious behavior. The police account states that Max García drew a gun and killed one of the policemen who, as it turned out, was of Polish descent. An article in the newspaper *México* claimed the detectives had approached the trio menacingly without identifying themselves and that García mistook them for robbers. The newspaper said the young men were justified in defending themselves, considering the great number of robberies plaguing Chicago in the midst of depression-era unemployment.⁶¹

The three were arrested and charged with first-degree murder. Immediately, friends of the accused and members of the *Sociedad Mutualista Obreros Mexicanos* launched a campaign to save the men from the gallows. On February 22, *México* implored colonia residents to follow the lead of the *Obreros Mexicanos*, the first mutual-aid society to take up a collection for the cause, "which besides being just has been left in care of the Mexican Colony."⁶²

Soon, organizations from throughout the Chicago area pledged donations. Fundraising activity also took place in Gary and Indiana Harbor. Public appeal in the Spanish-language newspapers and circulars printed for the occasion by Delfina Villarreal, a Mexican social worker, focused on perceived injustices against honest hardworking Mexican immigrants by a corrupt judicial system fueled by ethnic animosity.

The trial started on May 15, 1930, and the efforts of the residents resulted in a limited victory. Alfonso Reyes and José García were found not guilty, but Max García was sentenced to one-to-ten years for manslaughter.⁶³

Another police slaying involving a Mexican further demonstrates the support given to accused police killers in the community. In the United States only two years, twenty-six-year-old Ignacio Zaragoza was assaulted on December 12, 1931, by another Mexican who accused him of stealing his watch. Zaragoza claimed that in the scuffle he had to shoot the other man in self-defense. Panicking, he fled to Indiana in a blinding blizzard and after three days of walking in the snow and riding the freight trains, the completely disoriented Zaragoza was stopped by Charles Glafcke, a Michigan City policeman, some forty miles east of Chicago. Glafcke was shot

and killed as he attempted to disarm the young Mexican. After Glafcke's body was discovered, Zaragoza was tracked down in the snow and captured. He claimed he was beaten twice to obtain a confession.⁶⁴

Tried quickly, Zaragoza was found guilty of first-degree murder, and his electrocution was set for June 24, 1931. On June 11, the Mexican consul in Indianapolis wrote to Governor Leslie of Indiana requesting a commutation of Zaragoza's death sentence. The killing, the consul maintained, was not first-degree murder, because Zaragoza, who didn't speak English, was confused and delirious after his three-day trek through the snow and could not be responsible for his actions.⁶⁵

Governor Leslie rejected the appeal, indicating that as far as he was concerned, "Zaragoza had received a fair trial."⁶⁶ The case created a furor in Mexico and among the Mexican populace throughout the United States. Articles detailing Zaragoza's version of the ordeal and profiles on his good family background appeared in such diverse newspapers as *La Prensa* of San Antonio, *El Tucsonense* in Arizona, and *El Universal* of Mexico City.⁶⁷

In the Chicago area, local Mexican organizations embarked on fundraising drives for Zaragoza's defense. For example, it was publicized that the condemned man was named by his patriotic parents in Jalisco after Ignacio Zaragoza, the general who defeated the French on May 5, 1862, an event which provides the basis for one of Mexico's most important national holidays, *El cinco de mayo*.

The efforts to obtain clemency for Zaragoza coincided with the elaborate fiestas which Mexicans in Chicago organized yearly in commemoration of this holiday, accentuating the ethnic loyalty provoked by the campaign. As a last request, Zaragoza, perhaps sensing the patriotic campaign to prevent his execution, asked that the prison band play Mexico's national hymn before he died. The widely publicized episode elevated Zaragoza to martyrdom in the struggle against injustice.⁶⁸

No other event better exemplifies the emerging nationalism of Chicago Mexicans than the reaction in the colonias to the widely publicized series of escapes from Joliet State Prison of Bernardo Roa, Gregorio Rizzo, and Roberto Torres in company with four

white prisoners. These three young and popular South Chicago Mexicans had already gained the confidence of the Mexican Consul after being convicted of killing and robbing Charles Johnson, a train ticket agent in 1923. The consul believed their claim of being framed, without reservation, as did the general Mexican community.⁶⁹

The first escape took place on May 5, 1926, after Assistant Warden Peter M. Klein, a former South Chicago policeman, was allegedly murdered by all seven convicts during an interview. The prisoners made their escape into the countryside where all but one, James Price, were captured by a posse of farmers and townspeople. Bernardo Roa was shot in the leg twenty-seven times by the posse, an injury which left him crippled for life. The resourceful prisoner, however, put this handicap to good use in yet another escape.⁷⁰

The general public was outraged over the Klein killing, but many Mexicans saw the prisoners as heroes. An investigation conducted after the escape alleged Klein had been convicted of bootlegging liquor while he was a warden, that he was a member of a parole-selling ring headed by the chairman of the Illinois Board of Pardons and Parole, and that he allowed prisoners to leave the prison to commit robberies to pay for their paroles. Inevitably, such sensational revelations were widely publicized, if not completely proven. In the Chicago colonias a rumor circulated which had Klein, just prior to his murder, calling the convicts in to cancel a parole scheme. The disappointed prisoners, according to this version, fell upon Klein, and killed him in a moment of passion. Left with no other alternative, they escaped.⁷¹

In a sensational mass trial the six captured prisoners were convicted of the Klein killing and sentenced to hang on March 11, 1927, at the Will County Jail. In South Chicago, and Joliet itself, Mexican organizations like the *Sociedad Mutualista Guadalupana* pledged their groups to raise the legal fees required to appeal the case to a higher court. As a consequence, the convicts received a stay of execution, but the three Mexicans quietly prepared for a second jail break from the county jail, an escape containing elements usually found only in fiction. Roa, the most persuasive of the three, convinced Juanita Gallardo, a female friend from South Chicago, to smuggle into the jail files and saws embedded in

bananas and apples. He, in turn, found a way of concealing these items in his crutch and slowly he and Rizzo filed away at the window bars on their cells, while Torres, who was a professional singer, sang in his operatic voice "La Paloma" and other popular Mexican tunes, muffling the sounds of the scraping.⁷²

Commandeering a prison car, all three made their way to the Indiana Harbor colonia where they were fed by sympathetic Mexican friends. From there they took a taxi to South Chicago hoping to find refuge in their own colonia. The Chicago police, anticipating the Mexicans would try to return to their South Side home, prepared a trap for them, and in a sensational gun battle, a policeman and the taxi driver were killed. Rizzo was shot and not expected to live because of his wounds. Torres was captured unharmed but Bernardo Roa miraculously hobbled off and fled to Mexico after being hidden in the steel mills by Mexican workers. In his native land he became a feared *caudillo* (local boss) among *ejidatarios* (communal farmers) and at one time was the chief magistrate of Pénjmo, Guanajuato, a town near the hacienda where he was born.⁷³

Hjalmar Rehn, the state attorney who prosecuted the case against the original six convicts for the killing of Klein, was obsessed with finding Roa. In 1952 the State Department finally gave up its extradition efforts on behalf of Illinois after the attorney general of Mexico declined to act because the statute of limitations had expired. At that point, Roa was released from a Mexican prison after serving a sentence for illegally growing narcotic plants. In the meantime, Rizzo was killed in a third escape attempt from Will County Jail and Torres was hanged on July 15, 1927, along with the other two remaining men convicted in the Klein killing.⁷⁴

In addition to the Mexican convicts, those persons implicated in aiding the escape, such as the entire membership of the Sociedad Guadalupana, were considered heroes. They were sought out for arrest because it was believed their donation to the defense fund was used for bribes. Juanita Gallardo, the girlfriend who purportedly smuggled the tools used in the escape, was arrested, and as a result of the publicity surrounding the case, she was elevated to heroine status.⁷⁵

The events served the thousands of Mexicans in Chicago, whose brushes with the law left them resentful and frustrated, as a drama in which they could vicariously side with the "good guys," the Mexican convicts and their cohorts. Navor Rodríguez, lifelong activist and community leader in Joliet, remembers going door to door as a member of the Sociedad Guadalupeña, soliciting funds for defense committees. When asked why he did it, he replied that everybody knew that in those days Mexicans could not get justice.⁷⁶

In the final analysis, however, mobilization of both the community and the Mexican government was contingent on dramatic instances of injustices. Issues were taken up selectively by the community and the Mexican government according to their ability to evoke widespread sympathy.

Inversely, when Mexicans were the victims of crimes by other Mexicans, newspapers and community leaders remained indifferent and even hostile towards the legal plight of the accused. Internecine violence was a common occurrence in Chicago and most crimes were alcohol-induced, and provoked by arguments over women or money. José Anguiano, a longtime leader in Indiana Harbor, explained that in the 1920s Robert Estill, a lawyer, helped arrange a meeting between the consul in Chicago, the chief of police in East Chicago, and the Mexican colonia members:

Many Mexicans felt that police were harsh, which they were, but Mexicans were also violent. Sometimes, a Mexican would conclude his vendetta at the gate of the Inland Steel plant where he followed his victim from Mexico and shot him as he walked out of work.⁷⁷

In 1931 a colorful article appeared in *El Nacional* which condemned Jesús Barragán, alias "the Monkey," who fatally stabbed Francisco Bravo, a poolhall proprietor in South Chicago, when Bravo attempted to break up a fight. "He . . . is quite well known for his merciless and quarrelsome nature," the newspaper noted when reporting the crime, adding that the "instigator of this crime has caused other disturbances in the Mexican Colony and is a well known bully from Torrence Avenue."⁷⁸ In another issue, *El Nacional* announced the discovery of the beheaded corpse of *El Veneno* (The Poison) in an alley in South Chicago by noting it was

no use lamenting the demise of this unsavory creature whose sobriquet was well earned.⁷⁹

A more convincing demonstration of interethnic strife as prerequisite for political mobilization is the case of Alberto Velasco. In the spring of 1931, *El Nacional* printed a disparaging story about him after he killed Juvenciano Horta in a fight over a "gay Polish woman."⁸⁰ Velasco was convicted of first-degree murder in what could have easily been defended as a lesser offense. In addition, there were some obvious and blatant discrepancies in his trial. But *El Nacional* reported the crime as base (Mexican against Mexican in pursuit of a woman of questionable virtues) and he received very little help from the community or the Mexican consul, to whom Velasco claimed he directed a number of fruitless solicitations.⁸¹

First-degree murder cases, he was informed by Adolfo Domínguez, vice consul in charge of *atropellos*, as violations of civil rights were known, were not within the jurisdiction of the consul. This was an obvious delaying tactic, however, since many accused murderers had been assisted by the Mexican government throughout the United States and in Chicago prior to Velasco's incarceration. Unfortunately for Velasco, the Chicago Consulate, deluged by a tide of distress calls from starving workers and needy families during the Depression, put a very low priority on his case. Authorized by his home government to help repatriate Mexican citizens, Chicago Consul Rafael Alveryra and his assistant Domínguez devoted hundreds of hours to this problem alone.

Moreover, because community concern over the violation of Velasco's right to due process was markedly lacking, the consul could, in light of the pressing needs of the time, avoid that responsibility. Velasco, however, a bright young man, learned English in prison and mastered enough law to appeal his own case before a number of courts, and fifteen years later, in August of 1945, Judge Elwyn Shaw of the Federal Circuit Court in Chicago released him on a writ of habeas corpus, denouncing the original sentence as a "travesty of justice." Velasco was immediately deported to Mexico for illegal entry, and since he was only eighteen when he left his native land, at thirty-five he found himself lost and disoriented in a country he hardly knew.⁸²

In essence, Velasco's case fell through the cracks. In a way reminiscent of ethnic political brokers, the Mexican consuls throughout the United States yielded to community pressure when establishing priorities pertaining to colonia problems.

Vice Consul Domínguez, because of increasing arbitrary arrests of Mexicans, was in and out of courtrooms where he acquired a reputation as a nuisance. On one occasion he negotiated the release of eighty Mexican immigrants arrested for "no apparent reason" according to *El Nacional*, in a poolroom of South Chicago and in an adjoining barber shop. Because the prisoners complained about mistreatment and because only two men were accused of any wrongdoing (they had "reefers" in their pockets), Domínguez, accompanied by consulate lawyers, protested vehemently before Judge Thomas Green. In the process, Domínguez gained the enmity of the judge.⁸³

On the Fourth of July, 1931, a time when all Chicagoans headed out to the beaches of Lake Michigan, tension reached a high pitch. For some years, South Chicago Mexicans had shared the beach at Calumet Park with Poles and Italians in an uneasy truce. A fight broke out on this particular day, however, and quickly escalated into a minor riot. The Mexicans were ejected from the park by rock-throwing Poles and Italians. In the melee, knives and other weapons were drawn and some picnickers were injured, including two Mexican girls. Rioters on both sides were arrested on a variety of charges, but apparently charges were not brought against the men responsible for the attack on the girls.⁸⁴

On the morning of July 7, Domínguez, accompanied by attorney John Baker and a small group of Mexican citizens, entered Judge Green's courtroom to determine why the assailants of the Mexican girls were not charged. Green launched into a tirade upon learning of the vice consul's presence. According to Baker, he shouted at the top of his lungs that "the consul was no good, the Mexican Government was no good, that the consul was not taking care of his job properly," ending his invective with "Shut up or I'll throw you in the can." Domínguez did not shut up quickly enough and was hauled off to the county jail to serve a six-month sentence for contempt of court.

When reminded by a prosecutor in his courtroom that the vice consul enjoyed diplomatic immunity, Green exploded saying "it would take nothing short of an act of President Hoover to change his mind." Then he added, "I'm an ex-marine myself and that's the way we marines handle things. I don't see why people . . . scrape to these consuls and ambassadors. They've got to be put in their place."

Upon learning about the incident the next day, the Mexican ambassador, Manuel Tellez, quickly protested the jailing of a Mexican diplomat on United States soil. However, the Department of State, sensitive to the international implications of Green's action, had already acted. A cable was sent to Governor Lewis Emmerson in Springfield requesting his help in averting any further complications.

In Chicago cooler heads had already prevailed. Domínguez was freed on his own recognizance by another judge over Green's objections. In the meantime, Green flamboyantly retained the services of an American Legion attorney to represent him in all future deliberations pertaining to the Domínguez case, insisting that Domínguez would eventually go to jail. He changed his mind, however, after Chief Justice Sonseteby of the Illinois Supreme Court, at the behest of Governor Emmerson, personally spoke to him. The high-ranking official persuaded Green to expunge the original sentence and issue a statement admitting his error. The Department of State sent an official apology to Mexico through Ambassador Tellez, and the international embroglio ended.

Apart from the judge's lack of respect for diplomatic representatives from Mexico, his attitude made clear to the leaders in the Mexican colonias that more effective organization was required. Eduardo Peralta recalled another aspect of Judge Green's tirade not recorded either in newspaper stories or diplomatic dispatches. Peralta and a number of other Mexicans accompanied Domínguez to request police protection at Calumet Beach, the location of the Fourth of July fracas. Green, in the course of his exhortations to the vice consul and his party, made some remarks which would leave Peralta with a lasting impression. "The reason you people can't go to the beach," Peralta remembers Green saying, "is because you

don't have organizations and individuals that can represent you in this city."⁸⁵

Lack of political recognition for Mexicans obviously damaged their ability to obtain justice from court system riddled with influence peddling. In the 1920s the Wickersham Commission, an investigative body, was established by Congress to provide solutions to the issue of rising crime during the decade. Paul Warnshius was assigned to study the problem in Chicago as it affected Mexicans. He was astonished at the prejudice manifested by judges and jurors alike in court cases involving Mexicans. One judge even told him, "The Mexican is a born bandit not to be trusted." Such attitudes probably affected the conviction rates for Mexicans, which were twice that of other nationalities during the 1920s. Furthermore, jury trials were rare for Mexicans when charged with felonies because judges and prosecutors persuaded them to waive that right by pleading guilty, most times without the presence of defense counsel or interpreters.⁸⁶

But even when Mexicans were granted trials the results were far from satisfactory for the community. Warnshius observed that, apart from hostile judges and juries, many of the lawyers who defended Mexicans were lazy, indifferent and incompetent. After the trial which convicted the three Mexicans of robbing and killing the ticket agent, the Chicago Mexican consul was so disturbed he filed a claim before the Mexican Claims Commission for \$90,000 on their behalf. In an impassioned letter to his superiors in Mexico he stated that no witnesses were brought forth and that the conviction was based on a confession extorted out of one of the accused. The police were baffled for a whole month as to who could have killed the sixty-three-year-old agent, and they had been under great pressure to solve the crime when they arrested Roa, Rizzo and Torres.⁸⁷

An even more blatant abuse in the courts occurred in the trial of eighteen-year-old Vito Sánchez. In March of 1925 he fatally shot a European immigrant attempting to rob him in Gary, Indiana. Found guilty of first-degree murder, Sánchez was sentenced to die in the electric chair. Two years later, after Sánchez's case came to the attention of the Mexican government, a national campaign was launched to save the young Mexican, and because competent lawyers hired by the consulate in Indianapolis appealed the case,

the conviction was reversed. Sánchez's new attorneys charged that he had been defended by an unprepared counsel who did not even know witnesses could be subpoenaed and that the trial was presided over by a hostile judge who would not consider a self-defense plea.⁸⁸

Eventually, Mexicans became part of the ethnic mosaic of Chicago. For example, Eduardo Peralta, a firm believer that recreational activity for young people was essential to their physical and psychological well being, joined the Democratic Party in the 1930s and pressured city park officials to provide facilities and equipment so that he could organize baseball and other sports teams in the colonia. The rejections that he and other Mexicans experienced when he was a young immigrant and the pronouncements of Judge Green bolstered his determination.⁸⁹

By the end of the 1920s the Mexican colonias were changing politically and culturally. In 1927, *El Amigo del Hogar* summed up the overriding sentiment of the immigrant leaders: "We must take from this country where we are not respected the best, so that when we return to the homeland we can contribute to our nation's development." [translation by author.]⁹⁰ In response to the 1929 Immigration Act, however, which made it a felony to enter this country illegally, the Indiana Harbor newspaper printed articles on how to obtain permanent residency, the first step to naturalization. The threat of this law was the obvious motivation for this about-face. A stiff jail sentence or immediate deportation was the consequence for any Mexican found guilty of its violation. Regardless of the motivation, it is apparent that previous resistance to Americanization was wearing down.

During the 1920s, newspapers such as *México* and *La Noticia Mundial* urged their readers not to Americanize, or naturalize, and to keep in mind that they would someday return to México. But in the early 1930s, the publication, *El Nacional* endorsed candidates for city office and urged Mexicans to register and vote.⁹¹

There were other indications that Mexicans were accepting and wanting a more permanent place in Chicago. One was the enthusiastic involvement of Mexicans in the United Steel Workers Organizing Committee and the packing house unions during the

1930s. A further indication of this is the formation of the first political organizations, such as East Chicago's "First Mexican American Political Club" in 1938. Its objectives were to bring Mexicans into the wider orbit of political activity. Organized by native-born and naturalized citizens at a time when naturalization was on the rise, the club's goals were "to unite the colonia as a voting bloc, to participate actively in all campaigns, and to assist all Mexicans who desired to become citizens."⁹² A similar phenomenon existed in Chicago proper in the 1930s and 1940s. Goals of organizations like the Mexican Civic Committee and the Latin America Fraternal Society were designed to integrate Mexicans into Chicago political life and were markedly assimilationist.⁹³

Earlier issues giving impetus to Mexican solidarity in Chicago, such as inequity in the justice system, provided Mexicans with a unified approach to entering into coalitions with other ethnic groups. For example, labor unions were often used as vehicles for overcoming ethnic divisions, but the initial efforts to organize Mexicans and other ethnic groups in the 1930s used nationalistic appeals. But ethnic groups could not have responded to the overtures unless they had acquired a degree of cohesive nationalism. For Mexicans, joining a union was a collective method of improving their lot in the steel mills and the packing houses.

However, in making the transition from immigrant nationalism to a Mexican American assimilationist posture, the issue of abuses in the justice system remained of utmost concern. Consider, for instance, the first incursions of Mexicans into electoral politics. In the early 1930s, Anglo candidates for office made overtures to Mexicans, and while the candidates were not Mexican, appeals to people of Mexican descent were still possible. For example, in 1932, an editorial appeared in *El Nacional* supporting Russell J. Alvarez, son of a Spanish father and a German mother, for judge of municipal court. He deserved the vote of Mexicans and other Latins because "he is familiar with our customs and will impart justice to our race with less prejudice than any other judge." Note the final phrase of the quotation. The same year *El Nacional* heralded the election of Nuncio J. Bonelli to a municipal court judgeship. Bonelli, the paper said, was an Italian "who was warmly supported by the Spanish American element of Cook County on

account of his past kindness" to the colonias. Bonelli's election was also welcomed because of his fluency in Spanish, which "*facilitates the handling of our cases in the court*" [author's emphasis].⁹⁴

In summary, the process described here resulted in limited but effective ethnic consciousness among Mexicans in Chicago. Obviously, they were not aware of serving as a political building block for future generations. They were preoccupied with their contemporary conditions and the success of their activity has to be measured in that context. As demonstrated, they defended the colonias effectively in spite of setbacks and defeats.

For example, when the colonias were at their most organized, containing elements of highly developed nationalism, divisions were still evident. Mutual-aid groups competed and vied with each other for membership, prestige and dominance of colonia cultural life. Meanwhile, schisms based on religious ideologies became more acute as the religious wars in Mexico escalated in the latter part of the 1920s, and the regional and class differences were never completely eradicated. In addition, distrust of the Mexican consulate, an institution which did serve as a source of coalescence, was many times evident.

Internequine violence remained widespread. It was fostered by an atmosphere in which a large number of young and alienated males with few social outlets sought solace in alcohol and vied for the companionship of the few women in the colonias. This last factor threatened to foster social anomie, a problem combated by the leaders but which was also alleviated by the widescale return to Mexico of the younger single members of the colonias during the Great Depression.

Nonetheless, these divisive factors were to large degree mitigated by the cultural and national affinity which most Mexicans had for each other. But most important, the hostility encountered at the hands of the police and white workers fostered a veritable state of siege which forced the newcomers to confront adversity. But as has been seen, these incipient, impromptu efforts led to further organizing, which helped form the politics of future generations. Of ultimate importance is that the Mexicans survived the first genera-

tion as immigrants and did not allow adverse conditions or their detractors to curb the growth of relatively stable and united colonias. And even though the measuring stick is not very precise, it should be concluded that the efforts to build immigrant ethnic consciousness and the adoption of a defense posture were successful.

This study has dealt only with the first immigrants who came to Chicago in the 1920s and their descendants who are now into their fourth generation. According to Louise Año Nuevo Kerr, Chicago's Mexican immigrants demonstrated "every sign of becoming Mexican American, instead of Mexican in culture as well as in citizenship, and following the traditional European immigrant pattern of settlement and assimilation."⁹⁵ But since World War II a new wave of immigrants from Mexico, Mexican Americans from the Southwest, and Puerto Ricans have entered Chicago in large numbers, surpassing in population the immigrant group in this study. As Felix Padilla has demonstrated in a study of contemporary Latino consciousness in Chicago, a new ethnic identity has evolved as a consequence of the entry of new Latino groups. It would appear most probable, Padilla suggests, that the foundation of this new identity was laid by the immigrants from Mexico in the 1920s.

NOTES

- ¹ Alfredo Mirandé, *Gringo Justice* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), p. 101.
- ² See John R. Chávez, *The Lost Land: The Chicano Image of the Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1984).
- ³ Paul S. Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Valley of the South Platte, Colorado* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1929), pp. 212-216.
- ⁴ See Mario T. García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso* (New Haven: Yale University, 1981); Richard Griswold del Castillo, *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890: A Social History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979); and Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).
- ⁵ Francisco Arturo Rosales, "The Regional Origins of Mexicano Immigrants to Chicago in the 1920s," *Aztlán* 7 (Summer 1976): 187-201; Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Village: Arandas in Jalisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1933), pp. 35-36; Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Chicago and the Calumet Region* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), p. 271; Interview taken with East Chicago resident José Anguiano, 1974.
- ⁶ Louise Año Nuevo Kerr, "The Chicano Experience in Chicago, 1920-1970" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois At Chicago Circle, 1976), p. 22; Rosales and Daniel T. Simón, "Mexican Immigrant Experience in the Urban Midwest: East Chicago, Indiana, 1919-1945," LXXVII, *Indiana Magazine of History* (December 1981): 335-336; Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, pp. 27-48.
- ⁷ Rosales, "The Regional Origins of Mexicano Immigrants to Chicago in the 1920s," 192; Navor Rodríguez, *Síntesis Histórica De La Colonia Mexicana de Joliet, Ill. U.S.A. N.P., N.D.*
- ⁸ Richard N. Sinkin, *The Mexican Reform, 1855-1876: A Study in Liberal Nation Building* (Austin: University of Texas, 1979), pp. 147-148.
- ⁹ Luis González, *San José de García: Mexican Town in Transition* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1972), p. 112.
- ¹⁰ Interview, José Anguiano; Rosales, "The Regional Origins of Mexicano Immigrants to Chicago in the 1920s," 193.
- ¹¹ Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 138.

¹²Ibid., pp. 243-244; Interview, José Anguiano; García, *Desert Immigrants*, p. 262n2; Rosales, "The Regional Origins of Mexicano Immigrants to Chicago in the 1920s," 196: 131-142, 242.

¹³In his studies of ethnicity in the United States, Timothy L. Smith, has demonstrated that religious affiliations carried over from the old country provided the basis for transcending the initial parochial view of the immigrant communities and contributing to the formation of ethnic consciousness. See his "Religion and Ethnicity in America," *The American Historical Review* 83 (December 1978): 1155-1185; Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Village*, pp. 36-39; Ibid., *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, pp. 209-214.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 215.

¹⁵Taylor, *Mexican Labor in the United States: Dimmit County, Winter Garden District* (Berkeley: University of California, 1930), p. 367.

¹⁶Quoted in Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 115.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 214-215; *México*, November 10, 1928, Chicago Historical Society, microfilm reel 62, Chicago Foreign Language Press Survey (CFLPS).

¹⁸*El Amigo del Hogar* (September 11, 1927).

¹⁹Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 272; John Bodnar, "The Formation of Ethnic Consciousness: Slavic Immigrants in Steeltown," in Bodnar, ed., *The Ethnic Experience in Pennsylvania* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, 1973), pp. 309-330.

²⁰Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 243.

²¹Ibid., p. 232; *El Amigo del Hogar* (July 17, 1927).

²²Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 225.

²³*México*, March 10, 1920, reel 62, CFLPS; *East Chicago Calumet News*, November 28, 1929.

²⁴Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 268; See Griswold del Castillo, *The Los Angeles Barrio*, pp. 103-105, for a discussion of theories dealing with formation of racial consciousness among minorities. For example, Robert Blauner who formulated the influential internal colony model states that ethnic consciousness stems from the colonized position to which nonwhites were relegated, making them aware of their differences. In a book called *Conflict*

Sociology, Randall Collins maintains that exclusion from political and economic system and differences in skin color result in a growing self-awareness.

²⁵Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 218.

²⁶The notion that Mexicans saw their stay as temporary has been repeated so often by scholars who study this period of immigration that the idea is a now accepted as tautological.

²⁷See Taylor in "Crime and the Foreign Born: The Problem of the Mexican," in *Wickersham Commission Reports, Report on Crime and the Foreign Born*, No. 10 (Montclair: Patterson-Smith, Co. 1968), pp. 220-243 and Año Nuevo Kerr, "The Chicano Experience in Chicago," *passim*, for a discussion of the perception held in the Chicago colonias of police-ethnic white collaboration. The same perception is manifested in articles appearing in *El Nacional*, January 7, 1931, *La Lucha*, April 28, 1934, reel 62, CFLPS; Interviews taken with East Chicago residents José Anguiano, Elder Flores, Basil Pacheco, and Hilario Silva, 1974 and 1975; Interviews, Martín Blanco, Eduardo Peralta, and Victor Torres, South Chicago residents, 1974 and 1975.

²⁸Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 150.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 153.

³⁰East Chicago *Calumet News*, February 6, July 2, 1926; Lawrence Cardoso, *Mexican Emigration to the United States: 1897-1980* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980), p. 134.

³¹Rosales and Simon, "Mexican Immigrant Experience in the Urban Midwest," 337.

³²Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 144.

³³Paul Livingston Warnshius, "Crime and Criminal Justice Among Mexicans in Illinois," in *Wickersham Commission Reports, Report on Crime and the Foreign Born*, No. 10 (Montclair, Patterson-Smith, Co., 1968), pp. 267-268.

³⁴Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 242.

³⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 220-250; Kerr, "The Chicano Experience in Chicago," 11-12; David S. Weber, "Anglo Views of Mexican Immigrants: Popular Perceptions and Neighborhood Realities in Chicago, 1900-1940" (Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1982), pp. 106-107, 156-158; Kantowicz, "Polish Chicago," 184-192; For a discussion of the rise of Polish community in this area of Chicago see Domonic Anthony Pacyga, "Urban Villages of the Packinghouses and Steel

Mills: *The Polish Worker on Chicago's West Side, 1880-1921*" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1981).

³⁶See *El Nacional*, September 19, November 30, 1931, April 23, 1932; *México*, October 10, 1928, May 1, 1930; *La Defensa*, June 6, 1936, reel 62, CFLPS.

³⁷The statistical data was prepared from the following sources. United States, *Fifteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1930, Volume III: Population*, Part II, pp. 247, 362, 609, 638, 642. Anita C. Bowler, "Recent Statistics on Crime and the Foreign Born," Wickersham Commission Reports, in *Report on Crime and the Foreign Born*, No. 10, pp. 100-102; Taylor, "Crime and the Foreign Born," *Ibid.*, pp. 222, 224; Warnshius, "Crime and Criminal Justice Among Mexicans in Illinois," pp. 279-281.

³⁸Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 149.

³⁹*Ibid.*, Warnshius, "Crime and Criminal Justice Among Mexicans in Illinois," 285-294; Stanley Lieberman, *A Piece of the Pie: Black and White Immigrants Since 1880* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 1-47. For a discussion of the political activity of more than one ethnic group in Chicago see the essays in Melvin G. Holli and d'A. Jones, *The Ethnic Frontier: Essays in the History of Group Survival in Chicago and the Midwest* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eardman's Press, 1977); Humberto S. Nelli, *Italians in Chicago, 1880-1930: A Study in Ethnic Mobility* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 88-124; Mark Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Mexican Immigrant Labor in the United States, 1900-1940* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. 111.

⁴⁰Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, pp. 27-48; Kerr, "The Chicano Experience in Chicago," pp. 11-27; Rosales and Simon, "Mexican Immigrant Experience in the Urban Midwest," pp. 335-336.

⁴¹Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, pp. 27-28; Kerr, "The Chicano Experience in Chicago," p. 19; "Informe general del mes de junio 1917, Chicago," Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (AHSRE), File IV/1064.1 (72:73)/1; United States Department of Labor Circular submitted by S. L. Alatraste, Commercial agent in Chicago for the Secretaría de Industria Comercio y Trabajo, June 1919, Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Trabajo, 177-6-2.

⁴²William M. Tuttle, Jr., *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Atheneum Press, 1970), pp. 108-154; James R. Barrett in "Work and Community in the Jungle: Chicago's Packing House Workers" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1981), makes the point that while unions made working-class solidarity possible, Blacks were not included.

⁴³Tuttle, Jr., *Race Riot*, pp. 156-183.

⁴⁴Ibid.; "Blanco Report," August 10, 1919 in AHSRE, 24/25/23; R. Ruiz, Consul General in New York City to Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (SRE), August 19, 1919, Ibid.; José L. Sepúlveda, Chicago Consul to SRE, September 13, 1919, Ibid.; Ramón de Negri, Consul General in New York City to SRE, September 19, 1919, Ibid.

⁴⁵*Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 9, 1924.

⁴⁶Ibid., November 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 29; Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 153.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 220-231.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 151.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 149.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 151.

⁵¹*México* February 27, March 1, 8, 1930, reel 62, CFLSP; Rafael Aveleyra, Chicago Consul to SRE, June 20, 1930, IV-241.2- (73-16)56, AHSRE.

⁵²Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 128.

⁵³Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow*, p. 109.

⁵⁴*El Correo Mexicano*, September 30, 1926 quoted in Taylor, "Crime and the Foreign Born," p. 231-232; *México*, August 17, 1929, reel 62, CFLPS.

⁵⁵*El Nacional*, January 7, 1931, reel 62, CFLPS; Kerr, "The Chicano Experience in Chicago," 39-40.

⁵⁶*Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 7, 1926; Taylor, "Crime and the Foreign Born," p. 231.

⁵⁷Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 141.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 139-140; Reisler, *By the Sweat of Their Brow*, p. 109.

⁵⁹Interview, Victor Torres.

⁶⁰Interview, José Anguiano; *El Amigo del Hogar*, November 25, 1924; "Castro vs. State" 147 *North Eastern Reporter* (1925): 321-323; Warnshius, "Crime and Criminal Justice Among Mexicans in Illinois," 283. Warnshius.

⁶¹*México*, January 30, 1930, reel 62, CFLPS.

⁶²*Ibid.*, February 22, 1930.

⁶³*Ibid.*, February 18, 22, March 6, 8, May 6, 10, 1930.

⁶⁴"Ignacio Zaragoza, acusado de haber dado muerte a Charles L. Glafcke," Typescript in IV-313-2, AHSRE; Clippings from *La Prensa* and *El Universal*, in *Ibid.*; *El Tucsonense*, June 30, 1931; Interview Eduardo Peralta.

⁶⁵"Ignacio Zaragoza, acusado de haber dado muerte a Charles L. Glafcke," IV-313-2, AHSRE.

⁶⁶58. *New York Times*, June 23, 1931.

⁶⁷59. Clippings from *La Prensa* and *El Universal*, in IV-313-2, AHSRE; *El Tucsonense*, June 30, 1931.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*; Interviews, Eduardo Peralta, Jose Anguiano.

⁶⁹L. Lupian, Chicago Mexican Consul to SRE, August 10, 1924, IV-241-73-10, AHSRE; Interviews, Martin Blanco, Eduardo Peralta, Victor Torres; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 12, 1927; *New York Times*, March 13, 1927.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, May 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16, 22, 26, 27, 1926; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 6, 7, 8, 10, 11; *Chicago Herald Examiner*, May 6, 1926; Interviews, Martin Blanco, Eduardo Peralta, Victor Torres, and Jose Anguiano.

⁷¹45. *Ibid.*; *New York Times*, May 14, 15, 16, 1926.

⁷²*Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 27, 1926, March 13, 14, 15, 1927; "People vs. Shader" 6 *North Eastern Reporter*, (1927): 225-233; *New York Times*, March 13, 1927; Interviews, Martin Blanco and Eduardo Peralta.

⁷³*El Amigo del Hogar*, March 13, 1927; Interview with Jesus Roa Berber, Leon, Guanajuato.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*; *El Amigo del Hogar*, March 13, 1927; *Excelsior*, January 12, 1936; "Bernardo Roa, Reclamación #3475," 1927, VI.73(G)-454-1, and "Bernardo Roa—su detención y extradición," 41-21-32, AHSRE; "Extradition from Mexico

of James V. Price and Bernardo Roa," Natinal Archives, (NA), RG 49, 212.11; *Joliet Evening Herald News*, July 15, 1927.

⁷⁵*Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 13, 1927; *New York Times*, March 14, 1927; Interviews, Blanco, Peralta, Torres; Taylor, "Crime and the Foreign Born," 229-230.

⁷⁶Interview with Navor Rodriguez, Joliet Illinois, 1987.

⁷⁷Jose Anguiano Interview

⁷⁸*El Nacional*, April 1, 1931, reel 62, CFLPS.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, October 26, 1931

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, April 29, 1930.

⁸¹*Ibid.*

⁸²"United States ex rel Velasco vs. Ragen, no. 8966, Seventh Circuit," 158 *Federal Reporter, Second Series* (1946): 87; M. Jesus Gallo, Secretary to Manuel Avila Camacho, President of Mexico, 575.1/87, Presidentes, Camacho, AGN; Clipping from *Chicago Sun Times*, n.d., in *Ibid.*

⁸³*El Nacional*, June 3, 1931, reel 62, CFLPS.

⁸⁴This story was pieced together from the following sources. Interview, Eduardo Peralta; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 8, 9, 10, 11, 1931; Manuel C. Tellez, Mexican Ambassador to W.R. Castle, Acting Secretary of State, July 8, 1931, Louis Emmerson, Governor of Illinois, to Castle, July 9, 1931, Castle to Tellez, July 10, 1931, *Department of State Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1931, Vol. 11, 726-729.

⁸⁵Interview, Eduardo Peralta (1974), and "Interview with Eduardo Peralta, 3212 91st Steret, Chicago, Illinois, December 6, 1936, by Nicolas M. Hernandez," in reel 62, CFLPS.

⁸⁶Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 154; Warnshius, "Crime and Criminal Justice Among Mexicans in Illinois," pp. 204-304.

⁸⁷*Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 4, 1923; "Bernardo Roa, Reclamación #3475," AHSRE; Lujan to SRE, August 10, 1924, NA, RG 59 File 411.12; *Daily Calumet*, December 1, 3, 1923.

⁸⁸Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, *la migración y protección de mexicanos en el extranjero*, pp. 31-32; *México*, April 11, 1926. Quoted in Taylor, *Chicago and the Calumet Region*, p. 152; "Sanchez vs. State," 157 *North Eastern Reporter*, (1927): 1.

⁸⁹Interview, Eduardo Peralta (Conducted by author in 1974), and "Interview with Eduardo Peralta, 3212 91st Street, Chicago, Illinois, December 6, 1936, by Nicolas M. Hernandez," in reel 62, CFLPS.

⁹⁰*El Amigo del Hogar*, April 17, 1927.

⁹¹*El Amigo del Hogar*, July 7, June 9, 1929; *El Nacional*, April 9, November 19, 1932, reel 62, CFLPS.

⁹²Rosales and Simon, "Mexican Immigrant Experience in the Urban Midwest," p. 351.

⁹³Kerr, "Mexican Chicago," pp. 305-317.

⁹⁴*El Nacional*, April 9, November 19, 1932, reel 62, CFLPS.

⁹⁵Quoted in Felix M. Padilla, *Latino Ethnic Consciousness: The Case of Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 31.

MEXICANS IN THE NORTH CENTRAL STATES

George Edson

A survey of settlements of Mexicans in the industrial cities and the sugar beet country of the north central part of the United States, from the Allegheny mountains to the Missouri river, was made in the fall and winter of 1926-27, for the purpose of ascertaining the approximate number of Mexicans in this region, what they engaged in, their earnings and cost of living and other essential facts. The cities visited for this purpose were Bethlehem, Wilkesbarre, Johnstown, McKeesport, Homestead, Pittsburgh, Sharpsburg and Ford City, Pa.; Cleveland, Lorain and Toledo, Ohio; Detroit, Pontiac, Flint, Saginaw and Kalamazoo, Mich.; Fort Wayne, Decatur, Gary, Indiana Harbor and Hammond, Ind.; Waukegan, Chicago, Joliet, Aurora, Chillicothe, Peoria, Quincy, Galesburg and Moline, Ill.; Milwaukee, Wis; Fort Madison, Davenport, Ottumwa, Des Moines, Mason City, Manly, Sioux City and Council Bluffs, Iowa; Albert Lea, Chaska, St. Paul, Minneapolis and East Grand Forks, Minn; Fargo, N.D.; Sioux Falls, S.D.; Omaha, Neb; and St. Louis, Mo.

To ascertain the number of Mexicans in the above-named places inquiry was made of employers as to the number of Mexicans on their pay rolls, visits were made among the homes, camps and neighborhoods of Mexicans, estimates from well-informed leaders in the Mexican settlements were obtained and the enumerations

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shown in school censuses, and data gathered by commercial, social and religious workers were consulted. The population arrived at through these sources was approximately 63,700. Employers and employment agencies, boarding house keepers, ticket agents and many individual Mexicans had information indicating that during the summer months this number was increased to about 80,000 through an inflow of seasonal and transient laborers from the Southwest.

Mexicans began to come into the north central states in noticeable numbers in 1917. Since 1923 the movement into this section has slowed down, but it has become more tenacious. From a pulling-in it has developed into a pushing-in migration. During the ten years preceding 1910 the number of Mexicans who crossed the international boundary into the United States averaged about 900 a year. In 1910, the beginning of a revolutionary era in Mexico, 17,760 crossed out of that country, and during the next ten years the immigration is unusually large. These figures include only those who entered through the immigration offices. Only about 2,500 a year leave through the same gates. Mexican newspapers estimate that there are now in the United States between 2,000,000 and 3,000,000 of their countrymen.

Perhaps not over half the Mexicans in the north central states left any record when they crossed the boundary. Those now arriving generally carry proof of their legal entry but most of those who came a few years ago have evasive answers in place of documents. There are historic reasons for Mexicans feeling that they have a right to cross into the United States, and the subject leads into a maze of tradition and sentiment. This tradition and sentiment, as much as the inconvenience and expense of complying with our immigration requirements, has prompted many Mexicans to walk over the line without any formality. Employers seem to share the same sentiments, for they seldom ask a Mexican whether or not he was legally admitted into the country. The application of the quota principle, from which Mexicans and natives of most all American countries are exempted, would limit the immigration of Mexicans to 1,557 a year.

The immigrants come from many parts of the republic of Mexico but those in the north are principally from the states of Michoacan,

Guanajuato, Jalisco, Aguascalientes, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosi, Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon and Coahuila. Nearly all of them enter through Laredo, Eagle Pass and El Paso. Those from the states of Chihuahua, Durango, Sonora and Sinaloa generally go to the Pacific states north of the border. Other states are represented in smaller numbers.

According to evidence obtained, the Mexicans in our industrial sections came into the country voluntarily, without special inducements. Some large employers of common labor are interested in keeping the supply sufficient but the Mexicans desire to come and are glad of a chance to earn money. A certain amount of antipathy is being overcome, for it was due to erroneous notions that the Mexicans seldom ventured far into the country.

It was necessary to go through the entire factory districts of these cities and to make a shop-to-shop canvass in order to find where the Mexicans were working, and often it was necessary to go to outlying camps and make individual inquiries. Foremen were asked about their men and wages paid, for in the general offices the clerks seldom know the nationality of the employees merely by looking at the pay rolls. The workers themselves were conversed with in Spanish, and in many cases the Mexican women in their homes were questioned for all possible information. Inquiries were made in their barber shops, pool halls and other places of business, and the writer frequently ate with Mexicans and associated with them intimately.

From information thus obtained the following division as to occupations is compiled:

Employed in major industries	30,827
Employed in minor industries and at casual work	7,843
Employed as clerks, translators, interpreters, etc.	339
Engaged in business	207
Engaged in professions	88
Aged and dependent	368
Women (7,961) and children (16,147)	<u>24,108</u>
	63,780

The following table of wages received by the Mexican workers in the industries in which they are chiefly employed is based largely on information furnished by employers. In some cases this information was taken directly from the pay rolls by the writer; in other cases it was given in a general way by the employers. Mexicans frequently stated that the rate of pay was not as high as here given.

Table 1. Wages of Mexicans Employed in Industry 1926-27. North Central States.

Kind of Employment	Number Engaged	Wages per hour between					Hourly Average
		30-35¢	36-40¢	41-45¢	46-50¢	Over 50¢	
Steel mills & foundries	17,295	0	144	8,632	4,164	4,355	\$0.497
Railroads ¹	7,572	77	7,070	339	60	26	.391
Highways & Buildings ²	3,727	84	3,540	66	35	2	.402
Packing houses	1,011	57	68	692	180	14	.427
Cement & Brick plant	663	41	142	288	190	2	.446
Tanneries	559	0	6	425	115	13	.463
Totals	30,827	259	10,970	10,442	4,744	4,412	\$0.456

¹ Extra gangs employed in summer are not included.

² This number decreased about 90% between October 15 and December 1.

³ Of these there were 13 earning less than 30¢ (ten women earning 20¢, a girl earning 27½¢ and two men).

In addition to the 30,827 in the above groups there were 7,843 working at miscellaneous and odd jobs, many of whom were casually out of work and whose earnings were not ascertained, and 1,002 others, including transients, old men and those unable to work.

The greater number of Mexicans are working eight hours a day. In the steel mills most of them are on the eight-hour shifts, where the common labor rate is 50¢ (an hour), and in railroad work the day is almost always eight hours. A fairly large number of the Mexicans are working in ten-hour periods in the steel mills, where the common labor rate is 44¢. They work the same hours and receive the same schedule of pay as Americans or any other nationality doing the same class of work. The conditions affecting them in matters of employment also affect others. The period of their employment is often irregular, as they are generally hired for short periods or temporary occasions. In some cases they have been idle an entire year, depending on a vague promise of employment again.

Of the 63,780 Mexicans found in this territory—western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Iowa—approximately 18,300 were between the ages of 18-25 years, 14,000 were between the ages of 25 and 30, 8,000 were between the ages of 30 and 35, 5,000 were between the ages of 35 and 40, 2,900 were between the ages of 40 and 50 and 900 were over 50 years of age; 10,000 were children under five years old and 4,680 were between five years old and 18 years old.

The age groups show the following percentages:

Children under 5	15%	Adults between 30 and 36 . . .	12%
Children between 5 and 18 . . .	7%	Adults between 35 and 40 . . .	8%
Adults between 18 and 25 . . .	28%	Adults between 40 and 50 . . .	6%
Adults between 25 and 30 . . .	22%	Adults over 50	2%

Half the grown Mexicans are under 30 years of age. The number of children between the ages of eight and 15 years is small, as many of these have been left in the Southwest or in Mexico with grandparents or other relatives. Therefore, the number of children of school age is very small. Practically all the children under six years of age have been born in the United States. Although some of the men over 50 years old are engaged in gainful pursuits, the majority of them have been brought along as dependents.

Among the Mexicans in the north central states, not over two percent are natives of the United States, according to the personnel records kept by employers to show the state or country of birth and the information furnished by the Mexicans and their organizations. Generally the maximum length of time they have been in the country is eight years. The average for those in the eastern part is about two years, according to well informed Mexicans and others. In Illinois and Iowa the average time in the country runs considerably longer. Those now living in the older settlements represent the shifting of many thousands, and many are now on their second or third trip to the north. The following table, compiled from exact records of packing houses in South St. Paul and South Omaha, shows the length of residence in the United States of one of the steadiest groups of Mexican workers.

Table 2. Average Length of Time in the United States. Mexicans Employed in South St. Paul and South Omaha Packing houses.

Place	Variation in time	Number of	Years	Months	Days
South St. Paul	½ to 18 years	36	7	0	20
South St. Paul	2 to 38 years ¹	26	11	2	23
South St. Paul	2/3 to 19 years	28	6	6	0
Omaha		34	6	6	0
Omaha		21	8	0	0
Omaha		36	7	0	0

¹Of these 26 men four were born in the United States.

Duration on Job

In the eastern portion of the territory comprised in this report the duration of a Mexican on a job was relatively short, although the employers generally expressed satisfaction with the labor turnover. In their judgment the Poles and other immigrants of former years were better stayers and more efficient workers, but these are no longer obtainable. The Mexicans were said to be

preferable to certain peoples of southwestern Europe, but these (Europeans) were not regarded as desirable. About a fourth of employers thought that Mexicans meet the requirements for unskilled labor, and half of this fourth seemed rather optimistic about the ability of the Mexicans to progress. The other three-fourths were undecided or non-committal.

Mexicans had been regarded formerly, in 1915 to 1918, as undependable, quitting a job at any time they were offered even a slight increase elsewhere, but in recent years they have shown a tendency to settle down and stick to certain employers. They were originally brought in as supernumerary laborers during emergency activity, and men without family ties were preferred, but now the personnel managers are beginning to want men with families. The return of many Europeans to their home countries during the war and the absence of later immigrants seeking common labor jobs has left an opening for the Mexicans. To cultivate a supply of them their employers are disposed to encourage their remaining in a locality.

The men employed in building, bridge and highway construction have the poorest record of continuous service. Their jobs are usually of short duration, subject to weather changes and the seasonal demand for extra laborers. Railroad track workers are next in order as short-term stayers. Their average is lengthened, however, by the long periods of service of some regular section hands who have worked steadily for ten or 15 years, particularly in Illinois and Iowa. In different steel mills in the Pittsburgh region the average duration of Mexican laborers on the pay roll varied from five months in one mill to 17 months in another. The variation found in different factories was due to personality of the employment office, selection of applicants and fluctuation in demand. Some plants cooperate with others to give the Mexicans a little employment to keep them available, especially in the sugar beet country, and this fact tends to shorten the term of service and send the men back and forth.

The following table shows the records of several groups of Mexican workers in the middle west, as copied from employers' records. These figures take no account of the men who have gone to work and quit again during the past several years, for even the

most efficient labor departments do not preserve employment records more than two years, and of the hundreds who have come and gone no trace remains.

Table 3. Average Duration on the Job. Mexicans on Payrolls in February, 1927, in Certain Midwest Cities.

Place	Kind of Work	Number	Years	Months	Days
Galesburg, ILL	Foundry	36	2	3	3
Fort Madison, IA	Roundhouse & Shop	61	6	3	22
Moline, ILL	Steel Mill	26	1	8	10
Silvis, ILL	Roundhouse & Shop	40	2	5	2
Silvis, ILL	Railroad Stores	31	4	11	22
Mason City, IA	Cement Plant	39	3	4	27
Mason City, IA	Packing House	66	0	8	4
South St. Paul	Packing House	36	1	10	0
South St. Paul	Packing House	26	0	5	0
South St. Paul	Packing House	43	2	7	7
Omaha	Packing House	34	4	0	0
Omaha	Packing House	21	2	3	0
Omaha	Packing House	36	3	6	1

Mexicans in Sugar Beet Fields

Mexicans are largely replacing the Belgians and German-Russians formerly used as laborers in the sugar beet fields of Ohio, Michigan, Iowa, Minnesota and North Dakota and now comprise from 75 percent to 90 percent of this class of agricultural worker. The Belgians and German-Russians who remained throughout the war have been drifting into trades and small businesses in the cities or have become land renters or owners, often in competition with their former employers. When the shortage of field laborers became acute in 1917 and 1918 the producers of sugar beets followed the example of the Colorado growers and shipped in a force of Mexicans. Year by year the number of Mexicans coming into the beet country increases as the number of other nationalities decreases. A large proportion of the Mexicans are hired in San

Antonio and Fort Worth, Texas, at the agencies of the large sugar producing companies. Others are picked up in Kansas City, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland and other cities by representatives of these companies.

The sugar refining company makes contracts with farmers to raise a specified number of acres of beets at a certain price and subject to the supervision of the company, which agrees to furnish the necessary labor to tend the crop. Contracts are then made with Mexicans by the sugar company but as if by the farmer individually. The farmer agrees to prepare the ground, drill the beet seed and cultivate the plants to within three inches of the middle of the row, furnish a house for the laborers and to transport them and their luggage to and from the nearest railroad station. The Mexican signing the contract agrees to block and thin the beet plants, keep the rows hoed and free from weeds and to pike and top the beets at harvest. Nothing is said in the contract about anyone helping the Mexican, but before the contract is signed a representative of the company is assured that the Mexican can muster sufficient help. This help usually consists of his wife and children, and lacking sufficient children, he assumes guardianship of other children who, in the great majority of cases, are related to him. It is the custom among Mexicans to assume responsibility for orphaned grandchildren, nephews and nieces and even second or third cousins. The blocking is done by a grown man, using a wide hoe to strike out the plants to hills from ten to 12 inches apart. The women and children on their hands and knees pull out the weeds and superfluous plants, leaving one vigorous plant in a hill. The hoeing is performed by persons able to handle a hoe. When the beets are harvested the plowing out is done by the farmer, and the adult Mexicans strike off the tops and tails with a topping knife, throwing the beets in piles.

The rows are hoed as often as deemed necessary by the field man employed by the sugar company, and usually two or three hoeings are sufficient. The Mexicans arrive about April 15 or May 1. Whenever the crop is clean the workers are at liberty to do outside work, earning current wages at gathering tomatoes, picking sweet corn, shocking grain, making hay, topping onions, husking corn or doing whatever work is offered at the season. From August

1 to September 15 the beet worker generally has an opportunity to do other work to earn extra money, outside of his contract. Industrious workers are able to earn \$75 or \$100 in this way.

A Mexican contracts 15 or 20 acres if his family consists of himself and wife and only small children, but if there are several adults in his crew he can tend as many as 30 or 40 acres. An able Mexican cares for about eight acres, but some with considerable experience and unusual speed can undertake 15 acres. In case of continual wet weather and rapid growth of weeds the task is increased. The contract price is \$23 in the Michigan territory and \$24 an acre in the North Dakota and northern Minnesota country, payable in three installments. The first payment is made after blocking and thinning is finished, \$8 per acre. The second payment is made about August 1, when the final hoeing is finished, \$7 per acre. The Michigan and Ohio sugar companies deduct \$5 an acre to repay them for the cost of transportation, taking out \$1.50 an acre from the first payment, \$1.50 from the second and \$2 from the last. The Iowa, Minnesota and North Dakota company absorbs the cost of transportation but holds back \$1 an acre from the first payment and \$1 an acre from the second as a forfeit in case the contract is not completed by the Mexican, returning this \$2 an acre with the final settlement. The fairness of this deposit is justified on the ground that the Mexican is likely to drift away during the season when he is offered good wages at other work, and the company will have to pay another man a premium to get the beets harvested, and that sometimes the Mexican will fail to keep his fields clean and the farmer will have to hire extra help. A number of Mexicans who have become expert toppers wait until a worker has given up his field and then finish the work at good wages, occasionally making \$10 or \$15 a day. To a man who pays his own way to the beet fields and makes a contract locally, the Minnesota company pays an additional \$1 an acre or the equivalent of his traveling expenses.

To equalize the compensation in case the crop is heavy the sugar companies pay a bonus of 75 cents a ton for every ton of beets produced over 9.2 tons per acre. This bonus is not paid until the following January, when bonus checks are mailed to those contractors whose fields yielded an excess tonnage. Practically all

the checks are mailed to addresses within the United States. About half the beet workers leave for the border states about November 1. Most of the others go to the cities to get work in foundries and shops, but of these a number drift to Texas before spring. A small number remain in the beet country, some obtaining a little work from farmers and on railroads, and others living on their summer's earnings. One large sugar company is experimenting with a plan of encouraging their workers to stay in the locality, with the idea that this will help them familiarize themselves with the language, laws and customs of the people, give their children a chance to attend school and save the company the expense of recruiting and transportation in the spring.

The following table shows the earnings and number of Mexicans engaged in tending sugar beet fields during the season of 1926 in the territory covered in this report.

Table 4. Contract Earnings of Mexicans in the Sugar Beet Fields of the North Central States during the Season of 1926. Compiled from data furnished by Sugar companies.

Territory	No. of Workers	Acres Tended	Price per acre	Contract Earnings	Bonus Received	Total Received	Average per Person ¹
Michigan	² 6720	42000	³ \$23.00	\$966000	⁴ \$966000	\$143.75
Ohio and Ind.	3264	20400	23.00	469200	469200	143.75
Minnesota	1506	9375	23.00	215625	\$5620	221245	146.90
North Dakota	1270	7960	24.00	191040	2340	193380	152.27
Iowa	2018	12460	23.00	286580	11550	298130	147.73
Totals	⁵ 14778	92195	\$23.08	\$2128445	\$19510	\$2147955	\$145.34

¹Four persons constitute an average family

²Of this number 3,048 were shipped from Texas by one company.

³\$5 is deducted for transportation, leaving \$18 net.

⁴Exclusive of any outside earnings.

⁵About 5,000 of these returned to Texas after the harvest was finished.

Food and Cost of Living

A two-thirds fare is obtained from the railroad companies by the sugar companies for their Mexicans departing from the beet territory in the fall, in gangs of ten, to any one destination. Not half the Mexicans apply for these rates.

The principal foodstuffs of the Mexicans are tortillas, pinto beans, eggs, lean beef, pork, tripe, sausage, tomatoes, onions, chile peppers, rice, vermicelli, chickpeas, carrots, artichokes, squashes, green corn, sweet potatoes, coffee and chocolate. Tortillas should be made of corn but the cooks usually have to use wheat flour. Many spices are used in their cookery, and cinnamon bark is steeped to make a drink that is used extensively in place of coffee. Grocers and meat retailers seem to value the patronage of Mexicans and practically all asserted that the latter were particular eaters and demanded good food. A large proportion of the Mexicans, particularly eastward, board with others. The average charge for meals is about 30 cents. In commissaries and employer-owned lodging houses the charge for board and lodging is \$1.10 in the Pittsburgh region and \$1 a day at Chicago and westward, with a variation of five or ten cents a day in a few instances. The cost of board and lodging averages about \$35 a month.

The proportion of families is not over 10 percent at Pittsburgh, according to calculations made by leading Mexicans and by employers, but increases steadily until at Omaha 85 percent or 90 percent of the Mexicans live in their own households. The new arrivals from Mexico are generally unaccompanied by a wife or family, and they usually put up at a boarding house. Although some remain for a year at a company-owned boarding house, nearly all of them find accommodations in a Mexican home within a few weeks.

As a typical average, a Mexican works about 250 days a year, earning \$4 a day. A family of five spends hardly \$2 a day for food, 30 cents for rent, 25 cents for clothing and ten cents for other expenses. Railroad workers earn less but spend less for rent.

The Mexicans occupy the same class of houses and neighborhoods as the Europeans whom they are displacing in the steel mills and foundries. An average rent for the type of houses they live in is between \$20 and \$30 a month: in the large majority of instances a Mexican family has the use of only a part of a house, sub rented from a tenant of another nationality. In some of the midwestern towns they occupy small houses costing \$7, \$10 and \$15 a month.

Not one in a hundred owns his own home, nor are they interested in buying property, as they say they cannot depend on steady employment, cannot spare the money and cannot dispose of property without loss. In a number of cities they build temporary shacks out of scrap material on railroad or factory ground and consider them as personal property.

Nearly every railroad throughout this region has Mexicans on its section crews. The lines which run into the west, (such) as the Santa Fe, the Rock Island, and the Burlington, have a number of Mexicans doing the simpler work in roundhouses and shops. Many of these railroad workers live in old box cars demounted from the trucks and set on the ground along the tracks. The Burlington charges a rent of 75 cents a month in the summer and \$1.50 a month in the winter for each car or each family. For men earning over 50 cents an hour, the Burlington charges a rent of \$7 a month in summer and \$8 a month in winter for these identical car bodies. Several railroads charge nothing for these quarters. The Santa Fe charges no rent for car bodies to section men but it has tile flats in which \$1 per room is charged.

The Mexicans, as a rule, wear good clothing. They avoid articles of dress which might distinguish them from people in general. Many of the younger Mexicans buy automobiles. In the beet country employers oppose their men buying used cars, particularly when bought on credit, for they say that often a Mexican will spend for an old car the money which he needs to keep him through the winter.

The statements of charitable associations affirmed that a very few Mexicans ask for help, as they help one another. Social workers have observed that the Mexicans have a willingness to share their means with any of their unfortunate countrymen and

a marked reluctance to ask for public assistance. The information given by bankers revealed that many of the Mexican laborers have a habit of saving, notwithstanding the rather heavy remittances of money to Mexico. A few savings accounts run as high as \$500 and there are many from \$100 to \$250, mostly started within the last two years. In some places a fourth of the wage-earning Mexicans have savings accounts, but generally not over a tenth and in some places, less. It was also shown that many Mexicans hoard money in their homes. Investments in securities are rare, only five or six men in a thousand putting their money into interest-bearing paper.

The amount of money sent to dependents in Mexico varies with the proportion of families. In the cities where many single men work the amount of money remitted averages a fourth of the earnings, but in the smaller centers where many of the men have their families with them the amount sent away is from 10 percent to 15 percent of the wages received. The bulk of this money goes to the support of dependent relatives; some is in payment of loans extended to obtain passage, and some is to be saved until the emigrant's return home. Some of the beet workers who do not understand that work in the winter time is scarce sometimes send home so much of their money that they become penniless before spring. A Mexican in Fort Madison, Iowa, is taking care of a household of 30 persons.

The proportion of Mexicans who engage in business is small, and those in professions are exceedingly few. Most of the professional men connected with aggregations of Mexicans are Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Filipinos, South Americans or Spaniards. Eating houses, barbershops, pool halls, tailor shops, bakeries and printing offices are the most common of their undertakings. There are in Detroit, Chicago, Indiana Harbor and some other places some creditable businesses run by Mexicans. Several professional men in Chicago, as dentists and doctors, are succeeding in their sphere. A monthly magazine is published in Detroit called "el Eco de la Patria," and a daily newspaper is published in Chicago. A weekly newspaper in Spanish is edited by a Mexican in the latter city.

Organizations are numerous among the Mexicans. The most widely known is the *Comisión Honorífica*, fostered by the Mexican consuls and composed usually of the most intelligent Mexicans in

each colony. Its purpose is to teach the Mexicans how to get along in their new environment, to reflect credit on their nationality, to retain the homeland in their affections and to aid those who get into trouble. The president of the society in each colony is, ex officio, a representative of the consul. In some cities the membership is as high as 100 but in most places it is only a half dozen or so. *La Cruz Azul Mexicana* (The Mexican Blue Cross) is a charitable organization having chapters in New York City, Detroit, Indiana Harbor and other cities. The membership is open to men and women and represents the better element in Mexican society. There are many minor and local associations based on fraternal, social, educational, recreative, artistic, literary and patriotic motives, with membership varying from 150 in a few cases to 50 and even ten or less. In Indiana Harbor there is a religious-labor organization of considerable strength and prestige, one of whose purposes is to build a Catholic temple for Mexicans. The organization publishes a periodical called *El Amigo del Hogar* (Friend of the Fireside). Several colonies have musical organizations and uniformed bands.

Ninety-seven percent of the Mexicans in the north central region of the United States are Roman Catholics. Their religious sentiments have an historic background and are apparently closely allied to their love of their native country. The efforts of Protestant missions and social workers is regarded by many Mexicans as an unfair attempt to undermine their nationalism. Although in a number of cities the Mexicans are good attendants at classes for foreigners and they show ability and zeal equal to others, not two in a hundred become American citizens. This is revealed by statements of the teachers, the Mexicans and employers.

Mexicans show an indifference to learning the English language. This was apparent to the writer in numerous conversations with the Mexicans. Employers and others dealing with Mexicans have noted it. Most of the American-born and a small number of others, not exceeding two percent of all, speak English fluently, about 15 percent speak it well and about 15 percent can make themselves understood. The other 65 percent are unable to converse in the language and make no effort to learn it. A fairly large proportion of them can sign their names—a proportion far above the Europeans and the average Americans working at common labor

according to employers, bankers and others. School teachers very generally stated that the Mexican children are studious, apt and of good deportment, although a few teachers said they were dirty, irregular in attendance and untruthful. The fact that the families move about a good deal, especially those in beet work or with railroad gangs, is a hindrance to regular attendance.

The Mexicans are victims of the afflictions common to poor immigrants. Infant mortality is high, generally due to intestinal disorders. The women are subject to consumption, and their resistance to illness is low. The men, although not muscularly as strong as northern Europeans nor as active and big, show a greater endurance at work in extreme heat, disagreeable odors and nerve-wrecking noises than most other races. Instances were noted of men working continuously, without a day off in a year, in iron foundries where men of other nationalities would not stay a month. In Minnesota Mexican section hands work outdoors when the temperature is 20 degrees below zero. In tanneries they often have to work with their clothing wet, and in cement and asbestos plants their places are usually in the dust. Some of them said that they did not like the work which endangered their health, and employees in foundries declared that the gases were very injurious to their lungs.

An investigation into the police records and personal habits of the Mexicans indicated that they are not regarded as particularly vicious. The great majority of the offenses of which they are guilty are generally classed as disorderly conduct. Their murders are nearly always among their own race. A few Mexicans are addicted to the habit of smoking *maribuana*, a drug derived from a plant grown by Mexicans. The idea is very general among the Mexicans that they are abused in this country.

This report includes only certain facts and conditions found in the portion of the United States visited. Whether or not the same circumstances may exist in the country as a whole this report does not attempt to indicate.

ROSITA THE RIVETER: MIDWEST MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN DURING WORLD WAR II, 1941—1945

Richard Santillán

Saturday, December 6, 1941, the status of women as workers was one thing, by Monday, December 8, it had acquired a new complexion. War had come to the United States, war with inevitable demand for more men in the military force and the phenomenal need for more workers to turn out fighting equipment. Thus, the importance of women workers was enhanced over a week-end.¹

Mary Anderson

Thousands of Mexican American women made significant contributions to the industrial effort during World War II as a direct consequence of an acute labor shortage in the United States. Mexican American women, in both the Midwest and the Southwest regions, labored as riveters, crane operators, welders, assemblers, railroad section workers, roundhouse mechanics, forklift operators, meatpackers, farmworkers, seamstresses, nurses, secretaries, and shipbuilders. They assisted in the critical production of aircraft, tanks, trucks, jeeps, ships, uniforms, tents, medical supplies, small arms, heavy artillery, ammunition, bombs, and communication

This article is part of a forthcoming book entitled *Latino Social and Cultural Organizations in the Midwest United States: A Study of Four Generations, 1910-1989*. The author wishes to thank Stuart Anderson and David Fite for their excellent editing, Catherine Araiza for her time in typing this article, and Sherna Gluck for her helpful suggestions and resources. Finally, my heartfelt appreciation and respect to all the women interviewed for this article, especially the women of SOY (Señoras of Yesteryear) of East Chicago, Indiana.

equipment. The industrial work which they engaged in was extremely hazardous and physically strenuous, often requiring lengthy hours with few days off for rest and relaxation during the entire war.

The wartime contribution of Mexican American women was not confined solely to work in defense industries, however. A handful of Mexican American women eventually enlisted in the military service, some of them even serving overseas prior to the conclusion of the war in 1945.² The Mexican American community of East Chicago, Indiana, for example, had six of its young women serve with distinction in the military. Meanwhile, thousands of other Mexican American women aided the war effort by assisting in homefront activities such as organizing war bond drives, working with the local Red Cross, cultivating victory gardens, and collecting scrap metal for armaments. Some women also formed social clubs, modeled after the USO, for Mexican American servicemen who were often barred from public establishments because of racial discrimination.³

Nevertheless, a scholarly inventory of Chicano publications regarding the World War II experiences of the Mexican American community reveals a largely male perspective.⁴ This research has focused primarily on both the impressive war credentials earned by Mexican American servicemen and the new era of post-war social consciousness spurred by returning veterans, which eventually led to the establishment of the National G.I. Forum and both the "Viva Kennedy" and the "Viva Johnson" movements.

Absent from many of these studies are the critical wartime roles played by Mexican American women during this global conflict. As more and more men enlisted in the military service, the social and economic infrastructures of midwestern Mexican American communities underwent fundamental changes because women inherited greater responsibilities as heads of households, wage earners, and community leaders. In retrospect, we see now that World War II triggered a new social period in the evolutionary development of the Mexican community in the Midwest, as both men and women, in a collective effort, helped defeat fascism during the 1940s. It is safe to assume that without the gallant partnership between men and women on the homefront and

battlefield, World War II would have been won less easily and at greater cost in American blood and resources.

Unfortunately, Chicano research has unintentionally promoted the long-held myth that only Mexican American men were socially and politically affected by the war, while Mexican American women were somehow immune from its consequences. The study of the lives and labor of Mexican American women during World War II helps dispel this historical misunderstanding, and, more importantly, contributes deeper insight in our understanding of the social and economic forces which politically reshaped the Mexican American Midwest community in the post-war period of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

In all fairness, Chicano scholars are not solely to blame for this distorted historical interpretation. Mexican American leaders representing state and national organizations have also generally overlooked the wartime contributions and sacrifices of Mexican American women when paying special tribute to the community's historical commitment to the defense of the nation.⁵ Furthermore, Anglo historians who have written about the role of women during the war have almost completely ignored Mexican American women.⁶

Finally, both the U.S. government and the American private sector must share the blame for failing to recognize the considerable contributions of all female defense workers. The vast majority of the labor force has never received formal recognition from either the government or former employers acknowledging their unselfish courage and dedication during the war. The U.S. Government did not award ribbons or medals or sponsor rallies and parades for male and female defense workers, as it did for returning servicemen. Instead, many of these female workers were simply given a two-week notice of termination, without any significant post-war compensation, including the G.I. Bill. This lack of official recognition by the government and defense industry has helped to foster a social climate which unfairly ignores the immeasurable contributions of many defense workers during the war years.

Scholars have disagreed about the long-term impact these wartime experiences had on the lives of women.⁷ Some researchers maintain, for example, that the war helped accelerate the women's movement because many females acquired social independence, economic mobility, and permanent job skills, while shattering traditional myths about their inability to do industrial labor. Other researchers disagree with this assessment and claim there was no measurable social impact because many of these women were pressured to return to their pre-war status at the end of the war in 1945.

As noted earlier, this academic dispute has precluded any serious discussion regarding the social and community impact the war had on the lives of Mexican American women. During the past three years, the author has interviewed eighty-seven Mexican American women who worked in a variety of war-related industries in the Midwest between 1941 and 1945. These women were mainly employed in the states of Kansas, Nebraska, Indiana, Michigan, Iowa, and Illinois. With this article, I hope to make up for this past neglect by telling the story of these brave, resourceful, and energetic Mexican American women.

The article, detailing both the wartime and post-war experiences of these women, is divided into three parts. The first section surveys the political and economic forces which shaped and influenced the social attitudes of members of the G.I. Generation during their childhood and adolescence. This generation survived a series of titanic historical events which, unknown to them at the time, prepared them for the social and economic challenges stemming from World War II. This historical backdrop provides a framework that is necessary in understanding more fully the community mindset of the Mexican American in the Midwest prior to December 7, 1941.

The second section describes both the American defense industry in general, and the specific occupations and working conditions of Mexican American women. The majority of Mexican American defense workers were employed in the essential areas of aircraft, steel, ammunitions, railroads, and meatpacking. The final

section examines the impact of the war on the lives of these women.

Not surprisingly, many family members and close friends of these women were not even remotely aware of their defense work and wartime community activities. As a general rule, these women were reluctant, even forty-five years later, to speak about their wartime activities, preferring instead to talk about the contributions of the men. Eventually, however, they provided first-hand accounts of the war and how it affected their lives. This is their story.

The majority of the Mexican American men and women who would eventually fight, work, and organize during World War II were born between 1915 and 1926. This age group of Mexican Americans is often referred to as the G.I. Generation because they lived through a period of extraordinary historical events. The first of these events was the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917.

The Mexican Revolution forced more than one million Mexican citizens into the United States, where they desperately sought both physical safety and gainful employment far away from the bloody civil war.⁸ Thousands of these refugees traveled great distances and eventually settled in the Midwest, where job opportunities with railroads, steel companies, auto plants, packing houses, and agriculture existed. Mexican workers were usually assigned to menial tasks which were low-paying and physically dangerous, and which offered minimal opportunity for job advancement. Despite poor working conditions, Mexican laborers had become a vital part of the Midwest economy by the 1920s.

The Mexican-born population in the Midwest, by 1920, had already reached about thirty thousand and nearly 150 satellite communities flourished in this ten-state region, principally in Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin.⁹ These early Midwest Mexican settlements were, in the real sense, "communities," with both Catholic and Baptist churches, mutual-aid societies, fiestas, orchestras, dance, and theatre groups, Spanish-language newspapers, small businesses, and organized sports. Mexican neighborhoods were oftentimes separated from the rest of the city by either railroad tracks or a river. Enduring racial discrimination and prejudice was a way of life for the majority of

these Mexican newcomers—discrimination triggered primarily by job competition and ignorance.

Members of the G.I. Generation were raised in the U.S. Almost all of the children were delivered in the home by midwives, and most were born into a tri-generational household. Large families were very common, ranging between ten and twenty siblings. Infant mortality, caused by childhood diseases, was high.

The concepts of family and community were, in actuality, one and the same thing for the G.I. Generation. As one community organizer recalled:

My generation was raised during a special period in our history when the ideas of family and community were basically the same experiences inside our minds. Most of our families had known each other from the small towns in Mexico, and naturally carried these deep-rooted bonds of friendship with them across the border. We were almost all related in my barrio as *compadres*, *commadres*, *tíos* and *primos*. As a child, I saw everyone in the community as one large extended familia.¹⁰

The G.I. Generation was raised in a bilingual and bicultural environment, with strict rules often requiring that only Spanish be spoken at home. The children usually translated for their parents whenever the occasion required social contact with Anglo society. In addition, the children were encouraged by their parents to participate in the cultural activities of the community, including the *fiestas patrias*. The majority of parents instilled the Mexican culture in their children because they feared that, without such reinforcement, the process of assimilation would eventually destroy altogether their traditional Mexican culture. Many also believed they would eventually return to the old country, and wanted their children to be able to make a smooth transition back into the mainstream of Mexican life. Finally, the fear of deportation served as an incentive for parents to raise their children with the Mexican culture.

For recreation, children of the G. I Generation played the familiar American games of hide-and-seek, jump-rope, kick-the-can, jacks, and tag. Some of the fathers brought home ball bearings

from the company shops to be used as marbles by their young sons. Grandmothers made rag dolls for the girls, while a few of the older brothers made roller skates and ice skates for their younger siblings from old scrap iron during their lunch hours at work.

As the G.I. Generation entered adolescence in the late 1930s, many listened and danced to the music of Benny Goodman, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Harry James, and Wayne King. They also danced to the Latin sound of various Midwest-based Mexican orchestras: the Rio Grande Serenaders, the Tampico Boys of Kansas City, the Santa Cruz Band of St. Louis, the Orquesta Ixtliochili of Elgin, Illinois, Frank Rodríguez y Sus Diablos Rojos of Chicago, Los South Chicago Mayans, La Orquesta Travadores of East Moline, Illinois, and Tommy Tamez of East Chicago, Indiana.

These pre-war experiences of young Mexican Americans were tragically overshadowed by a series of distressing events that caused extreme social and economic hardships during most of their formative years. The Depression of the 1930s had a devastating impact, including widespread physical dislocation caused by the repatriation programs and the need of families to seek steady employment elsewhere in the United States. The Depression also ended the educational aspirations of many young men and women who were forced to leave school to help their families during the crisis.

In addition, Mexicans in the Midwest encountered widespread racial prejudice and public discrimination, including the common practice of being restricted to certain segregated sections of restaurants, theaters, schools, and some Catholic churches. As children, they were required to sit in the balcony while watching the Saturday afternoon movies, and they were permitted to swim in public pools only one day during the week. Many Mexican families were forced to live in sub-standard housing, characterized by the lack of hot running water, the discomforts of outdoor bathrooms, inadequate space to accommodate large families, unpaved and unlighted streets, and the frigid cold during the harsh winter months.

To their credit, the majority of midwestern families prevailed against an inhospitable environment of racial isolation, physical displacement, unflattering stereotypes, and unfair accusations of un-American behavior. The social determination demonstrated by the Mexican community in overcoming these political and economic hurdles explains in large measure the deep-rooted spirit of survival and optimism of the G.I. Generation during and after the war. The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, would again severely test and reaffirm the endurance, courage, and strong sense of community and cultural pride of the Mexican people in the Midwest.

The Mexican American communities of the Midwest, along with the rest of the nation, anxiously sat in front of their Philco and RCA radios and listened as President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked for a declaration of war against Japan. Thousands of young Mexican-descent men and a handful of women soon enlisted or were drafted into all the branches of the military. They registered in their local induction centers in Detroit, Chicago, Des Moines, St. Louis, Toledo, Gary, Milwaukee, Bethlehem, Kansas City, Omaha, St. Paul, and East Chicago. They also came from rural towns such as Sutherland and Hershey, Nebraska; Mason City and Davenport, Iowa; Albert Lea, Minnesota; Silvas, Illinois; Garden City and Emporia, Kansas; Holland, Michigan; Lorain, Ohio; and Kenosha, Wisconsin.

There were many reasons why Mexican Americans rushed to join the military service, despite the fact that most had experienced a great deal of discrimination during their lives. The majority enlisted out of a strong sense of patriotic obligation, most simply feeling it was their civic duty:

We believed, that by joining the service, we could lay to rest the idea that Mexicans were disloyal to the United States. We wanted to prove that while our cultural ties were deeply-rooted in Mexico, our home was here in this country.¹¹

As young Mexican American men saw their close friends joining the Army and Navy, they too wanted to be part of the community team. The United States government also offered U.S. citizenship

to all legal residents serving in the military, and some Mexican-born men took advantage of this policy. Ironically, the U.S. government mailed draft notices to young Mexican American men residing in Mexico who had been repatriated with their families years earlier by this same government.

The majority of Mexican American recruits undertook their basic training in the southern states in 1942. What most of these former war veterans vividly remember to this day is not the lack of Mexican food at the training camps or the obscenity-shouting sergeants, but the terrible segregation and mistreatment of Black citizens in the states where the camps were located. Many Mexican American servicemen recall how they sympathized with the Black population, largely because of their own personal experiences with discrimination in the Midwest.

Most Mexican American servicemen briefly returned home to visit their families and friends before being shipped overseas for combat duty. The women of the family nearly always prepared the favorite foods of their departing sons and husbands, and the men typically would sit outside after the meal, drinking beer and reminiscing about the old days in Mexico, especially about the great battles of the Mexican Revolution. After an emotional farewell in the morning, the young servicemen would be driven to the bus or train depot, where another emotional scene often took place. Almost all of the homes of the Mexican communities in the Midwest had silver stars posted on their windows, indicating the number of men and women of that particular household serving in the armed forces. As the war dragged on, many of these silver stars were replaced by gold ones—indicating family members killed in action.

A Mexican American woman defense worker whose brothers saw combat action stated:

We didn't understand the international politics that led to the war. We did know, however, that the Japanese had cowardly bombed Pearl Harbor and had killed hundreds of young American boys—boys who were my brothers' ages. The Japanese had attacked our country. I say our country because I was born here. My generation went proudly

to war because this country, despite the discrimination, had provided my family with a better life than my relatives (had) in Mexico.¹²

Another former defense worker recalled:

It was very depressing when the men went off to war because it shattered our community. Whenever a young man was killed in action, we all felt the same pain because we all went to school together and were close friends. In a strange way, the war brought our community closer together because the war touched all of our lives; and therefore, we had to give more emotional support to one another.¹³

In the early months of the war, the United States government publicly predicted that labor shortages in war-related industries would not be a serious problem because of the high rate of volunteer recruitment. This optimistic forecast had changed by mid-1942, however, when the government announced severe labor shortages in several critical areas of war production, especially the aircraft and munitions industries. Both the president and Congress proposed in 1942 and 1943 the mandatory registration for all women between the ages of eighteen and fifty as a way to resolve this wartime problem.¹⁴ The policy was never implemented, however, mainly because vocal women's groups lobbied against the proposed plan and eventually convinced the president and federal lawmakers that female volunteers were already doing their fair share of work without the need for a mandatory civilian draft. In fact, by 1943, women had become an integral part of the wartime labor force, comprising nearly one-third of all workers and over fifty percent of the workers in the aircraft and munitions industries.¹⁵

At the outbreak of the war, the vast majority of female workers in defense plants could be accurately characterized as young and single. This demographic profile changed dramatically by 1943 as married and divorced women, women with children, and elderly women swelled the ranks of defense workers.

There are no accurate records on the total numbers of Mexican American women who were employed in the Midwest during the war, especially in the defense industry, because Mexican American workers were simply categorized as "white" as opposed to "non-

white" for company records. A very crude estimate would be approximately five thousand Mexican American women, based on my interviews with former defense workers.

Mexican American defense workers were a diversified group composed of young single women, married and divorced women, including mothers, and women over fifty-five years of age. It was not unusual for single daughters living at home to work prior to the war.

During the Depression, the only jobs available to young Mexican American women were limited primarily to sewing and laundry work, hotel maids, and as domestics. These jobs were both physically demanding and paid very little. When the war broke out, defense jobs were all of a sudden open to us because of the labor shortage with the men off to war. Many of us left these menial jobs into highly skilled occupations with good to excellent pay with overtime. Despite changing our jobs, we were still required to turn over our checks to our parents.¹⁶

Besides the higher pay, young Mexican American women applied for defense work for other reasons, including the glamor and excitement of such work, and as a means to escape from a rigid upbringing at home. The significant change in these Mexican communities, however, was the number of married women working outside the home. Prior to the war, married women helped supplement the family income by taking in work at home, including washing, ironing, sewing, and taking care of children and boarders. This temporary change regarding married women was rooted in a realistic appraisal of the situation. With so many young men off to war, other family members still had to earn the income for rent and food. Furthermore, Mexican men strongly believed that their wives and daughters could help bring the war to a swift end by working in defense plants, thus increasing the chances that their sons would return alive from overseas.

Some women also recalled that they had sought outside employment as a way to keep themselves fully occupied in order to fight the loneliness of having their sons so far away. Finally, a minority of Mexican women between the ages of fifty and seventy-

five also worked, mainly because they wanted to feel part of the community effort. A daughter of one such woman observed:

It was simply amazing seeing our mothers and grandmothers outside the home working after watching them as housewives for all our lives. Almost none of these women spoke English and for many, it was the first real social contact with the Anglo world. Our mothers and grandmothers worked as cleaning women, carting material to the various shops, and sorting nuts, bolts, and screws. The cultural shock of adjusting to both defense work and the Anglo world was too much for most of these women. The majority quit within six months.¹⁷

Some of the more traditional Mexican fathers and husbands reluctantly gave approval for their daughters and wives to work once the United States entered war. Despite their cautious approval, a few fathers quickly withdrew it if they learned that their daughter was socializing after working hours:

I remember one day when an angry Mexican father came marching into the plant searching for his daughter whom he had heard was talking to some of the boys after work hours. He found her and quickly escorted her out of the plant. We never saw her working again. Many other fathers waited outside the company gates in order to walk their daughters home after work. Our fathers were simply old-fashioned when it came to their daughters working in a place where there were men.¹⁸

Most of these women walked to work, since their neighborhoods were often adjacent to the industrial sections of town. Each was issued her own personal locker in which she stored her work clothes and other necessities, including make-up. These women recalled that no matter how dirty the work was inside the plants, they still came to the work floor wearing perfume and make-up. This practice was not done to attract the men, but to remind themselves of their femininity despite the harsh surroundings. Almost all of these women had pictures posted inside their lockers of *La Virgen de Guadalupe* and of their loved ones overseas. Some also confessed good-naturedly to having pictures of Clark Gable or Robert Taylor taped inside their lockers.

Defense workers were often required to purchase their own work clothes and to pay to have their clothes cleaned. The work uniform generally consisted of overalls, slacks, shirt, steel-tip shoes, head covering, safety goggles, and work bib. This type of dress was socially uncomfortable for many of the older women. One woman recalled:

Many of our mothers and aunts who worked in the defense plants never really adjusted to wearing what they considered to be men's clothing. Here were women who had worn only dresses all their lives, and were now required to wear pants and shirts. Many of them were clearly embarrassed, whereas many of us younger women thought that pants and shirts were both very fashionable and chic.¹⁹

For the Mexican American women who entered the labor force during World War II, the wartime experiences were very difficult, including the constant separation from loved ones, race and sex discrimination, and the physical demands required at work. The majority of women interviewed agreed, however, that the long-term personal and community benefits after the war had far outweighed the social and economic inconveniences.

The initial experience of being torn away from their families was a shattering feeling for women who had been accustomed to being an integral part of a close-knit unit:

I knew women who hated coming to work because of the daily pain of leaving their children at someone's house as they worked in the factory. They couldn't wait for the war to be over so they could return to a normal family life. Some of the women did quit their jobs before the war ended to be home with their families.²⁰

Notwithstanding steps by the federal government toward eliminating race and sex discrimination in the work place, a few Mexican American women now look back on the war years and complain that nearly none of them were hired as clerical help in the front offices or promoted to supervisory positions on the factory floor, though they applied and were qualified. Many of the women attribute this to racial discrimination against Mexican Americans.

Some Mexican American women also noted that there was a small segment of Anglo women who believed Mexican Americans were lazy, and initially balked at the idea of working with them. These Anglo women were persuaded by their supervisors to either work with Mexican American workers or face being fired. One woman told of an experience shared by many Mexican Americans at this time:

This German man told me one day to go back to Mexico and I responded by telling him that I was more an American citizen than he was because my family just crossed a river to get to the U.S, whereas he had to cross several countries and a big ocean. No matter how much they taunted us, we would always have the last word.²¹

Black women, on the other hand, were generally assigned to work with Mexican American women because many Anglos refused to work with Blacks in the defense plants. None of the Mexican American women interviewed had any problems working with Black women and noted further that many long-lasting friendships evolved from these partnerships during the war:

Aircraft work generally required a team of two women for riveting—one person working outside the plane and the other person inside. At one particular plant, there were many white women from Missouri who refused to have anything to do with the Black workers. Our supervisor decided to pair several Black and Mexican women together. At first, there was some prejudice on both sides, but as time passed, we became good friends both in and out of the plant.²²

Another former defense worker recalled:

I remember one day when some new Black workers came to our factory. From the start, some white workers absolutely refused to even say hello. The next day, some of us Mexican women invited the Black women over to our table for lunch. We did so because we knew what it was like to be discriminated against. By the end of the week, several white workers also joined us for lunch. We soon realized that we had to set aside our differences in order to win the war.²³

As the war went on, many Mexican American women developed good social relations with Anglo women both in the workplace and in the lunch room, and often socialized together after working hours. The war had improved some race relations by dispelling a few of the stereotypes held by these various groups.

The majority of the women interviewed politely declined to speak about the twin issues of sex discrimination and sexual harassment in the work place during the war. One woman did recall, however, that:

Sex discrimination was much worse than racial prejudice because we were constantly harassed on the factory floor by male workers who told us that we should be home taking care of our children and that defense work was not for women. We often complained to our male supervisors regarding our problems with some of the men but nothing was ever done. Sometimes when we were working, one of the men would come by and grab us in a sexual way which made us very angry concerning this ugly treatment of women in the plant. Many women didn't formally complain, however, in fear of possibly losing their jobs.²⁴

Women said that the subject of sex was still taboo during the war, and, therefore, few women sought advice from their co-workers and families. It appears that each woman confronted these issues privately.

Defense work, which is often glamorized by the romantic image of Rosie the Riveter, was, in reality, physically exhausting and often hazardous. Women in the defense industry sometimes worked fifty to seventy hours a week, with few days off for relaxation. Many former Mexican American defense workers recalled working several consecutive months of sixteen-hour days, with only one or two days of rest each month:

The company always encouraged—push is a better word—us to work two shifts because of the severe need for war materials. I remember so many days when I could barely stand up at work and wishing I was home with my family. The companies almost always made us feel that if we did not work the extra hours, that somehow we were being unsympathetic to the war effort and letting our men down

overseas. This guilt trip did work on women who felt unpatriotic if they didn't give the extra hours at the plant.²⁵

Mexican American women were employed in a variety of war-related occupations, especially in the areas of aircraft, munitions, railroads, steel, and meatpacking. The majority of Mexican American aircraft workers were employed in Missouri, Kansas, Michigan, Ohio, and Oklahoma. In fact, the cities of St. Louis and Wichita were the major centers of the aircraft industry in the United States prior to World War II. Mexican American women worked for Cessna, North American Aviation, Boeing, Beech, Douglas, Pratt and Whitney, Ford, Gibson, Buick, Glen L. Martin, and the Goodyear Tire Company. Most worked as welders and riveters in the production of bombers, gliders, engines, instrument panels, fuel tanks, transport planes, fighters, and interceptors.

Some Mexican American women were successful in bringing their sisters and cousins, who had lower-paying jobs, into the aircraft industry. Mexican American women were particularly in demand in this occupational field because of their small stature, which was an advantage when it came to working in cramped spaces aboard the aircraft. As one aircraft worker recalled:

We tended to be physically smaller and slender compared to both the Anglo and Black women. Some of us weighed only 90 pounds and stood around five feet. As a result of our small size, we were given the responsibility of welding and riveting in the hard-to-get places of the plane, including inside the wings, gun turrets, and both the nose and tail sections of the aircraft. We always did an excellent job despite the tight spaces we had to work with inside the planes. We prided ourselves because our work always passed inspection on the first check.²⁶

As in the aircraft industry, women comprised nearly forty percent of the labor force in the production of munitions. Mexican American women worked in many Midwest munitions plants including Kansas Ordinance, Savannah Ordinance, Green River Ordinance, J.I. Case Company, Elgin Watch Company, Hammond Ordinance, Kingsbury Ordinance, Standard Forge, Cushion Motors, Parsons Ordinance, Hastings Ammunition Depot, and Lake City

Ordinance. They helped produce bombs, fuses, timing devices, bullets, machine guns, shell casings, land mines, bomb caps, rifles, cartridge belts, grenades, light and heavy artillery, and rocket launchers.

There were labor shortages in the munitions industry throughout the war because of low wages and the constant danger of working with explosives. The munitions industry was plagued with mishaps resulting in death and severe injuries.²⁷ A timing fuse on a bomb, for example, had over one hundred parts which had to be carefully assembled with tiny files, tweezers, and other small tools; with such work to be done, there was always a danger of injury to the people assembling the munitions.

Additionally, munitions work was often done below ground as a way of protecting the plants against possible enemy aerial attacks. Working all day underground, away from sunlight and fresh air, served to discourage many women from volunteering for the munitions industry.

Many munitions workers, including Mexican American women, were housed in company dormitories located inside the company grounds. The housing facilities served as an incentive for both men and women to work two shifts for extra money, since the workers did not have to worry about the time traveling to and from home. As one Mexican American woman stated:

We usually took the bus or car-pooled to the ordinance plant in Parsons, Kansas, where we lived in dorms during the work week. We worked two shifts a day, five days a week, with little time for rest and sleep. Some of us would come home for the weekend to visit our families. The time would go by fast when we were with our loved ones. Before you knew it, it was time to go back to the plant to start another week. Many of us lived this way for three years.²⁸

A small percentage of Mexican American women found employment in the forty-one steel mills operating in the major producing areas of Chicago, East Chicago, Detroit, Lorain, Gary, and Bethlehem. These women were employed by the American Steel Corporation, Northwestern Steel and Wire Company, Inland Steel, Cast Armor, Youngstown Steel Company, Great Lakes Steel,

Bethlehem Steel Corporation, and United States Steel Corporation. Only ten percent of all steelworkers were women, compared to forty percent in the aircraft and munitions industries. A number of former Mexican American steel workers remembered the unbearable noise level inside the mills:

What I remember the most after all the years was the noise. It was absolutely terrible working in that type of surrounding where you heard and felt the pounding and grinding of steel being rolled out for the war. It's hard to describe the feeling of your body shaking and your ears hurting because of the vibrations inside the plant. In addition, it was extremely hot because of the ovens melting down the steel.²⁹

Despite such hardships, women in the steel industry were still required to do the same type of work as men. Mexican American women, many weighing a mere ninety pounds, worked in the rolling mills, the blast furnaces, and the open hearths, operated fifteen-ton cranes, operated punch presses, and served as painters, loaders, welders, riveters and car dumpers. They assisted in the production of iron and steel for tanks, concertina wire, bullets, shells, jeeps, trucks, and steel beams for military housing.

The railroad system was vital to the war effort because trains transported nearly ninety percent of all military freight and seventy percent of all military personnel. Although women comprised only eight percent of all railroad workers, apparently a significant number were Mexican American women. The explanation for this lies in the geography of Mexican communities, which were often located along the rail lines. Many Mexican American women worked for the Burlington, the Santa Fe, and the Fruit Growers Express, while others were hired to maintain the privately owned railroads of the steel companies, including Inland Steel, and Northwestern Steel and Wire Company. Mexican American women labored as section workers, roundhouse mechanics, drawbridge tenders, train dispatchers, loaders, and as waitresses and tellers in the railroad lunchrooms and ticket offices. One important responsibility of railroad workers was to help clear the tracks during the winter months:

The wintertime was awful. We worked in freezing weather to clear the snow from the tracks in order for the troop and supply trains to travel to their final destinations. We also replaced ties and rails, loaded and unloaded war materials into the boxcars, and loaded heavy chunks of ice for the air-conditioning system for the soldiers during the hot humid summers.³⁰

Some Mexican American women served as bilingual translators for the government, working with the large number of Mexican *braceros* who were brought to the United States during the war and used extensively by the railroad companies and farmers in the Midwest:

In addition to our daily work, many of the company supervisors requested our bilingual skills in translating between themselves and the Mexican workers. We also helped many of these men adjust to the American way of life by teaching them basic English. We were never given any extra pay for our translating, but we enjoyed speaking with them because it helped our Spanish, and besides, there were lots of good-looking young men among the *braceros*.³¹

Finally, the meatpacking centers of the United States have been historically located in the Midwest, especially in Omaha, Chicago, Topeka, St. Joseph, and Kansas City—cities with significant Mexican American populations. The meat companies, including Armour, Morrell, Wilson, Swift, and Cudahay, employed a large number of Mexican American women during the war as pork and beef trimmers, butchers and packers. They also helped produce "C" and "K" rations.

One woman recalled the unfavorable conditions inside the packinghouses:

The slaughterhouses were the worst places to work during the war because of the coldness and terrible smell of dead animals everywhere. Many women were constantly suffering from colds and flu as a result of working all day in the freezers and loading refrigeration cars. We also had to be extra careful not to hurt ourselves with the butchering knives and the meat-cutting machines.³²

Many of the women observed that they were allowed to speak Spanish with each other in the work place and were never discouraged from doing so by their employers. Also, companies during the war years rarely requested proof of citizenship for employment and never used the issue of legalization to intimidate Mexican Americans who were not United States citizens:

Prior to the war, there was a lot of discrimination against Mexican Americans because of the Depression and the dislike of 'foreigners', especially here in the Midwest. Employers before the war would always ask to see documentation in order for us to work. After the war broke out, they stopped asking for proof of legalization because they needed all the workers they could find for the war effort. Even in the aircraft and munitions industries, where one would expect to find tighter security, we were rarely required to provide evidence of citizenship.³³

The average wage of seventy-five cents an hour for women was low and did not vary significantly from industry to industry. Even with these low wages, the vast majority of male and female Mexican American defense workers purchased war bonds. This, despite the fact that many of the families would have preferred having the additional \$18.50 a month for rent, food, and other important essentials during these rough times.

After a hard day of work, the women workers would shower in company facilities before heading home to care for their families and to write letters to their loved ones overseas. One Mexican American woman outlined a typical day in her life during the war:

I woke up early and prepared both breakfast and lunch for my two boys, who were of school age. I walked them to school before returning home to do my domestic chores, including grocery shopping, purchasing ice for the icebox, washing dishes, ironing, and washing clothes by hand, because we could not afford a washing machine. I would take a nap in the afternoon before going after my children in school, and have their dinner ready. I tried to help them with their school work before leaving for work on the night shift. My neighbor took care of my children while I was working at the machine shops for the Santa Fe.³⁴

The problem of child care for female workers was never resolved by the government during World War II. It established only three thousand child care centers for women workers, accommodating a mere 130,000 children, despite the fact that female defense workers had a total of some 4.5 million children under the age of fourteen.³⁵ Furthermore, government fees for each child prevented many poor minority women from using the centers that did exist. As one Mexican American defense worker remembered:

Our child care service was our own families. Our mothers, aunts, and even our younger sisters helped with the children while we were busy working. We could not afford private child care and none of the companies offered child care to their female workers. Not being able to spend time with our sons and daughters was often mentally harder on us than the physical demands at the plant.³⁶

Mexican American women confronted a host of other problems, including budgeting their ration stamps for large families and overcoming the loneliness that came with their men away at war. Nevertheless, these economic and social difficulties were always overshadowed by the grim possibility that, at any time, they could be notified that a loved one had been killed in action:

I remember a few times during the war when I was working and all of a sudden (there would be) a loud scream followed by uncontrollable crying of a woman who had learned that her husband or son was dead. We all feared that moment when we, too, could be requested to go to the front office and find a representative of the military with an attache case tucked under his arm with a letter for the next of kin. The workers would always collect a fund for these women.³⁷

Several other women recalled the fear of reading the casualty list in the local newspapers and of seeing the Western Union messenger riding his bicycle through their neighborhood, praying that he was not coming to their door with an official notification from the War Department. Many young Mexican American women in the Midwest were tragically left widowed with children as a result of World War II.

All of the Mexican American women interviewed vividly remembered where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news that the war had finally ended. As one woman recalled:

I was welding some material together for a part of a tank when all of a sudden I noticed lots of commotion on the work floor as women were hugging and crying. I turned off my torch gun and heard the company whistle tooting and tooting. One of my friends ran up to me and told me that the war was over. I remember sitting down on a workbench, placing my hands over my face, and crying. All of the emotion which had been locked up for all these four years was released. All I could think of was that our boys would be finally coming home to be reunited with their families.³⁸

During the next several days, Mexicans throughout the Midwest streamed into their local churches to pray and thank God for sparing the lives of their loved ones. Ironically, some of these same churches still maintained segregated sections for Mexican Americans. The segregation in some of these churches was the initial clue that the wartime contributions of the entire Mexican community had not helped completely erase public discrimination. Both men and women of the G.I. Generation became increasingly indignant with the continuation of pre-war practices of social and economic discrimination by most public offices and private businesses. They strongly felt that they had earned the right to be treated as first-class citizens, since they had fought and worked side-by-side with Anglos on the battlefield and in the defense plants. One veteran recalled:

We fought for the American ideals that our parents had taught us as children and we believed that our misfortune was merely a way of life. After the war, we clearly realized that these deplorable conditions only existed because of racial discrimination. We were no longer afraid like our parents to confront the local officials regarding these terrible problems. Our battle for eliminating social discrimination was less frightening when compared to the horrors of war we had recently experienced overseas.³⁹

A former defense worker noted:

During the war, there was a lessening of discrimination by some public places only because they needed our money, with so many Anglos in the service. After the war, some restaurants, stores and taverns again refused to serve us on an equal basis with whites. We knew this was totally unfair because we had worked hard to win the war. My generation realized then that we had to do something to change this condition, not only for ourselves, but for the next generation. We didn't want our children to experience the social and economic hardships we did during the Depression and the war.⁴⁰

The G.I. Generation brought these serious grievances to the immediate attention of the Mexican leadership represented by the long-established mutual-aid societies. They became quickly frustrated because these *mutualistas*, while sympathetic, had limited themselves primarily to promoting cultural activities and providing death benefits. This, in part, made them organizationally inflexible in confronting the post-war challenges against local authorities.

To provide more effective leadership, the G.I. Generation formed several associations in the Midwest, including the Latin American Veterans, the Mexican American Servicemen's Association, the G.I. Forum, the Latin American Ladies' Clubs, and the Mothers of World War II. The establishment of these post-World War II organizations signaled a new era in the Mexican community as the mutual-aid societies reluctantly relinquished their community leadership to the management of the G.I. Generation.

These post-war organizations were instrumental in skillfully abolishing the vestiges of overt public discrimination, eliminating the unfair poll tax and literacy requirements, ending the practice of excluding Mexican Americans from serving on juries, and legally challenging the educational segregation of Mexican American children. The leadership also promoted voter registration drives, sponsored political forums, and encouraged naturalization. These activities led directly to the election of a handful of Mexican American candidates during the 1950s and early 1960s in the Midwest. The G.I. Generation eventually would dominate and

influence the Midwest community agenda and political philosophy until the emergence of the Chicano Movement in the late 1960s.

The war years unquestionably modified the social and political attitudes and behavior of many Mexican American defense workers regarding their roles in the home and the community. It appears that the war served as a social and economic apprenticeship for these women at a time when most of the men were in the service. Many women believed the war was an historical turning point in their lives and the community's because it provided them with a rare opportunity to develop political awareness, social independence, grass-roots leadership, and economic self-reliance—personal strengths which greatly enhanced the post-war civil rights movement in the Midwest:

All of us were definitely changed by the four years of defense work. Prior to the war, we were naive young women with few social and job skills. But the war altered these conditions very quickly. By the end of the war, we had been transformed into young mature women with new job skills, self-confidence, and a sense of worth as a result of our contributions to the war effort. Just as the war had changed boys to men, the same thing happened to us girls.⁴¹

Another defense worker also drew a parallel with the men:

When our young men came home from the war, they didn't want to be treated as second-class citizens anymore. Deep in their hearts, they firmly believed their wartime contributions had entitled them to better social opportunities. We women didn't want to turn the clock back either regarding the social positions of women before the war. The war had provided us the unique chance to be socially and economically independent, and we didn't want to give up this experience simply because the war ended. We, too, wanted to be first-class citizens in our communities.⁴²

Social independence had different meanings among Mexican American women in the post-war period. For the majority of single women, personal freedom was primarily limited to the newfound liberties of smoking, wearing pants and make-up in public places, having the latest hair style, and dating without a chaperon. Married women, on the other hand, defined social independence in a much

broader perspective, including an equal voice in the decision-making at home, the right to pursue educational goals, and the freedom to participate in community organizations and to seek outside employment:

In general, Mexican American women as daughters, mothers, and wives have always sacrificed themselves for their families. My working and traveling experiences during the war exposed me to a whole new world of opportunities that I didn't know existed before in my life. My point of view is that my family responsibilities are important, but at the same time I feel that I have the right to achieve my goals as well.⁴³

Other women pointed out that the social latitude they experienced during the war helped prepare them later when they were widowed or divorced:

We always thought women who hadn't worked during or after the war were very lucky. We have recently noticed, however, that working women seem better prepared to emotionally cope with death or divorce than non-working women. The main reason for the difference is we learned during the war how to survive without depending on a man.⁴⁴

Mexican American women as a group had mixed feelings about post-war employment. It seems that a woman's decision to continue working was strongly determined by both her wartime occupation and marital status. Many women in the munitions and railroad industries were laid-off, while a significant number of women in the meat, steel, and aircraft industries were asked to continue working as these companies began slowly converting their wartime operations to peacetime production. Furthermore, many Mexican American women who were married or engaged looked forward to raising a family on a full-time basis. Women who continued to work or to seek employment after the war were generally single, divorced, or widowed. There were, nevertheless, some married women who were employed outside the home after 1945.

Naturally, some men expressed serious reservations regarding the increasing numbers of women joining the labor force in the late 1940s and early 1950s:

We could sense that the older men didn't agree with us regarding the right of a woman to work outside the home, especially a married woman with children. They still believed in the old-fashioned notion that a woman's duty was to her children and her husband. Don't get me wrong. We loved and admired our elders and never showed them disrespect, but some of us women felt that the times were changing for women.⁴⁵

The economic recession during the early part of the 1950s, however, forced many men to reconsider their objections concerning the role of married women in the workplace. It became obvious that a single paycheck could no longer provide the income needed to raise a family comfortably. Over time, men slowly came to accept the fact that their upward social mobility was, in some measure, dependent on the income generated by their wives.

This growing economic importance of women also helped to change slightly the political attitudes of men toward women. There was, for example, a group of influential Mexican American men who supported wider civic participation of women. These men understood that their political aspirations were intertwined with the emerging voting power of women, because men were numerically insufficient to achieve elected office alone.

During the war, many of us registered to vote for the first time and later marked our ballots for FDR for President. We were active with the fiestas, volunteering for the local Red Cross, and USO, and working with our church groups. All of these community experiences helped us develop our organizational skills and develop networks among the women. As it turned out, these skills and networks were valuable for our community after the war.⁴⁶

The war served as a training ground for women regarding leadership and organizational development. As a consequence of these wartime experiences, women were very active with political campaigns on behalf of Mexican American candidates after the war.

They walked precincts, helped with fund-raising, encouraged voter registration, and mailed campaign materials.

The political and economic forces in the immediate post-war period enhanced the status of women in the labor force and community affairs. It appears that some of the traditional male attitudes about the roles of women in the Mexican American community took a backseat to these economic and political realities after the war.

A few men, nevertheless, raised the larger concern that the new attitudes and behavior of women would undermine the Mexican culture and represent the first step toward total "Americanization":

Some men blamed our Anglo co-workers for 'brainwashing' us during the war. They said that we were acting like white women because we wanted to work and participate in the community. Yet, some of these same men were speaking more English than Spanish, had more Anglo friends than we did, and were not participating as much with the fiestas. It was true that we were less Mexican than our parents, but so were the men our age. We felt we could be Mexican Americans and have equal rights as women.⁴⁷

In conclusion, the traditional view of the G.I. Generation has been that it was simply an interregnum between the Mexican and Chicano generations. The past few years, however, have witnessed renewed scholarly attention regarding both the major contributions and the influence the G.I. Generation had on subsequent generations. This new research is dispelling many of the myths which have unfairly portrayed the G.I. Generation as one that promoted cultural assimilation and accommodationist political attitudes. In reality, the G.I. Generation represented a broad spectrum of organizations which advocated conflicting ideologies and strategies.

Also, contemporary research on the G.I. Generation continues to focus primarily on the male viewpoint. This narrow outlook ignores the critical contributions women have made to the social and political development of Mexican Americans during the post-war period. Thus, more research is needed in order to ascertain the role of women in community activities during the war; the war's impact on women who served in the military and how this

experience compared with that of defense workers; the wartime contributions of Mexican American women in the Southwest; the role of Mexican American defense workers during the Korean War and how this experience compared with World War II; and an investigation of company records for an accurate account of Mexican American defense workers.

Unfortunately, the G.I. Generation is slowly fading from the community landscape of the Midwest and Southwest. Scholars must act quickly to interview, document and preserve the precious information before it is lost. In this way, the G.I. Generation will be guaranteed its rightful place in the history of Mexicans in the United States.

NOTES

¹ In Chester W. Gregory, *Women in Defense Work During World War II* (New York: Exposition Press, 1974), p. 10.

² Interviews with Marge Villanueva Lambert, Lincoln, Nebraska, June 3, 1987; Gloria C. Fraire, East Chicago, Indiana, May 18, 1987; and Romana Acosta Sinclair, Kansas City, Missouri, May 27, 1988. Lambert served with the Women's Army Air Corps (WAAC) while both Fraire and Sinclair enlisted with the Women's Army Corp Service (WACS).

³ Interview with Hazel Gómez, Topeka, Kansas, February 9, 1987. Gómez stated that: "Many public places in Kansas including dance halls, bars, and restaurants, did not allow Mexican American soldiers inside their businesses. Some of us young women formed a group called Las Señoritas, an extension of our local YWCA. We raised funds in order to sponsor dances and other cultural activities for our young men. It was nice seeing them have a good time and forgetting about the war for a while."

Also see Christine Marín, "La Asociación Hispano-Americano De Madres y Esposas: Tucson's Mexican American Women in World War II," *Renato Rosaldo Lecture Series Monograph 1* (Tucson: University of Arizona Mexican American Studies & Research Center, 1985).

⁴ Raúl Morin, *Among the Valiant: Mexican Americans in World War II and Korea*, (Alhambra: Borden Publishing Company, 1966), Carl Allsup, *The American G.I. Forum: Origins and Evolution*, (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1982); Henry A.J. Ramos, *A People Forgotten, A Dream Pursued: The History of the G.I. Forum 1948-1972* (Washington, D.C.: American G.I. Forum); U. S. Defense Department, *Hispanics In American's Defense* (U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense, Pentagon, 1984).

⁵ As far back as the 1950s, the motion picture *GIANT*, starring Rock Hudson and Elizabeth Taylor, depicted, for example, the combat death of a Mexican soldier portrayed by Sal Mineo. The decades of the 1970s and 1980s have seen several films including *Hero Street USA* and *The Men of Company E*, which highlight the wartime contributions of Mexican American men. Finally, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) hosted a national banquet in Los Angeles, California in 1982, recognizing Mexican American servicemen who had earned the Medal of Honor.

⁶ A general review of the literature reveals only one book which discusses in detail Mexican American female defense workers. Sherna Gluck's study examines the lives of several Mexican American aircraft workers who were

employed in the Los Angeles area. Some of the publications do discuss the role of Black women in defense work. (See bibliography)

⁷ For an excellent summary regarding this debate, see the introductory section of Maureen Honey's book entitled *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class Gender, and Propaganda During World War II*, (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984).

⁸ Lawrence A. Cardoso, *Mexican Immigration To The United States 1897-1931*, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press), p. 38.

⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population 1850-1970* (Washington, D.C.).

¹⁰ Interview with Jesse Villapando, Sr., East Chicago, Illinois, 14 October 1988.

¹¹ Interview with Anthony Navarro, Davenport, Iowa, 21 June 1986.

¹² Interview with Victoria (Vicki) Quintana, Parsons, Kansas, 9 March 1987.

¹³ Interview with Juanita Vásquez, East Chicago, Indiana, 18 May 1987.

¹⁴ Op. Cit., *Women In Defense Work During World War II*, p. 7.

¹⁵ Between 1940 and 1945, the female labor force grew from 12 million to 19 million, with female employment in defense-related jobs increasing by 460 percent. Nearly 50 percent of all U.S. adult women were employed some time during the war. See Susan M. Hartman, *The Homefront and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982).

¹⁶ Interview with Felisa Ruiz, Kansas City, Missouri, 24 February 1987.

¹⁷ Interview with Aurora F. Gonzalez, East Chicago, Indiana, 18 May 1987.

¹⁸ Interview with Ann Antilano, Sterling, Illinois, 25 March 1987.

¹⁹ Interview with the Women of SOY, East Chicago, Indiana, 18 May 1987.

²⁰ Interview with Esther Beard, Ecorse, Michigan, 16 May 1987.

²¹ Interview with Ventura Tellez, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 13 July 1988.

²² Interview with Carmen Caudillo, Wellington, Kansas, 16 July 1988.

²³ Interview with Antonia Molina, Flint, Michigan, 5 May 1987.

²⁴This woman requested anonymity. Author's personal files.

²⁵Interview with Julie Gutiérrez, Humbolt, Kansas, 14 June 1987.

²⁶Interview with Theresa Rocha, Kansas City, Missouri, 24 February 1987.

²⁷In the year 1943 alone, in all jobs, there were 2,414,000 workers who suffered temporary disabilities, resulting in 56,800,000 lost days of production. In this same year, there were 18,400 work-related deaths, 108,000 cases of permanent partial disabilities, and 1,700 workers suffered permanent (total) disabilities in the workplace in 1942 and 1943. The final figures of deaths and injuries between 1941 and 1945 are considered undercounts, and thus misleading, because a significant percentage of companies never reported these statistics to the proper federal agencies. See *Monthly Labor Review* (November 1944): 905.

²⁸Interview with Aurora Gutiérrez, Humbolt, Kansas, 14 June 1987.

²⁹*Op. Cit.*, Esther Beard, 16, May 1987.

³⁰Interview with Julia Padilla, Aurora, Illinois, 25 April 1987.

³¹Interview with Natividad (Nattie) Escamilla, Omaha, Nebraska, 1 June 1987.

³²Interview with Angelina Rocha, Omaha, Nebraska, 2 June 1987.

³³*Op. Cit.*, Felisa Ruiz, 24 February 1987.

³⁴Interview with Leonecia Vásquez, Topeka, Kansas, 25 May 1988.

³⁵*Op. Cit.*, *The Homefront and Beyond*, p. 84.

³⁶*Op. Cit.*, Women of Soy, 18 May 1987.

³⁷*Op. Cit.*, Margaret Villanueva Lambert, 3 June 1987.

³⁸Interview with Ermelinda G. Murillo, East Chicago, Indiana, 16 October 1987.

³⁹Interview with I.C. Plaza, Omaha, Nebraska, 16 June 1986.

⁴⁰Interview with Jenny Perales García, Omaha, Nebraska, 2 June 1987.

⁴¹Interview with Victoria Morales, Topeka, Kansas, 11 February 1987.

⁴²Interview with Eva Hernández, Hutchinson, Kansas, 21 March 1988.

⁴⁴Interview with Irene García, Garden City, Kansas, 14 January 1987.

⁴⁵*Op. Cit.*, Women of SOY, 18 May 1987.

⁴⁶Interview with Antonia Flores Alonzo, Chanute, Kansas, 10 June 1987.

⁴⁷*Op. Cit.*, Women of SOY, 18 May 1987.

⁴⁸Interview with María García Hero, St. John, Indiana, 17 February 1988.

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SINTESIS HISTORICA DE LA COLONIA MEXICANA DE JOLIET, ILL., U.S.A.

Navor Rodriguez

PROLOGO

He aquí, querido Lector, un conjunto de acontecimientos que he procurado coordinar para darte a conocer las vicisitudes por las cuales muchos Mexicanos hemos tenido que pasar para fundar o engrandecer nuestras Colonias Mexicanas aquí en U.S.A. y dejar, en este País hermano, el imperecedero recuerdo de que México tiene hijos entusiastas, trabajadores y sobre todo agradecidos, que saben corresponder la generosidad de éste próspero País, que desde hace años nos abriera sus fronteras para labrar nuestro porvenir.

In August 1987, Arturo Rosales went to Illinois to gather information on the Mexican prisoners who had been incarcerated at Statesville Prison during the 1920s, and to investigate the history of the Mexican *colonia* in the nearby town of Joliet. While there he came across Navor Rodriguez, a longtime resident who, years earlier, had published his own history of the colonia in Joliet.

Mr. Rodriguez was born in Congregación de Canoas, Guanajuato, in 1905. In 1921 he borrowed money from his brother-in-law and came to the United States through Texas and worked on the railroads in Topeka and Flint. In 1923 he settled in Joliet, where he worked at U.S. Steel. Mr. Rodriguez, who is a World War II veteran, retired in 1969.

We wish to thank Mr. Rodriguez for allowing us to reprint his work.

—The Editor

Este escrito quiere ser:

UNA APORTACION a la Historia para que no se pierda en la obscuridad el origen de la Colonia de JOLIET, a la cual están en mucho ligadas las Colonias de LOCKPORT y ROCKDALE, ILL.

UN TRIBUTO de admiración para todos aquellos, hombres, que con su esfuerzo la hicieron realidad.

UN LLAMADO a los hijos de Mexicanos para que vean con orgullo y recuerden con reverencia a los que supieron dejarles en un País extraño, el calor de su Patria.

En esta información no puedo pasar por alto a todas aquellas personas, que de, algún modo, hicieron posible mi anhelo, entre ellas: el Sr. Elizalde, el Sr. J. Vázquez, el Sr. A. García y principalmente algunos miembros de la Orden Carmelitana.

Quiera el Señor, hacer que estas páginas conserven el recuerdo glorioso de personas que llevamos en el corazón, despierten en los que las leen, el anhelo de superación ante esa meritoria labor sembrada por el espíritu del mexicano, que aprovechándose de la luz que Dios ha puesto en sus manos, ha servido a la causa del bien y del progreso.

El Autor

LA COLONIA

La Colonia Mexicana de Joliet, Ill., es igual a las demás Colonias Mexicanas que existen en los Estados Unidos, con excepción a las de los Estados del Sur como Texas, Arizona, Nuevo México y California. En estos Estados las Colonias Mexicanas son permanentes desde el principio, mientras que en el resto de la Unión Norteamericana se componen, en su mayor parte, por ciudadanos que vinieron de varios Estados de México.

Las tres cuartas partes de emigrantes mexicanos vinieron de Haciendas, Ranchos y pequeños Pueblos; la cuarta parte de diversas ciudades. Estos últimos, más preparados, se dedicaron al comercio en pequeño; si no lo hicieron en gran escala fué porque

desconocían el Inglés y las costumbres de estas tierras. Por la misma razón, algunos de ellos conociendo algún oficio no lo podían ejercer y se resignaron a aceptar empleos que varios de ellos nunca los habían ejercido.

La emigración de mexicanos a este lugar fué por los años de 1905, pero su permanencia era de poca duración. Esto se debía a que la mayor parte de hombres eran contratados en el trabajo de las vías ferrocarrileras, que sólo se llevaba a cabo durante el verano, pues al aproximarse el otoño todos regresaban a los Estados del Sur o su lugar de origen.

Así pasaron algunos años hasta que en 1914, época en que fué más crecido el número de emigrantes, muchos de ellos se quedaron y sus familias vinieron a establecerse con ellos. Agrupándose estas familias mexicanas originaron lo que ahora conocemos con el nombre de Colonia Mexicana de Joliet.

Las primeras familias permanentes que aquí se registraron fueron: la familia Sánchez, la familia Orozco, la familia Elizalde y la familia Rivera. Más tarde también la familia Quiroz.

El primer nacimiento fué el de la niña Beatriz S. Rivera hija de la Sra. Cleofas y del Sr. Ubistano, en el año de 1916. Después el 25 de Nov. de 1917 siguió el de la niña Catalina Orozco, hija de la Sra. Ma. de Jesús y del S. Atilano.

La primera defunción se cree que fué la del Sr. Tomás Venegas en 1916. Después la del Sr. Ubistano Rivera en 1917, hay personas que aseguran que hubo otras antes, pero no ha sido posible saber sus nombres.

Los primeros Matrimonios registrados de que se tienen memoria fueron: el del Sr. Julián Sierra con la Srita. Pabla Velásquez el día 4 de Oct. de 1919, siendo Padrinos el Sr. Guadalupe Hernández y su esposa la Sra. Ramona A. de H.

El 15 de Junio de 1920 se registró el del Sr. Clemente Elizalde con la Srita. Matilde Reyes, como testigos asistieron el Sr. Fermín Gallegos y Sra. A. Elizalde.

El 1º de Dic. de 1920 el del Sr. Lois Briones con la Srita. Bernabé Cásarez.

—1 PARTE SOCIAL—

Los integrantes de la Colonia Mexicana siempre han sido amantes de reuniones y de actividades sociales, fué por eso que aún cuando no existía formalmente Agrupación alguna, sin embargo ya aquí se festejaban fiestas nacionales como: el 1º y el 5 de Mayo, el 15 y 16 de Septiembre. Para la celebración se reunían todas las familias en algún lugar determinado y allí se celebraba la Fiesta.

PRIMERA JUNTA PATRIOTICA

Al sentir la necesidad de que existieran personas que se encargaran de la preparación y dirección de las Fiestas Patrias, se pensó en establecer oficialmente una agrupación que se hiciera cargo de los festejos y fuera responsable de dichas actividades. A esta agrupación se le dió el nombre de Junta Patriótica, cuya Mesa Directiva quedó formada así el año de 1918.

Presidente
Secretario
Tesorero
Vocales

Sr. J. J. Cota
Sr. J. R. A. Ramírez
Sr. Antonio Zendejas
Sres. Louis Briones, Ezequiel Briones
y Clemente Elizalde

Estos compatriotas son dignos de mención porque fueron los primeros que integraron dicha Junta y los primeros que, con su actitud, establecieron la costumbre de celebrar formalmente nuestras Fiestas Patrias.

SOCIEDAD MOCTEZUMA

Esta Sociedad fué fundada en el año de 1924 por un grupo de hombres, deseosos de una mejor vida social en la Colonia.

Quedó integrada de esta manera:

Presidente
Secretario
Tesorero

Sr. Louis Sánchez
Sr. Antonio Barrera
Sr. Guzmara Venegas

Las actividades de dicha Sociedad se limitaban exclusivamente al beneficio de sus miembros, por cuya razón no tuvo mayor alcance y su existencia fué de pocos meses.

CLUB LATINO

Esta agrupación se estableció casi al mismo tiempo que la anterior y fué dirigida por las siguientes personas:

Presidente
Secretario

Sr. P. Cabrera
Sr. José Zaldivar

Este Club trabajaba en beneficio de unos cuantos y su vida se consideraba muy pasajera casi provisional.

COMISION HONORIFICA

No llenando las necesidades de la época las anteriores agrupaciones fué necesario organizar una Sociedad con más visión y cimentada sobre bases firmes y estables. La ocasión era muy propicia pues en este tiempo, según las estadísticas se había registrado el mayor número de Mexicanos en Joliet. En ese tiempo la Colonia disponía de hombres competentes y de gran capacidad de organización y dirección.

En los primeros meses del año de 1925 era público el deseo de organizar todo el elemento de que se disponía y así el 8 de Marzo de 1925, se convocó a una junta general con el fin de discutir las bases de la nueva organización que debería existir.

En dicha junta sobresalió el Sr. Carmen García, manifestando la mezquindad de anteriores agrupaciones y la necesidad de una que velara por el bien común de todos los Colonos Mexicanos.

Se optó por ponerle el nombre de Comisión Honorífica, porque estas eran apoyadas por los Cónsules Mexicanos existentes en los mismos Estados Unidos. Después de discusiones y deseos de aplazar la junta se procedió a establecer la Mesa Directiva, que fué compuesta por los siguientes hombres:

Presidente
 Vice-Presidente
 Tesorero
 Secretario
 Pro-Secretario
 Vocales

Sr. J. Carmen García
 Sr. José Hernández
 Sr. Juan B. López
 Sr. Antonio Contreras
 Sr. Salvador F. Razo
 Sres. Antonio Maldonado
 Luis Sánchez
 Juan Aguirre
 Toribio Villagómez
 Rafael Castellanos
 José D. Jiménez

He aquí en detalle, el Acta de la sesión del día 8 de Marzo de 1925. Joliet, Ill. Reunidos en el Polasky Hall, una parte de la Colonia Mexicana, así como la Junta Patriótica, elegida en el año de 1924, la sesión se desarrolló bajo el siguiente programa:

- I.— Apertura de la sesión
- II.— Informe del Secretario
- III.— Informe del Tesorero
- IV.— Lectura del Reglamento
- V.— Presentación de Candidatos para Presidente
- VI.— Presentación de Candidatos para Tesorero
- VII.— Elección de ambos Candidatos
- VIII.— Protesta y toma de posesión de la Mesa Directiva
- IX.— Asuntos diversos.

Al hacer en la Junta la Protesta de Ley se encontraron con un caso no previsto por el Reglamento y se acordó formar una comisión de entre la asamblea ante la cual se rindiera dicha Protesta. En esta asamblea quedó también formada la Junta Patriótica con las siguientes personas:

Presidente
 Secretario
 Tesorero

Sr. Antonio Contreras
 Sr. G. José Hernández
 Sr. Martín Molina

Quedaron algunos asuntos pendientes para la definitiva formación de la Comisión Honorífica y se aplazaron para el Domingo 15 de Marzo de 1925. En esta segunda asamblea se determinó poner en conocimiento del Comité Central de la Confederación de Sociedades Mexicanas de los Estado Unidos, la existencia de esta nueva Sociedad para que fuera reconocida y apoyada oficialmente.

La sede oficial de esta Confederación de Soc. Mexicanas estaba en el número 1616 W. Taylor St. Chicago Ill., compuesta de tres miembros: el Sr. Luis Lupián G. C. Cónsul de México en Chicago, José B. Armendáriz Srio. y Jesús S. Domínguez miembro consular.

El Sr. Carmen García, a nombre de la Colonia que representaba, comunicó el 17 de Marzo de 1925 a dicha Confederación la creación de la Comisión Honorífica, cuyo Lema era: "Ayudarse mutuamente en todo y por todo". Manifestóle la buena acogida por parte de la Colonia y le dió a conocer la Mesa Directiva.

Nuevamente el día 24 de Marzo de 1924, el presidente de la Comisión Honorífica escribió el Comité Central de la Confederación, solicitando toda clase de informaciones y requisitos necesarios para poder ser afiliados a esa cadena de Sociedades. En la contestación se le comunicó que podían pertenecer cuando lo juzgaren oportuno, de acuerdo con lo estipulado en la Constitución mandada.

La inauguración oficial fué el día 9 de Mayo de 1925. Esta Comisión, por primera vez, levantó un Censo Oficial de los Mexicanos residentes.

BRIGADA CRUZ AZUL

Por ese mismo tiempo un grupo de damas se daba a la tarea de organizar la Brigada Cruz Azul Mexicana de Joliet.

El centro de esta organización fué la residencia de la familia Maldonado, que durante su estancia en esta ciudad ofreció su casa como centro de movimiento social. Con la cooperación de la Comisión Honorífica hubo más actividad dentro de aquel grupo de damas y fué más rápida su organización. Su inauguración oficial quedó fijada para el 1º de Junio de 1925, pero causas imprevistas

la impidieron y así definitivamente quedó establecida el 4 de Julio de 1925, asistiendo personalmente el C. Cónsul.

La Mesa Directiva fué integrada de la siguiente manera:

Presidenta
Vice-Presidenta
Secretaria
Tesorera
Sub-Tesorera

Sra. Luisa T. de Maldonado
Sra. Joaquina S. de Lomeli
Sra. Concepción A. de Calcanas
Sra. Ma. Refugio Gómez G.
Srita. Catalina Martínez

Esta Brigada fué oficialmente reconocida por la Confederación de Sociedades Mexicanas de los Estados Unidos de Norte América, la cual en su carta circular del día 18 de Junio de 1925, expedida en Chicago, dispone que en el No. 800 S. Halsted St. (Hull House) se celebre una sesión el 28 de Junio a la que asistan los miembros de la Directiva; asimismo se invite el mayor número de damas que deseen formar parte de la Brigada Curz Azul para quedar instalada definitivamente el 4 de Julio de 1925.

Una vez ya establecidas ambas organizaciones cada una se dedicó a la misión que desde un principio se habían impuesto.

La existencia de estas dos organizaciones no fué prolongada, pues varios de sus dirigentes, no conformes con su posición emigraron a otros lugares en busca de mejores condiciones económicas; de manera que esta separación trajo consigo la desintegración.

SOCIEDAD MUTUALISTA GUADALUPANA

Al dejar de existir las dos organizaciones antes descritas, no había quien se hiciera cargo de las actividades religiosas y patrióticas. Por consiguiente, se deseaba un grupo que viniera a hacer frente a tal situación. Fué entonces cuando el Sr. Andrés Ruiz y el Sr. Clemente Elizalde tomaron la iniciativa de reorganizar el elemento que había quedado a disposición.

Después de varias reuniones efectuadas en las residencias de dichos señores, se acordó organizar la presente Sociedad. Como su nombre lo indica esta Sociedad tuvo fines religiosos y patrióticos, quedando formalmente establecida el día 15 de

Noviembre de 1926. Fué también reconocida por el R. P. Louis Balleto, párroco de la Iglesia de San Antonio, la cual fué centro de actividades religiosas de los Mexicanos de Joliet, Rockdale y Lockport, Ill.

Se formó la Mesa Directiva en la forma siguiente:

Presidente	Sr. Andrés Ruiz
Vice-Presidente	Sr. Salomón García
Secretario	Sr. Aurelio Ruiz
Tesorero	Sr. Clemente Elizalde
Secretario de Hacienda	Sr. Tomás García
Comisionado del Orden	Sr. Navor Rodríguez

La primera actividad que llevó a cabo fué celebrar religiosamente, después de una laboriosa preparación, el 12 de Diciembre de 1926. Cumpliendo dignamente según su cometido, esta Sociedad siguió existiendo hasta el año de 1929.

SOCIEDAD MUTUALISTA BENITO JUAREZ

Un grupo de señores, de esta misma colonia, encabezados por el Sr. J. Guadalupe Jorge y el Sr. Félix Cervantes, hombres cuya ideología no simpatizaba con los nobles ideales de la Sociedad Guadalupeana, quisieron organizar el nuevo elemento que a esa fecha habíase congregado en esta Colonia, procedentes de diversas partes de U.S.A.

La dirección de dicha Sociedad quedó integrada así:

Presidente	Sr. Manuel Rivera
Vice-Presidente	Sr. Félix Cervantes
Secretario	Sr. Juan Ortega
Tesorero	Sr. Armando García
Sub-Secretario	Sr. José Ayala
Pres. de Sanidad	Sr. Rodolfo García
Instructor	Sr. Sabino Cervantes
Vocal lo.	Sr. Guadalupe Jorge

Sólo en las actividades sociales caminaba paralelamente con la Sociedad Mutualista Guadalupana y en este sentido ambas festejaban las Fiestas Nacionales propias de los Mexicanos.

Perteneció a esta Sociedad el gran pianista Sr. Rosendo García, quien, por vez primera, organizó una Banda de Música, que se presentó al público el 19 de Marzo de 1929 en el "Polasky Hall".

Siguió en sus labores esta Sociedad hasta el año de 1931, en que por circunstancias no deseadas vino a desintegrarse.

EPOCA DE DEPRESION

De 1931 a 1934 existió un período aciago que se le dió en llamarse: "Epoca de depresión". Fué un tiempo adverso no solo para aquellos emigrantes que recientemente habían llegado a estos lugares, sino que también para aquellos hombres que ya gozaban de residencia fija en estas tierras.

Fué una época de desequilibrio económico, de vida sin futuro, de sacrificios sin resultado y de desesperación financiera. Epoca en la que tanto los hombres inclinados sobre él yunque del trabajo, como los que formaban parte de la élite financiera, fueron duramente azotados por la derrota (defeat), quedando en estado deplorable muchos de ellos y no faltando quien cayera en el suicidio.

A causa de esta situación la Colonia se vió abandonada, pues no existía ninguna Sociedad que pudiera en algo orientar a los individuos singulares o interesarse por la Comunidad. Fué como una catástrofe nacional, todo se consideraba inestable e inseguro; las migraciones y cambios de lugares para conseguir algo del trabajo no brindaban momentos oportunos para asociarse. Fué un tiempo en que, con relación a las agrupaciones, se consideró como nulo.

Las mismas empresas, en combinación con una parte de las autoridades locales, considerando que aquel estado de cosas se prolongaría se ofrecieron ayudar a todas aquellas personas y familias que desearan reintegrarse a su país de origen. Para ello designaron a varias personas que tomaron el parecer de todo aquel

que estuviera en disposición de aceptar dicha proposición. Fijaron días y fechas para su partida y pusieron trenes a su disposición.

Estos fueron cuadros llenos de dolor y de tristeza y se podía advertir en los semblantes tanto de los que se marchaban como de los que se quedaban, era algo parecido a aquellos que presenciamos durante el tiempo en que nuestros jóvenes salían a los campos de entrenamiento militar en los años de 1941 a 1945; época en que se desarrollaba la Segunda Guerra Mundial.

Hay que considerar que estos hombres que se marchaban al sur del Río Grande, no lamentaban el marcharse o el no marcharse sino la situación precaria en la cual se encontraban al verse sin recursos y expuestos a volver a sus pueblos en peores circunstancias que cuando los dejaron por primera vez.

Cabe preguntar, ¿si hubo años de bonanza por qué no fueron precavidos en ahorrar? Pero, ¿hasta dónde pueden llegar los ahorros de un simple trabajador con o sin familia? Ciertamente que la mayoría conservaba sus pequeños ahorros pero como la situación se prolongó tuvieron la necesidad de hacer uso de ellos y al encontrarse en la situación aquí descrita no pudieron sostenerse más, viéndose obligados a regresar. Los que se resignaron a enfrentar la situación se quedaron dispuestos a llevar una vida de sacrificios, con la esperanza de mejores tiempos.

SOCIEDAD MUTUALISTA VICENTE GUERRERO

Pasando por este lugar el ingeniero Luis Soto y Gama, quien sustentó una conferencia ante la Colonia en los salones de la Iglesia Bautista Mexicana de Joliet y enterándose de que no existía agrupación alguna mexicana, propuso a un grupo de personas que era necesario establecer una Sociedad en bien de los mexicanos residents. Aceptada la idea los señores Arnulfo Ramírez y J. Trinidad Vásquez, activos hombres de vida social convocaron a varias juntas con el fin de hacer realidad tal consejo. En la última de ellas celebrada el día 15 de Enero de 1936, después de varias discusiones se logró organizar esta Sociedad, cuya Mesa Directiva quedó así formada:

Presidente
Vice-Presidente
Secretario
Tesorera

Sr. Julio Rodríguez
Sr. Luis Briones
Sr. Cástulo Lara
Srita. Eloisa Acosta

Una vez formada la Mesa Directiva, se tomó el acuerdo entre la misma de aplazar su presentación ante la Colonia para el día 23 de Enero de 1936, día en que entraría formalmente en funciones. Mas como todavía atravezábamos una época en que los recursos de los miembros no eran suficientes para sufragar los gastos que dicha agrupación requería y al mismo tiempo por cierta indiferencia de ideología predominante en esa época, se volvió a repetir lo que en las anteriores organizaciones, es decir: prontamente se desintegró.

CLUB JUVENIL AGUILAS AZTECAS

En la misma época, pero antes de organizarse la Sociedad Vicente Guerrero, un pequeño grupo de jóvenes encabezados por Manuel Cortés, Moisés Fonseca y Tony Fonseca, deseosos de tener un lugar donde reunirse y pasar las horas libres de sus ocupaciones y viendo que al presente no existía alguna agrupación que les ofreciera lo deseado, ellos mismos dieron la idea de formar un Club.

El grupo se dedicó a la tarea de seleccionar un lugar que en ese tiempo abundaban para que les sirviera de sede. Conseguido dicho local ahí pasaban las horas divirtiéndose. Mas no contentos con aquel género de vida, deseaban que el grupo presentara algunas actividades; pero para eso era necesario contar con fondos y ellos no pudiendo aportarlos por ser menores de edad, solicitaron la cooperación de personas mayores. Como es natural, al tomar parte los adultos fué necesario darle una nueva modalidad.

Así que de aquel pequeño grupo de jóvenes se originó el Club Aguilas Aztecas, que quedó reorganizado el día 15 de Febrero de 1936, formando su Mesa Directiva de la forma siguiente:

Presidente
Vice-Presidente

Sr. Trinidad Vásquez
Sr. Juan G. Salas

Secretario
Tesorero

Sr. Juan Escobedo
Sr. J. Rosario Gutiérrez

El principal objetivo del Club era desarrollar a la juventud en el deporte y hacerla partícipe en las actividades sociales.

Esta fué la primera ocasión en que la juventud de la Colonia trató de demostrar también su iniciativa, que fué como el primer paso de las futuras generaciones.

CLUB FEMENIL AGUILITAS AZTECAS

Fué en Abril de 1938 cuando también el elemento femenino sintió el deseo de organizarse y tomar parte, de una manera activa, en la vida cívica y social de la Colonia. Deseaba ser parte integrante en toda causa noble, poniendo a disposición su talento, su cooperación y sus fuerzas. Correspondió a la Sra. María Jesús Orozco llevar a cabo la idea de este Club. En su casa se llevaron a feliz término esos deseos, después de entrevistas, consultas y reuniones, pudo atraerse al elemento femenino y quedó organizado el día 1º de Mayo de 1938 con el nombre arriba mencionado. Su Mesa Directiva quedó así:

Presidenta
Vice-Presidenta
Secretaria
Sub-Secretaria
Tesorera

Srita. Tomasa A.
Sra. Catalina Orozco
Sra. Rosa M. Fonseca
Sra. Josefina R. de Jorge
Srita. Amalia Orozco

Ya elegida su Mesa Directiva, fijaron el día 12 de Mayo para su presentación oficial, preparando una Velada que resultó excelente.

—II PARTE RELIGIOSA—

Todos los mexicanos llevan muy arraigada su fe de católicos y no olvidan tan fácilmente sus costumbres y tradiciones religiosas. Desde un principio los primeros formadores de la Colonia Mexicana se acercaron a practicar y vivir su fe a la Parroquia de

San Antonio, máxime que en ese entonces existía un sacerdote que hablaba a satisfacción el Español el P. Louis Balleto.

Deseosos de poseer una imagen de Nuestra Sra. Madre de Guadalupe para satisfacer sus devociones marianas, como verdaderos mexicanos, reuniéronse fondos y con ellos se compró una hermosa imagen, a la cual se arregló un altar expresamente para ella, festejándole cada día 12 de Diciembre, según la tradición de México.

LA ORDEN CARMELITA

El Día 1º de Octubre de 1936, el Cardenal Mundelein comunicó al M.R.P. Prov. Carmelitano Fray Laurecen Diether, que la Iglesia de Santa María de Joliet pasaba al cuidado de dicha Orden. Inmediatamente fué nombrado el R. P. Fr. Mathew O'Neill O.C.D. para ocupar el puesto de primer Pastor en la Parroquia, la cual quedó oficial y eclesiásticamente establecida el 26 de Marzo de 1936.

Fueron designados como conventuales y colaboradores los R.R. P.P. Sylvester Snee, Terence Fitzgerald, Philip Irvin y Timothy Moore, también fueron enviados los Hnos. Coadjutores: Fr. Victor Nowak, Fr. Albert Dunne y Stephen McGovern.

En Junio de 1936 el R. P. Matthew O'Neill O.C.D. fué elevado al puesto de Provincial de la Orden en Estados Unidos, pero no tomó posición de su alto puesto sino hasta el año de 1939. Durante el tiempo que el P. O'Neil permaneció en esta localidad trabajó constantemente no sólo dentro de la Orden sino que se extendió su esfuerzo más allá de los límites a que Sacerdote alguno hasta entonces había llegado.

Al entrar en contacto con los fieles se dió cuenta que la Colonia mexicana carecía de localidad para sus necesidades espirituales y estaba olvidada. Al ver esta situación se dedicó a organizar a los colonos mexicanos, esperando encontrar una solución. Todos correspondieron al llamado en su afán de tener un lugar sagrado para dar culto a Dios y satisfacer sus sentimientos religiosos.

El esfuerzo del benemérito P. O'Neill—como así lo llaman algunos—floreció el día 16 de Julio de 1939, al abrirse una Capilla

con el titular de: "Capilla Mexicana de Ntra. Sra del Carmen". Mas como sus ocupaciones eran muchas y el tiempo no le permitía dedicarse completamente a las actividades de esta Capilla, designó al R. P. Aquinas Colgan, O.C.D., quien ocupaba entonces el cargo de Capellán en: "Chaplain of Lewis of Aeronautica of Lockport, Ill. Este padre aún cuando no hablaba el español como el P. O'Neill, sin embargo, pronto se puso al corriente de nuestras costumbres.

Trabajó constantemente en la Colonia y dedicose con todo entusiasmo a la juventud, esto sucedió durante los años de 1939 a 1942. Mas como estábamos en estado de guerra, en Junio de 1942 se enlistó en las fuerzas armadas de los Estado Unidos, sirviendo como Capellán en la 31st. División y 124th. Regimiento de Infantería. Embarcóse en las costas del Pacífico de U.S.A., desembarcando en Marzo de 1943 en las Islas Filipinas. Pasó dos años en los campos de batalla, sirviendo a Dios, auxiliando al prójimo y luchando fielmente por su Patria, hasta que cayó como un héroe en la Isla de Mindanao el 6 de Mayo de 1945, cuando se desarrollaba un encuentro bélico entre las Fuerzas Aliadas y el Japón. Al saber la noticia de su muerte todos los que le conocimos, le lloramos como Padre y le glorificamos como héroe, su recuerdo perdura viviente en nuestra memoria.

Cuando el P. O'Neill tomó posesión de su cargo de Provincial, dejó al R. P. Sylvester Snee como párroco de la Parroquia de Santa María, la cual sostenía financieramente a la Capilla Mexicana, pues la situación de los fieles, por la guerra, no era muy desahogada.

El Sr. Guadalupe Jorge y su esposa Josefina R. de Jorge encargados de la Capilla, concibieron la idea de independizarla económicamente; su idea fué secundada por la mayoría de los feligreses, que se impusieron una cuota mensual recogida por el Sr. Carlos Estrada. Esto fué por los años de 1940 a 1942, pero tan noble labor no duró mucho tiempo y esto por la guerra; así que quedó decidido que el que quisiera ayudar, mandara directamente sus donativos a la Parroquia de Santa María.

Desde el alejamiento del P. Aquinas, duramos un año sin Sacerdote en nuestra Capilla, hasta que el P. Provincial O'Neill nombró en Julio de 1944 al infatigable P. Germain, O.C.D.

COMITE EXISTENTE DE 1944 a 1947

Era conocido de todos, que la actual Capilla no allanarla las necesidades del futuro, por cuyo motivo, se propuso a toda la Colonia la idea de reunir dinero para adquirir una propiedad bastante grande, que fuera suficiente no sólo para edificar la Capilla sino también para construir un centro social en beneficio de todos. Una vez acogido el proyecto se le presentó al Párroco P. Snee, quien propuso se formara un Comité para darle la autorización y empezara de inmediato a trabajar. Se realizó una junta general el 9 de Julio de 1944 en la Capilla mexicana de Ntra. Sra. del Carmen, estando presente la mayor parte de los feligreses varones y se procedió bajo la presidencia del P. Snee a la formación de dicho Comité, que quedó así integrado:

Presidente
Secretario
Tesorero
Sub-Secretario

Sr. Navor Rodríguez
Sr. Enrique Haro
Sr. Guadalupe Jorge
Sr. Carlos Estrada

En esa reunión se le dió al grupo Mexicano el nombre de "Congregación Católica Mexicana". A ella asistieron los Sres.: Julio Rodríguez Torres, Felipe Rodríguez, José Cabrera, José Fonseca, David González, Francisco Gutiérrez, Gumersindo Rodríguez, José Córdova, Blas Calcanas, Pedro Márquez, J. Guadalupe Ramírez, Juan Saucedo, José Olvera y Elias Gutiérrez

El Comité designó como colectores a las siguientes personas:

Zona primera: Familia Tamayo. 705 Bruce St.
Zona segunda: Sr. José Córdova. 822 N. Collins St.
Zona tercera: Sr. Navor Rodríguez. 421 N. Collins St.
Por Lockport: Sr. Felipe Rodríguez. Yale Ave.
Por Rockdale: Sr. Enrique Haro. 500 Moen Ave.

Tomando en consideración las palabras del P. Snee y el interés de la mayoría de la Colonia, los donativos se presentaron inmediatamente por parte de las siguientes personas, que cooperaron de muy buena voluntad:

David González	118.00	José López	33.75
Gonzalo Gutiérrez	60.00	Julio C. Fuentes	33.75
Navor Rodríguez	55.50	José Cabrera	30.75
Guadalupe Jorge	49.50	José Fonseca	32.00
Domingo López	49.50	Ciriaco Chávez	32.75
Epifanio Hernández	47.50	Cirilo Estupillán	33.75
Carlos Estrada	43.00	Catarino Germán	33.75
José Olvera	37.50	Sabino Arellano	31.75
Pablo Zaragoza	36.75	Ramón García	28.75
Victor Gutiérrez	36.75	Salvador García	28.75
Leandro Gómez	28.75	Jovita Delgado	11.00
Bonifacio Loreto	28.75	Rose Faynick	10.00
Juan Rodríguez	23.75	Severa Vásquez	9.00
Jesús Tamayo	20.00	Epifanio Razo	8.00
José Córdova	30.75	Rafael Martínez	7.00
Jacinta M. Cruz	17.00	Jerónimo Roa	3.00
Vicente Cruz	18.75	M. Mireles	3.00
Jesús Ortega	18.75	Blas Calcanas	1.50
Jesús López	18.75		
M. Carmen Rodríguez	18.75		
Francisco Orozco	18.75	LOCKPORT	
Jesús Sambrano	18.75	Felipe Rodríguez	38.00
Remedios López	18.75	Elías Gutiérrez	36.75
Guadalupe Ramírez	18.75	Gonzalo Tafoya	31.25
José Baltazar	18.75	Francisco Gutiérrez	20.00
Alfonso Izquierdo	18.75	Lorenzo Rodríguez	10.00
Margarito Vásquez	18.75	Ismael Zepeda	3.00
Cirilo Lázaro	18.75	Ambrosio Padilla	3.00
Primitivo Cervantes	18.75		
Urbano Portales	15.75	ROCKDALE	
Rodolfo Chávez	15.00	Enrique Haro	43.00
Ricardo Roa	12.00	Amador Serratos	30.75
Pedro Zavala	12.00	Jesús Padilla	28.75
Guadalupe Rodríguez	12.00	Juan Gómez	20.00
Ramón Ramírez	13.00	Ramona Pacheco	20.00
Vicente Mejía	12.00	Felipe Ayala	18.75
Eulalio Delgado	28.75	Juan Padilla	18.75
		Juan Serratos	4.00

Esto fué el resultado de la colecta durante el año de 1944 desde el mes de Julio del mismo año en que se formó el Comité.

EL PADRE GERMAIN

Dábase principio a las actividades sociales en Julio de 1944, cuando el R. P. O'Neill designó al R. P. Germain O'Henry, O.C.D., para que se hiciera cargo de la Capilla Mexicana de Ntra. Sra. del Carmen. Ocupó su cargo en el momento más propicio para el Comité, que apenas iniciaba sus funciones y necesitaba de un guía.

El P. Germain, desde un principio, se manifestó entusiasmado de todas las actividades sociales y en ellas esperaba ocupar parte de su Ministerio. Al entrar en contacto con los fieles pronto se dió cuenta que dichas actividades eran muy limitadas, que la juventud no disponía de ninguna acción social, ni mucho menos de un sitio donde pudiera desarrollarlas.

CORO FEMENIL RELIGIOSO

Al conocer la situación en que estaban sus feligreses, tanto las mujeres como los hombres, lo primero que hizo el P. Germain fué organizar el Coro de la Capilla, escogiendo timbradas voces de jóvenes Sritas. bajo la asistencia de la incansable y siempre activa Miss Collins, persona que puso mucho empeño en el progreso de la Capilla Mexicana. Entre el grupito reunido por el P. Germain con jóvenes de la misma Colonia se encontraban las señoritas: J. Jazo, L. López, P. Jazo y J. Rodríguez. Esta inciativa tuvo poco resultado, pero sin embargo, hay que tenerlo como el primer esfuerzo del P. Germain, esfuerzo que después floreció con la cooperación de las Sritas. Rodríguez, hijas del Sr. Felipe Rodríguez y de su esposa la Sra. Romana. Dichas Señoritas tuvieron a su cargo el coro que funcionó espléndidamente en nuestra Capilla y que tuvo una actividad digna de encomio.

CENTRO SOCIAL MEXICANO

Puesto en actividad el grupo de señoritas, el P. Germain se dedicó a organizar a los jóvenes bajo el nombre de Mount Carmel C.Y.O. En este grupo de jóvenes, que fué de importancia para la vida social de la Colonia, militaron los siguientes. David Gómez,

J. González, I. Ramírez, V. Tobías, M. Calcanas, A. Delgado, R. Frausto, P. López, T. Gutiérrez, J. Rodríguez y F. Castillo.

Como no se disponía de un centro de reunión, a petición del P. Germain, la Parroquia de Santa María cedió un lugar adecuado en una de las Escuelas de la misma Parroquia. Al tenerlo en disposición los jóvenes lo arreglaron para el fin a que lo iban a destinar y dicho lugar fué inaugurado el 7 de Noviembre de 1944 con el nombre de: "Mexican Clubroom and Social Center". Este centro social se puso a disposición de toda la Colonia y el mismo Comité vigente lo usó como centro de sus actividades.

GRUPO KAPPA GAMMA KAPPA SORORITE

El mismo P. Germain se ocupó de formar el grupo juvenil femenino, que con este nombre fué designado y comenzó a existir ya desde ese mismo año de 1944. Este grupo comprendía a jovencitas de 14 a 18 años, integrada su Mesa Directiva de la forma siguiente:

Presidenta
Vice-Presidenta
Tesorera
Secretaria
Sub-Secretaria

Srita. Esther Estrada
Srita. Nellie Rodríguez
Srita. Mary Louise Zaragoza
Srita. Carmen Gutiérrez
Srita. Eleonor Gómez

Entre sus miembros participantes estaban las Sritas.: Gloria Acosta, Rita Martínez, Elvira Martínez, Jennie Jaso, Pauline Jaso, Mary Louise López, Ann Hernández, Celia Domínguez, Mary Medina, Lina Gómez, Mary Gómez, Mary Delgado y Celia Gutiérrez.

PAN AMERICAN CLUB

La anterior agrupación atraía nuevos elementos y miembros, tanto señoritas como señoras, lo cual no estaba en conformidad con el título que llevaba ni con los fines con que se organizó ese grupo. Ante esta situación, consideraron necesario y práctico cambiar el nombre, reorganizarlo y darle una nueva estructuración

y orientación que pudiera ser homogénea tanto a señoritas como a señoras; por cuyo motivo se le puso el nombre arriba indicado.

La Mesa Directiva quedó así establecida:

Presidenta	Srita. Dorothy Baldingo
Vice-Presidenta	Sra. Theresa G. Zaragoza
Secretaria	Sra. Ruby C. López
Sub-Secretaria	Srita. Carmen Delgado
Tesorera	Sra. Petra Partida

Durante el Comité vigente de 1944 a 1947 fué cuando existieron estas agrupaciones.

Entre las actividades patrióticas de dicho Comité estaba la celebración solemne de las fiestas de Independencia; pero como en ese Septiembre de 1944, apenas tenía 2 meses de fundado, no le fué posible organizarlas, pero si cooperar con el P. Germain y principalmente con el grupo de Señoras y Señoritas, quienes por primera vez, en la Historia de la Colonia Mexicana, organizaron formalmente las Fiestas y fueron ellas el alma, la vida y la alegría de dichos festejos. Se vieron más lucidas aquellas celebraciones con la cooperación de los Braceros Mexicanos, quienes tuvieron a su cargo el acto cívico de esa memorable noche del 15 de Septiembre. Fué una fiesta muy recordada, tanto por lo concurrido como por las actividades realizadas por aquel grupo de damas. Como tributo de admiración damos sus nombres:

Organizadoras:	Josefina R. de J. y Ramona S. P.
Presidenta:	Sra. María Luis Flores
Vice-Presidenta:	Srita. Carmen Delgado
Secretaria:	Srita. Francis Orozco
Sub-Secretaria:	Sra. Martina E. Campos
Tesorera:	Srita. Theresa Gómez
Maestro de Ceremonias:	Alfonso Izquierdo

En el Comité existente de 1944 a 1947 se le dió una participación más activa a la mujer mexicana y ella supo desempeñar concienzudamente su deber, dando siempre ejemplo de fidelidad a la confianza recibida.

En 1946 para dar más esplendor a la Fiesta Patria del 5. de Mayo, Aniversario glorioso de la Batalla de Puebla donde nuestros ejércitos derrotaron al invasor, las señoras Carmen O. De Karales y Josefina R. de Jorge, organizaron un "Concurso de Simpatía" entre las Señoritas de la Colonia para elegir Reina.

Las señoritas participantes fueron:

Carmen Gutiérrez

Gloria Acosta

Theresa Orozco

María Gómez

Dicha competencia llevaba también por objeto recaudar fondos para el proyecto en que todos estaban interesados.

Al clausurarse el Concurso, superó a todas las Señoritas. María Gómez y ella, como vencedora, fué coronada como Reina por el Alcalde de la ciudad: el Mayor A. O YANKE, el día primero de Mayo de 1946. El resultado financiero fué de entera satisfacción para todos los participantes, pues velan en ello el bien que se originaba a la Colonia.

El P. Germain, encargado de la Col. Mexicana de Joliet, concibió la idea de hacer un viaje a México y conocerlo para comprender mejor el alma mexicana e interpretar sus ideales y sentimientos. Para ello aprovechó las vacaciones de Agosto de 1946. Llegó a México con las ansias de conocer nuestro pintoresco país e inmediatamente comenzó a viajar, conociendo, además de nuestra Capital, Guadalajara, Puebla, Cuernavaca, Taxco y otras ciudades más. Lo que más quedó gravado en su mente y corazón, según confesión de él, fué el palpar dulce y maternal de la Virgen de Guadalupe, cuando en la Basílica celebró una Misa, privilegio anhelado y realizado con gran satisfacción.

Llevó a cabo una conversación amistosa con el entonces Arzobispo de México Sr. Dr. Dn. Luis María Martínez, quien al enterarse del bien que ejercía en U.S.A. sobre mexicanos y descendientes de éstos, le entregó un saludo por escrito para ser llevado a sus fieles. Dicho escrito decía:

"Residencia del Arzobispado de México"

He sentido grande satisfacción al saber por conducto del mismo P. Germain, O.C.D. que tiene a su cargo la Parroquia de Ntra. Sra. del Carmen, formada por católicos mexicanos. Aprovecho gustoso la oportunidad de enviarles, por medio de su digno Párroco, una Bendición muy especial, augurándoles copiosas bendiciones del Cielo y la protección de la Virgen Santísima.

México, D. F., a 30 de Agosto de 1946
+ Luis M. Martínez
Arzpo de México

El P. Germain regresó a su Parroquia emocionado y contentísimo de haber contemplado las bellezas, paisajes y ciudades de México; supo de la religiosidad de sus habitantes y apreció la grandeza histórica del mexicano. Todo lo llevaba en su imaginación y con gran profusión de detalles hacia venir la nostalgia en el ánimo de sus fieles de raza y sangre mexicana cuando les hablaba de su Patria. Todo esto hacía que el vínculo, entre Pastor y fieles, fuera más estrecho.

COMITE EXISTENTE DE 1947 A 1950

El anterior Comité finalizando ya su tercer año de funciones, reconoció con sobrada razón, ser tiempo conveniente de elegir nuevo personal, que dirigiera el Comité y se encargara de realizar sus actividades.

Se consultó al P. Germain y a la mayoría de la Colonia, todos quedaron conformes. Se celebró una junta el 15 de Junio de 1947, participando los miembros de la Congregación Católica de Joliet, Lockport y Rockdale. En dicha sesión habló el P. Fabián, Pastor de la misma Congregación y algunos miembros del Comité; por mayoría de votos se aplazaron las nuevas elecciones hasta el Domingo 6 de Julio del mismo año. En dicha fecha, se reunió la mayor parte de la Congregación C.M. en el Centro Social.

Después de abierta la sesión leída el acta anterior y dado a conocer el fin de la reunión, el presidente expuso la forma de

llevar a cabo las elecciones, dando a todos el derecho de votar y elegir a los candidatos idoneos. Finalmente la reunión aprobó ser mejor que el presente Comité eligiera a los Candidatos, reservándose cada uno el derecho de dar su voto. Conforme a esto fueron seleccionadas dos personas para cada cargo, a fin de que libremente pudieran escoger el mejor. Verificado el escrutinio la elección fué de absoluta conformidad, quedando con esto satisfechos de su coordinación.

El nuevo Comité quedó así formado:

Presidente	Sr. José Fronesca
Vice-Presidente	Sr. Manuel Campos
Secretario	Sr. Moisés Fonseca
Sub-Secretario	Sr. Felipe Macías
Tesorero	Sr. Felipe Macías
Vocal lo	Sr. Primitivo Zaragoza
Sarg. de armas	Sr. Francisco Espinoza

Este último, por motivos de salud, no pudo desempeñar su cargo, al ausentarse para buscar un lugar donde el clima le fuese más saludable.

Terminada la elección se les tomó la protesta de rigor, en la que prometieron, bajo palabra de honor, trabajar y realizar cuanto fuera posible, en bien de la Congregación.

El presidente del Comité saliente, habló a los miembros del Nuevo Comité y a todos los presentes, para agradecerles su cooperación, en estos términos:

"Hace aproximadamente tres años, cuando fuimos honrados con vuestros votos para tomar las riendas de esta organización ocupar este lugar y saludaros como vuestros dirigentes ofrecimos servir a nuestra organización, con todas nuestras energías y pedimos a cada uno lealtad y cooperación continuada; en cambio, recibimos la promesa de que estariais siempre a nuestro lado. Ahora, queridos compañeros, doblemente agradecidos, venimos a hablaros por última vez como dirigentes. Ayer escuchábamos una promesa y hoy estamos ante una multitud de hechos consumados, todos nobles, todos ejemplares, todos verificados por vosotros mismos.

Por lo tanto nuestro adiós arranca desde lo profundo de nuestro corazón, como un voto de admiración hacia vosotros mismos.

En breve oiréis, aunque en síntesis, el informe relativo a nuestros pasos y progresos, podrá decirse con toda verdad, que siempre fueron hacia adelante, gracias al esfuerzo vuestro que facilitó nuestra tarea. . . Al abandonar el cargo que vosotros nos confiásteis, llevamos el recuerdo de vuestro compañerismo y al regresar a las filas de la Congregación lo hacemos positivamente satisfechos y orgullosos porque vamos a estar entre vosotros".

Terminó la reunión con aplausos y felicitaciones para los nuevos dirigentes, llenándose de entusiasmo y alegría el Centro Social.

El día 13 del mismo año se celebró una junta para presentar a los miembros del Nuevo Comité al R. P. Germain, quien los felicitó y exhortó a seguir trabajando unidos por los mismos ideales, a superar problemas, a sobrellevar sacrificios y a realizar ideas, deseándoles toda clase de éxitos en sus empresas.

Durante la gestión de este Comité, el P. Fabián dió a conocer la noticia de haber adquirido el sitio para la erección del magno proyecto antes dicho, o sea la construcción de la Capilla y el Salón adjunto, que serviría para Centro Social de las distintas agrupaciones.

El P. Fabián era Párroco del Templo de Santa María, al cual estaba afiliada nuestra Congregación. Gracias pues, a él, que con esto mereció un sitio de honor, juntamente con el P. Germain y los miembros del actual Comité, todos ellos deseosos de ver realizada la obra.

El día 3 de Abril de 1948, se llevó a cabo una junta especial, en la cual el P. Fabián informó a todos sobre el proyecto y manifestó los planos que a la fecha se tenían.

Los trabajos empezaron el 26 de Abril de 1948, llevando a cabo la obra concebida por el P. Sylvester Snee y el P. Matthew T. O'Neill en el año de 1944.

Meses más adelante una noticia vino a entristecernos, pues se nos avisaba el cambio del P. Germain y, por consiguiente, su separación de nuestra Congregación para desempeñar su ministerio en otro lugar muy distante al nuestro. Sentimos mucho su

alejamiento, ya que durante 4 años nos habíamos acostumbrado a su trabajo y amistad. Con resignación acatamos su partida, que fué el día 10 de Agosto de 1943. Cinco días antes, en una reunión, le manifestamos nuestro agradecimiento por sus actividades en favor de nuestra Congregación. Siempre llevaremos en la mente su entusiasmo, sus consejos, sus orientaciones, sus obras y cuando el agradecimiento no sea posible exteriorizarse cultivaremos el recuerdo del bien recibido en forma de amor, de luz y de verdad.

P. GABRIEL N. PAUSBACK, O.C.D.

El 5º de Septiembre de 1948, fué presentado el P. Gabriel ante la Congregación Católica Mexicana, como el nuevo Capellán de Ntra. Sra. del Carmen.

Dicho Padre contaba con una excelente preparación y experiencia, había estudiado en Roma y ahí fué ordenado el 14 de Junio de 1930. Se le dedicó a la enseñanza durante 4 años en Chicago y Joliet; en esta última ciudad estuvo al frente del Templo P. de St. Bernard durante los años de 1934 a 1937. Luego fué nombrado Asistente Gral. de la Orden de 1937 a 1947 en Roma. Pudo visitar y trabajar en Australia, Malta y España. De regreso a U.S.A. el 10 de Julio de 1948 se le asignó el cargo de nuestra Capilla. Llegó a nosotros empeñado en trabajar y ensanchar las actividades, tanto sociales como religiosas. Visitó inmediatamente a las familias, se entrevistó personalmente con muchos para conocerse, comprenderse y así el trabajo resultara más fácil para todos.

Al grupo de jóvenes de ambos sexos los reorganizó y con su orientación se prepararon tan bien, que pudieron participar en los eventos del San Francis Youth Center of Chicago, ILL el 26 de Diciembre de 1943.

Cuando el P. Gabriel se hizo cargo de la Congregación Católica Mexicana, los trabajos de la nueva Capilla estaban muy adelantados, con su esfuerzo quedaron terminados, aunque no completamente, el día 24 de Diciembre de 1948. Fué ese día una fecha imborrable para todos, pues lo que era proyecto se había convertido en realidad y la estábamos gozando.

DEDICACION Y BENDICION DE LA CAPILLA

Al terminarse la obra, gracias a la cooperación e interés de toda la Congregación como también a los esfuerzos de los Padres Carmelitas, se pensó en llevar a cabo la Bendición Solemne de aquella Capilla dedicada a Ntra. Sra. del Carmen. Para tal fin se escogió el día 1º de Mayo de 1949. Ese día presentóse para bendecirla el Excm. y Revme. Sr. Obispo Dr. Don. Martín McNamara, acompañado del P. Fabián W. Donlan O.C.D., Párroco de Santa María, el personal de la misma Parroquia y algunos otros Padres de Joliet. A recibir a su Excelencia, estaban el Capellán P. Gabriel Pausback, P. Flavian Wilson y el P. Gerald Henrici, O.C.D., con asistencia de la Congregación, así también como otros feligreses que asisten a esta misma Capilla.

En la ceremonia habló el Capellán P. Gabriel, dió a conocer la Historia de la Colonia Mexicana en Joliet, ensalzó a todos los que con sacrificio y espíritu tenaz cooperaron, puso de manifiesto el orgullo que deberían sentir ante este acto y exhortó a conservar en la memoria y en el corazón a todos aquellos que ayudaron, pero que no pudieron asistir a este acontecimiento. A su vez y antes de terminar las ceremonias, habló el Sr. Obispo a las personas ahí presentes, tratando someramente algunos puntos:

- a) Nobleza y recia Fe de los Mexicanos.
- b) Misión y fin del hombre sobre la tierra.
- c) Virtudes necesarias en los ahí presentes.
- d) Aprecio de los dones sobrenaturales.
- e) Cultivo de las virtudes sociales.

Todos agradecemos al Creador el beneficio de habernos concedido vivir aquellos momentos felices de unión, de realidades y de plegarias.

DATOS QUE INICIAN UNA HISTORIA

La Capilla inmediatamente comenzó a ser el centro del culto

católico y las ceremonias religiosas se iniciaron normalmente.

Las primeras inscripciones en los libros de la Capilla fueron los siguientes:

DEFUNCION—La primera defunción, registrada en esta Capilla, fué la de la Sra. Eduarda Ayala el día 18 de Enero de 1949.

BAUTISMO—El primer Bautismo anotado fué el de la niña Theresa P. Carreño, Hija de la Sra. Pagge P. y del Sr. David Carreño, el 22 de Enero de 1949.

MATRIMONIO—En el libro de actas Matrimoniales, el primer Matrimonio asentado fué el del Sr. Miguel Bravo hijo del Sr. Joe Bravo y de la Sra. Inés de Bravo con la Srita. Richael Gutiérrez.

PADRE GERALD HENRICI, O.C.D.

El P. Gerald vino a substituir al P. Gabriel, quien por espacio de dos años estuvo al frente de la Capilla y ahora se ausentaba por motivos de salud.

El P. Gerald, por su decisión y empuje, se le llamó el P. "Valiente", pues se hechó encima compromisos que algunos consideraron temerarios, pero que al final todos reconocieron como muy necesarios. Dicho Padre quiso poner la Capilla, en cuanto a comodidades, al nivel de otras de gran categoría. Para conocer su empresa, bástenos leer una de sus solicitudes hechas a la Congregación:

Muy queridos Mexicanos:

En vista de las extensas mejoras que se le han venido haciendo a la Capilla Mexicana, tenemos la necesidad de pedir la ayuda financiera de cade uno de Uds. Estoy seguro que, por lo que sé de Uds., pronto recibiremos su cooperación para darle a la casa de Dios lo que se merece.

Hasta ahora todas las familias mexicanas han cooperado, en

cuanto ha estado de su parte, para ir adelante con el proyecto al cual mucho le falta. Hasta el primero de Nov. de 1950 se ha gastado la cantidad de \$8,190.24 Dólares, deuda que está totalmente cubierta. Hoy afrontamos una nueva per—\$2,500.00 Dólares, para dar término a las mejores, que son necesarias en nuestro Centro Social.

Confiamos en que aceptaréis esta carga con buen espíritu y voluntad. Hemos designado una cuota a cada familia de acuerdo a sus condiciones económicas, tratando de no sacrificar persona alguna.

Nos reiteramos en Cristo

(Firma)

Fr. Gerald Henrici, O.C.D.

CLUB LOS GAVILANES

En esta época no había un grupo juvenil formado, pues los anteriores fueron desapareciendo poco a poco. Por esta razón un grupo de Señores, después de juntas y reuniones, desearon organizarlo para que hubiera actividad y representara a la Congregación dentro y fuera de ella.

Dicho Club fué creado el 29 de Julio de 1950, con el nombre de "Los Gavilanes" "A.C. SPARROW HAWKS", eligiendo para su directiva a los jóvenes siguientes:

Presidente:

Jimmy Padilla

Vice-President:

Fabio Castillo

Secretario:

Marco Calcanas

Tesorero:

Peter López

Este grupo, con el tiempo, avanzó muchísimo en las actividades sociales y sus determinaciones fueron ventajosas y muy decididas para la Congregación.

CLUB AGUILAS AMERICANAS

Así como la expansión se nota a través de las actividades y movimientos y en su continuación todo se va estabilizando, así

también sucedía con nuestra Congregación, la cual extendíase por la creación de nuevas actividades, originándose de ellas este Club, como una necesidad, para satisfacer deseos, realizar ideas y establecer actividades.

El fundador y organizador de esta agrupación fué el Sr. Armando García, quien después de no pocas fatigas logró establecerlo el 4 de October de 1952, quedando al frente de dicho Club los miembros aquí anotados:

Presidente:
Secretaria:
Tesorero:

Sr. J. Guadalupe Castillo
Sra. Ma. Jesús Orozco
Sr. Armando García

OTROS CAPELLANES

En este tiempo hubo inestabilidad, en cuanto a los Capellanes, pues en un período relativamente corto contamos con varios.

1. P. GERALD, quien después de casi dos años de atendernos, 1950-1951, fué trasladado.
2. P. PIOX, que vino en 1952 y en el mismo año se alejó por haber ingresado en el Ejército de U.S.A.
3. P. GORDON, que substituyó al anterior, durando pocos meses, pues marchó como misionero, a la América del Sur.
4. P. DUNSTAN, que igualmente estuvo poco tiempo con nosotros, pues como el anterior fué destinado a Sud América para hacerse cargo de una Parroquia.
5. P. VALENTINE, que vino a hacerse cargo de la Capilla en Enero de 1953.

JOLIET LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL CLUB

En vista del desarrollo de la Colonia, del crecimiento de las familias y de un sin fin de necesidades, se creó este grupo para que actuara dentro y fuera de la Congregación con mayores

facultades. Para desenvolverse perfectamente fué necesario registrarlo con el fin de que legalmente fuera reconocido y sus actuaciones tuvieron más trascendencia en nuestra vida de Sociedad.

Las personas anotadas fueron sus componentes:

Sr. José Fonesca.
Sr. Alfonso Izquierdo
Sr. Primitivo Zaragoza
Sr. Guadalupe Jorge
Sr. Amador Serrato
Sr. Juan Gómez
Sr. José Cabrera
Sr. Pedro Hernández
Sr. Jesús García
Sra. Elena Izquierdo

Sr. Navor Rodríguez
Sr. Benn Rodríguez
Sr. Juan Carrillo
Sr. Carlos Estrada
Sr. Miguel Reyna
Sr. Jesús Cabrera
Sr. Pablo Domínguez
Sr. Arnulfo Jiménez
Sr. Juan Serratos

El grupo de estos Sres. siempre trabajó incansablemente por la Congregación y sus determinaciones se hicieron palpables en beneficio de nuestra Colonia Mexicana.

CONCLUSION

Habéis podido conocer, a través de estos apuntes, el espíritu del mexicano, que combate por dejar estampado en otros lugares el sello de su tenacidad en la lucha por la vida.

Habéis conocido, aunque a grandes rasgos, el anhelo de unión que lo alienta en su vida social.

Habéis palpado el alma religiosa del mexicano, que atacado a su Fe se desenvuelve en torno a ella como el centro de su vida, a la manera como revolotean las palomas en nuestro Campanario, símbolo de nuestras creencias.

Le visteis lucirse en sus actividades cívicas, con la preocupación de realizar esplendorosamente sus participaciones.

Le contemplásteis lleno de sentimiento patrio, esforzándose por realzar el prestigio, libertad e independencia de su suelo natal y enalteciendo las virtudes y gestas heroicas de su bronceada raza.

Le admirásteis escalando la cumbre de sus ideales y luchando por la conservación de sus conquistas culturales.

Considerásteis, en fin, que siempre es grato y placentero sondear su alma, sedienta de dar a conocer su Patria con sus riquezas, sus hombres, sus bellezas y sus valores morales.

Ojalá que otro emigrante mexicano, recoja el compromiso que dejó en sus manos para que siga haciendo historia y relate lo acaecido, durante estos últimos años, en nuestra Colonia de Joliet para que pueda conocerse y comprenderse mejor la fina personalidad del mexicano, que por si necesidad emigra, por deber, con su vida enaltece su Patria.

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Juan R. García

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