

***Concientización:***  
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*Concientización* is a student journal dedicated to promoting the study of Chican@ & Latin@ experience and thought. We are committed to creating alliances across boundaries of nation, race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality. In that spirit, we incorporate in our mission the study of Latin@s and Chican@s in diaspora; the study of racial, ethnic, class, sexual, and gender identities; and the study of community and nation building.

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CONTENTS

	<b>Editor's Note to Reader</b>	3
<b>Section One</b>	<b>Chican@/Latin@s and Education in the U.S.</b>	4
James Corona	Applying Cultural Norms to Latino ESL Students: Reviewing Some Ways in which Culture is Conceptualized in the Field of Latino Multicultural Education	5
Holly Morton	Language in Education: English Immersion vs. Bilingual Education Programs	15
Natalie Fraser	Increasing Latino Representation on Campus	23
<b>Section Two</b>	<b>Topics in Latin@ Immigration</b>	29
Kathryn Finley	Immigrant Detention Centers: Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network	30
Jessica Derenne	Immigration Integration: The Challenges of Becoming a U.S. Citizen	37
Sara Schroeder	Health Challenges Facing Latinos and Multi-Level Social Work Interventions	46
<b>Section Three</b>	<b>Chican@ &amp; Latin@ Artistic Expression as Political Project</b>	56
Julie Covarrubias	Music and Dance: Activities of the Working Class	57
Cristina Springfield	Communities and Revolution: The Nuyorican Poet's Café as a Social Movement	66
Guadalupe Fonseca	<i>"Que ironía, te has convertido en lo que mas odiabas"</i> <i>"You have become what you use to hate"</i>	75
Rosalilia Mendoza	<i>Promesa al Tiempo</i>	78
Jessica Rajtar	<i>Se Habla Español</i> I am Latina	79

### **Editor's Note to Reader**

This volume provides the reader with a variety of topics from undergraduate and graduate students whose scholarship focus on issues of education, immigration, health, activism, and identity, informed by an analysis of Chican@ and Latin@ experience in the U.S. The scholarship can be read as fitting into three broad topic areas: 1) Chican@s/Latin@s and Education in the U.S.; 2) Topics in Latin@ Immigration; and 3) Chican@ & Latin@ Artistic Expression as Political Project. A broad theme that emerges from reading this volume as a whole is an understanding of how historical, national, and local policies and practices interact, shape, and react to shape the Chican@ and Latin@ condition in the U.S.

## **Section One: Chican@s/Latin@s and Education in the U.S.**

In this section the authors offer research informed analyses and reflections about current educational research and education policies impacting Latin@ education.

Corona's review of education research regarding English Language Learners (ELLs) offers an overview of how culture is conceptualized in multicultural education literature.

Based out of an experience of working with ELL middle-school students, Morton provides an outline of the arguments and positions held on the opposing sides of those favoring English Immersion versus those supporting Bilingual Education programs.

Attending to concerns for increased diversity at the university level of education, Fraser focuses on the need to increase Latin@ Representation at UW-Madison, and puts forth an argument for creating a reciprocity agreement with states that have higher Latin@ populations than Wisconsin.

All of these works, across a range of settings, reflect UW students' concerns, inquiries, and understandings of contemporary educational issues that importantly shape the Chican@ & Latin@ education in the U.S.

# **Applying Cultural Norms to Latino ESL Students: Reviewing Some Ways in Which Culture is Conceptualized in the Field of Latino Multicultural Education**

James Corona

## **Abstract**

As it pertains to Latino ESL students in secondary schools, this study succinctly reviews broad culture conceptualizations in the multicultural education fields of bilingual education and heritage language education. As found in the education literature, a broad array of conceptualizations of culture will be examined throughout this presentation.

This short paper will focus on how, as it is relevant to Latino English As A Second Language students (ESL) and Limited English Proficiency students (LEP) in secondary school, *culture* is conceptualized across the literature of multicultural education, doing so through the analytic framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT). As it is relevant to Latino English As A Second Language students (ESL) and Latino Limited Language Proficiency students (LEP) in secondary school, this short presentation will selectively review not only some of the culture conceptualizations in the field of bilingual education, but also some of the culture conceptualizations in the arena of heritage language education. Therefore, when reviewing some of these ideas on culture that prominent educators have generated, this work will pay special attention to culture conceptions that are educational responses to how many secondary schools tend to privilege the cultural identities and knowledge foundations of middle class, English monolingual students over Latino LEP/ESL students. In addition, this short paper will also highlight how broad cultural developments in both schools and society at large tend to negatively impact on the existence of heritage language programs in secondary school.

## **Latino ESL Students and Broad Culture Conceptualizations in the Bilingual Education Field of Multicultural Education**

Despite the academic effectiveness – relative to other forms of education – of bilingual education in the United States, as evidenced in many literature reviews (Willig, 1985; Ramirez, 1992; Beykont, 1994; Greene, 1997; Slavin and Cheung, 2003; May, 2008), not as much saliency has been given to the *cultural* importance of bilingual education in the United States. From a CRT perspective, a society's framing of *culture* is an important element in the education of students of color, including Latino ESL and LEP students. Intellectually predicated on Bell's (1992) understanding of the perennial influence of White privilege in American society, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), Delgado and Stefancic (2001) and Willis (2008) broadly outline five major conceptual pillars of contemporary Critical Race Theory. These five conceptual foundations are generally shared, in varying degrees, by many Latina/o critical race theorists – such as Villenas and Deyhle (1999), Trucios-Haynes (2000), Fernandez (2002) and Yosso (2005) – since there is a general acknowledgement, among these education scholars, that Latina/o children are often treated as a non-White racialized minority group. First, there

is the recognition of racism as a persistently mundane aspect of American life, including life in its educational milieus. Second, racism, as it infiltrates the cultural and the institutional life of students, provides White students with both material and psychological benefits. Third, conceptions of “race” are social constructions that, resulting from socio-cultural and socio-historical processes, privilege White student identities/knowledge foundations over non-White student identities/knowledge foundations. Fourth, the privileging of White identities/knowledge foundations over non-White identities/knowledge foundations competitively crowds out or minimizes non-White voices in a wide array of social fields – from economics to education. Fifth, the capturing and analyzing of these Latino voices – whether they are students, teachers, parents or community members – can transform deficit notions of Latina/o student identities and Latina/o knowledge foundations into cultural assets that support the educational trajectory of Latina/o students.

While today’s secondary schools generally privilege the cultural, the psychological and the academic needs of its affluent English monolingual students, Zentella (2005) thinks that bilingual education can strengthen the cultural heritages of many Latino students, including ESL pupils, given the connection between language acquisition and cultural identity. Furthermore, Tse (2001) believes that bilingual education programs can help mitigate the effects of familial and societal cultural conflicts that often arise when people are socialized through different sociocultural experiences. In Tse’s view (2001), the loss of a community’s language – through an educational system that neglects to provide bilingual education to those students inhabiting multilingual milieus – potentially creates three sociocultural developments: first, the rise of differences in the personal and familial languages used by different generations within immigrant families; second, the social rejection of a member of a cultural group that has lost or abandoned the group’s traditional language; and third, the emergence of social movements that are aimed at recovering the language that has been gradually lost through educational neglect .

In acknowledging the CRT notion that schools educate Latino students in ways that are most congruent with White, middle class monolingual cultural norms, Mora (2006) affirms that bilingual education helps Latino students in at least three ways. First of all, it paves the way for bridging some of the cultural differences that exist between home and school settings. Secondly, it enhances a student’s self esteem by embracing cultural elements of the student’s home identity. Thirdly, it counteracts the explicit and implicit devaluing of a Latino student’s home language and culture. What’s more, in resisting educational efforts to erase Latina/o cultural elements that are devalued among powerful sociocultural groups in American society, Corson (2001) reiterates the importance of Latina/o knowledge foundations, for he suggests that bilingual education can help both Latina/o students and teachers to cultivate an important skill in our current multicultural world: “being able to see part of the world from the different culture’s point of view” (p. 120).

Compatible with a CRT sensibility, which stresses the importance of incorporating – rather than eradicating – a student’s cultural background into the school curriculum, Cummins (2008) advocates the kind of bilingual education that “activate(s) a student’s prior knowledge” (p. 53), even if that student’s cultural prism is not entirely aligned with the cultural expectations of the privileged culture in American society.

Schwinge (2008) sees bilingual programs as educational vehicles to assert, rather than deny, the culturally inflected voices of many minority language students. Schwinge (2008), borrowing from Moll and Gonzalez (2004), understands the tapping into “local funds of knowledge” as a way of helping students in bilingual programs to become not only better adjusted to classroom settings, but also to change the culturally constructed knowledge foundations of secondary school classrooms. This emphasis on moving away from culture deficiency models of educating Latino students, while moving toward culturally affirming approaches to Latina/o education, finds a most explicit articulation in Yosso’s (2005) CRT perspective. As a self-conscious CRT practitioner, Yosso strengthens the cultural attractiveness of bilingual education by visualizing bilingualism as a form of linguistic capital, part of what he calls “community cultural wealth,” from which educators can draw upon to educate, and to build, knowledge foundations for Latina/o students. The work of other Latino cultural race theorists also suggests the reconceptualization of Latino bilingual education. These CRT scholars highlight the importance of incorporating Latina/o voices in order to reconstruct, decolonize and empower Latino/a student identities, and legitimize Latino cultural knowledge. For example, in applying a CRT framework to seven ethnographic studies of Latino teenagers and parents, Villenas and Deyhle (1999) capture education discourses that not only denigrate Latino culture, but also psychologically undermine Latino student identities. In addition, Villenas and Deyhle (1999) carefully analyze how schools routinely track Latino students, cavalierly pushing them into dead-end educational trajectories. For their part, Solorzano and Ornelas (2004) document the limited opportunities, for Latino students, of taking Advanced Placement courses, especially in educational sites that foster low academic expectations. Finally, it should be noted that by focusing on the empowering elements of Latino student resistance toward deficit cultural orientations, particularly as these elements unfold in Latino/a student narratives, CRT theorists, such as Fernandez (2002), open the door for more culturally powerful approaches to bilingual education. Within a CRT orientation, these educators are ultimately interested in pushing beyond the limiting tendency of educational institutions to use bilingual education as a transitional vehicle for offering an otherwise monopolizing English monolingual curriculum.

At its most culturally defensive conception, bilingual education may be regarded as a figurative barrier against some of the more culturally destructive forms of dominant secondary education. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Teresa McCarty (2008) have equated “submersion/sink-or-swim” programs with subtractive language learning situations, circumstances under which society’s dominant language endangers the survival of the minority language. When viewed through the CRT lens, this subtractive language learning situation threatens the survival of minority cultures in ways that are not altogether dissimilar to Spring’s (2004) notion of “deculturalization,” which he ultimately defines as “the educational process of destroying a people’s culture and replacing it with a new culture” (p. 3), though one less privileged than the dominant monolingual culture of White middle class students. From this culturally shaped angle, that is closely tied to this notion of subtractive learning, Valenzuela (1999) has construed the idea of “subtractive schooling,” which in the case of Mexican American students – whether they are ESL or not – she defines as a “schooling process” whereby the school becomes an “instrument of cultural de-identification, or de-Mexicanization” (p. 161). For Valenzuela

(1999), the implicit and explicit message of the school curriculum is clear: “Spanish is a second-rate language and that the goals of bilingualism and biculturalism are neither worthwhile nor expedient” (pp. 162-163). In short, using a perspective that is congruent with a CRT framework, Valenzuela’s idea of “subtractive schooling” boils down to the structuring of school practices around the implicit and explicit understanding that school “is designed to divest youth of their Mexican identities and to impede the prospects for fully vested bilingualism and biculturalism” (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 172).

### **Latino ESL Students and Broad Culture Conceptualizations in the Heritage Language Field of Multicultural Education in the United States**

This section will convey a succinct review of some of the scholarly literature connected with how culture has been broadly conceptualized for ESL and LEP students in the multicultural education area of heritage language education at the secondary school level. If one employs a CRT lens when reviewing this literature, many conceptualizations of culture in the field of heritage language education can be largely framed in response to a racialized social struggle, filled with educational and political implications. Scholars in the field of heritage language education are generally engaged, whether explicitly or implicitly, in contesting the stigmatized enterprise of teaching devalued heritage languages and heritage language cultures to devalued heritage language learners. At the same time, many of these teachers of heritage languages are also attempting to affirm the potential benefits of such an education for minority language students. With those issues in mind, this brief review of the scholarly literature will focus on conceptualizations of culture at two levels – namely, at the level of society at large and at the secondary school level.

Crawford (1996) historically traces the evolution of America’s impulse to culturally subordinate, devalue or erase linguistic minorities throughout many American venues: Ben Franklin’s fear that German immigrants “will never adopt our Language or Custom,” (p. 7); Congress’ insistence on a Louisiana state constitution which insured that “all laws and official record be published in the language in which the Constitution of the United States is written” (p. 8); the promotion of “English-only” schooling for Americans under the jurisdiction of the Indian Peace Commission of 1868 (p. 9); the 1880s enactment of “English only instruction laws for public and parochial schools” in both Wisconsin and Illinois (p. 14); the monopolization of English language education in the Hawaii of 1896 (p. 13); and the widespread passage, after World War I, of English-only education laws in more than fourteen states, which culminated in Congress’ approval of “the strictest immigration quotas in U.S. history, which limited the entry of non-English speaking Europeans – Italians, Poles, Jews, Greeks – and totally excluded Asians (and Africans)” (p. 15).

In more recent years, with the advent of the contemporary English Only movement, anchored on a vision of social stratification for speakers of non-English languages in the United States, coupled with the appearance of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 – with its emphasis on the acquisition of literacy in accordance to normative standards of English monolingualism – the heritage language movement has emerged, and, with it, a variety of ideas on culture have been used to both problematize the challenges of heritage language education and to assist in its positive possibilities. In



taking into account students with varying degrees of proficiency in the oral and written domains of the Spanish language, I will define the heritage language learner by deploying Valdes' (2000) definition of such a learner: "a student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken by one who speaks or merely understands the heritage language, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language" (p. 1). I will also take into consideration how Fishman (2001) reminds us that heritage languages are those that "have a particular family relevance to the learner" (p. 1).

Although twenty percent of adolescents in the United States are Hispanics, and over forty percent of Hispanic students – from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade – actually participate in a Spanish language cultural upbringing (Potowski and Carreira, 2004), only nine percent of middle schools and high schools offer Spanish for native speakers (SNS) classes (p. 429), even when "the teenage and early adulthood years of minority youth are marked by a pursuit of their ethnic and linguistic roots" (p. 428). Such institutional negligence toward the cultural needs of Latino/a heritage language learners stems not only from the cultural prejudice implied in treating non-English languages of instruction "as obstacles to the academic success of these students" (Carreira, 2007, p. 152), but also to what Ricento (2005) argues is the cultural tendency of equating English monolingualism with a White American identity, an identity in which instruction in English is seen as the exemplary "instrument for citizenship ideology" socialization (p. 364).

Beyond the ingrained beliefs that identify English monolingualism with a normative American identity, plus the "common sense" perception that the academic cultivation of Spanish by native Spanish speakers academically interferes with the foundations of academic knowledge on which educational achievement is built, there is also the negative stereotype that the Latino heritage language student must directly confront. Simply put, this student is often viewed as a low achieving, somewhat un-American, remedial student. Thus, the use of heritage languages, such as Spanish, is culturally marginalized, both by heritage language speakers and by non-heritage language speakers, because these languages are culturally stigmatized in the larger monolingual English-speaking American society. In fact, Fishman (2001) believes that in the United States "Spanish is widely viewed as the dialectally splintered and socially stigmatized language of lower-class illiterates" (p. 11). Within this macro context of cultural stigmatization, where Latina/o speakers of Spanish are racialized as culturally primitive "others," Schreffler (2007) observes that "many heritage Spanish-speaking students are reluctant to participate in programs specifically dedicated to 'native speakers' because they have come to internalize the discriminatory attitudes of non-Hispanic and even some Hispanic educators towards their heritage language variety" (p. 33).

When one migrates from cultural conceptualizations of heritage language instruction at the societal level, to cultural conceptualizations of heritage languages at the school level, important challenges arise. Hence, it is important to briefly touch upon some of the more difficult cultural developments that the academic literature suggests has negatively impacted the trajectory of Latino heritage language instruction in the United States.

In reviewing some of the literature on the suppression of the Spanish language in English medium schools, MacGregor-Mendoza (2000) acknowledges how "many schools espoused (formally or informally) 'No Spanish Rules' in which the use of Spanish in

classrooms, at lunchtimes, and on the playgrounds was strictly prohibited” (p. 356). What’s more, MacGregor-Mendoza’s (2000) own ethnographic work confirms the widespread use of “punishment” – ranging emotional to physical – directed at heritage language students who dared to use Spanish in public school grounds. In fact, after historically reviewing the literature on “Spanish as a social problem” in American schools, Hurtado and Rodriguez (1989) find that in their ethnographic study 43 percent of their Mexican American students “responded that the school personnel disapproved of Spanish when they attended elementary and secondary school” (p. 407). Consequently, it is this ongoing cultural legacy of linguistic repression, partially arising out of a cultural fear of primitive “others,” that teachers of heritage language students must overcome in their classrooms.

So within the culturally repressive environments of some of today’s secondary schools, school cultures often render invisible the language and the cultural needs of Latino heritage language students, obstructing the pedagogical processes that could make possible the availability of a genuine multicultural education to many Latino heritage language students. Potowski and Carreira (2004) give us a taste of how many school cultures in our nation’s schools should change in order to accommodate the cultural, if not the academic, needs of many of its Latino heritage language pupils: “to date, there is no SNS (Spanish for Native Speakers) methods textbook and there are no standards for SNS teacher preparation, no state-sponsored certification of SNS teachers, and no national language standards for heritage language speakers of Spanish” (p. 427). These cultural mismatches mean that language programs, particularly Spanish ones, could potentially become more culturally responsive to the cultural and educational needs of heritage language learners. The area of language education could gravitate beyond language programs that serve mostly the educational needs of White, middle class, monolingual students. Instead, renewed efforts could be made to put together heritage language programs and curriculums that “reflect,” however imperfectly, the cultural backgrounds of Latino heritage language learners (Benjamin, 1997; Faltis, 1990).

In the meantime, instituting heritage language classes at the secondary school level will certainly help create a school culture that would assist many Latino/a heritage language students engage in a multiplicity of tasks: to culturally decolonize their minds, to creatively marry their home culture with their school’s culture, to unashamedly gain a deeper understanding of their linguistic/cultural background, to become more highly educated citizens. In fact, Carreira (2007) underlines how the fostering of literacy in a student’s cultural heritage language generates the kind of “sense of identity and connectedness” with home languages that has been linked to “academic success” (p. 159). In helping to break down the cultural stigmatization of Latino/a heritage language use throughout the various layers of American society, these courses should contribute to public reflection on the value of cultural diversity. The development of Latino/a heritage language programs for secondary school students might even, perhaps eventually, play a contributing role in eliminating NCLB (No Child Left Behind Act) “provisions which demand that ‘limited English proficient’ students learn English as quickly as possible,” for those provisions “discourage schools from offering heritage language programs” (Wright, 2007, p. 3).

## Conclusion

When seen globally, a CRT prism suggests that the viability, if not the survival, of both bilingual education and heritage language education will hinge, in part, on whether or not secondary schools will be structured in a manner that will allow ESL/LEP students to employ their linguistic/ethnic backgrounds as if they were cultural tools that could be considered academic assets rather than erasable liabilities. Indeed, today's educational institutions function in ways that permit middle class English monolinguals to convert their sociocultural practices into mediating structures for the acquisition of academic knowledge. Therefore, if only out of educational fairness, can these schools be socioculturally *diversified* to allow Latino ESL/LEP students to use their sociocultural backgrounds to acquire highly valued academic knowledge that may be comparable, though not identical, to the academic knowledge acquired by middle class English monolinguals?

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## About the Author

I am a doctoral candidate in the Curriculum & Instruction Department at UW-Madison, specializing in multicultural education. As a bilingual teacher, one who has taught English at the secondary school level and Spanish at the college level, I am currently working on a project that explores how Latino ESL students are socially constructed. I am particularly interested in examining how ESL students are culturally stigmatized in educational institutions.

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# **Language in Education: English Immersion vs. Bilingual Education Programs**

Holly Morton

## **Abstract:**

My service learning experience as a tutor with Latino students introduces the controversy between English immersion and bilingual education programs. English immersion proponents believe that language learners need the maximum amount of exposure to the language they are trying to learn, while bilingual education proponents believe that students benefit most when they can continue to develop cognitively in their native language, while simultaneously learning their new language. I describe issues of theory and practice for these two programs, potential consequences, as well as a new school of thought which argues that disparities in education result from other disparities in society.

## **Introduction**

Akira Toki Middle School is a public middle school for grades six through eight, located on Madison's southwest side; an area well known among Madison residents for its racial / ethnic minority population. Demographic data affirms this, indicating that with each year, Black and Latino enrollment at Toki is increasing, while White enrollment is decreasing. According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's 2008 census, 12 percent of students at Toki are Latino, 30.5 percent are Black, and 48.5 are White (2008b). Though they comprise a smaller portion of Toki's student body, Latino student enrollment is growing at an incredible rate; 140 percent since the year 2000. This reflects a national pattern as Latinos have become the largest minority group in the United States. According to the U.S Census Bureau, from the year 2000 to 2006, Latinos accounted for half of the United State's population growth (2006a). The growth rate of Latinos for all of Wisconsin was 32.7, compared to 6.1 percent for the entire population of the United States. Much of this growth rate can be attributed to international migration from many different countries, but the majority of Latinos are of Mexican origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). One complicating factor of this social phenomenon is language proficiency. Recent data indicates that within the Madison Metropolitan School District alone, English Language Learners (ELLs) number 2,338 (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2008a). While the number of Latino students who are not proficient in English decreases as students get older, there are still 434 ELLs within grades nine through 12 alone, and almost double that number, 853 students, in grades four to eight. As language is the primary tool for education, these statistics demonstrate the urgency of addressing the issue of language spoken within the United State's public education system.

## **Volunteer Role**

In my time as a volunteer tutor with Latino students at Toki, I have witnessed the discouraging consequences of English language learners being placed into exclusively English-speaking classrooms. At Toki, I worked in a study hall for eighth grade bilingual students who are exempt from the language requirement because of their fluency in Spanish. I assisted students with their homework from a variety of subject areas. Unfortunately, many of these students are struggling in their classes to understand the assignments and the class concepts. As a tutor, I typically worked with students to help them learn the class material. On occasion, I attended a class with a student to assist them directly while in their classroom. There are a number of students who could benefit from this one-on-one attention; especially those who have more recently immigrated and would find a personal translator helpful. Unfortunately, the school does not provide such services, and there are not enough volunteer tutors.

## **Disparity in Education**

Many of the students whose first language is Spanish perform poorly in their exclusively English-speaking classes. In working with these students, I have seen how this is an inaccurate reflection of their true capabilities, and is instead a reflection of a culturally biased system of education. When students enroll at Toki, they are placed in their grade according to their age and regardless of the language that they speak. The Spanish-speaking students are immersed into English-speaking classrooms, and struggle to understand what is being taught. While an education should be a source of empowerment for an individual; instead, school is a source of pressure and feelings of inadequacy for these students. Stevenson et al., describes how feelings of failure among students lowers their self esteem and may discourage them from making attempts in their school work (1990). This therefore becomes a self-perpetuating cycle of a lack of understanding followed by poor academic performance, resulting in a loss of motivation thus preventing improved comprehension. Statewide testing in 2006 demonstrated a disparity in learning between native English speakers and ELLs. Sixteen percent of 8<sup>th</sup> grade ELLs scored in the lowest bracket of ability, compared to only five percent of English-proficient students (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2006b). Similarly, while 46 percent of English-proficient students scored in the highest bracket, only nine percent of LEP students tested at this level.

This disparity reflects a system of education where policies and programs do not support the bicultural development of Latino students. They are disadvantaged academically and subsequently economically in comparison to their white English-speaking counterparts (Lapayese, 2007; Aguilera, 2003). The current system of education therefore exacerbates racial / ethnic inequalities (Auerbach, 1993), taking the form of institutionalized racism as described by Andersen and Collins. As such, racism is built into the very structure of our society and therefore goes unnoticed (2007). However, research and data are consistently revealing a wide achievement gap that is undeniable. Educational policies and programs clearly need to support ELLs in order to create a more equitable system. Scholars debate as to which type of educational program



is most effective in equipping ELLs with the skills necessary for advancement in United States' society.

### **English Immersion vs. Bilingual Education**

Proponents of English immersion believe that students need as much exposure to English as possible, and should therefore not be taught in their native language (Cummins, 1986). Bilingual education supporters believe that students should continue learning core subjects in their native language while also learning English. Structuring language learning in this way allows students to remain on track academically, and to develop their native language skills as well as their English proficiency (Ochoa and Cadiero-Kaplan, 2004).

This debate has been fueled by California's passage of Proposition 227 in 1998. The law requires that schools abandon bilingual education initiatives and implement English immersion programs for language learners throughout the state. This program places students in a brief transition period upon their initial enrollment. Their classroom uses a modified core subjects curriculum in English. They are not to remain in this transition stage for more than one year before they are placed into mainstream English-language classrooms. The primary goals are to provide early literacy development for students, then integrate them into mainstream English classes as quickly as possible (Porter, 2000). Opponents of English immersion claim that such efforts seek to assimilate non-native English speakers without fostering their cognitive development (Garcia, 2001). Simply put, if students are taught in English, yet do not understand that language, they will not learn what is being taught. As a result, students are exposed to significantly less academic content than their English-speaking peers. Even once ELLs have developed English suitable for conversation, academic learning and critical thinking skills are of a more elevated level, requiring many more years of English language development. Research reveals that it takes five to seven years to achieve full proficiency (Krashan, 1994). Bilingual education supporters charge that despite these research findings, the goal of English immersion is to have students speaking English immediately. They argue that instead, bilingual education provides development of ELLs' academic abilities, native language skills, as well as English proficiency. English immersion proponents refute this claim, saying that use of the native language significantly hinders the English learning process (K. Baker, 1998). They believe that the degree to which students are able to learn the English language is dependent upon how much time they spend around English. While time is an important factor, there are other variables to consider. Cummins, a bilingual education supporter, believes that time spent in the students' native language will not hinder their English language learning ability. In his article, he discusses the "interdependence principle" which acknowledges that academic skills are transferred between languages if students are motivated and exposed enough to the second language (1986).

The debate continues beyond theory and into issues of practical implementation. The case of California provides lessons from which English immersion programs can learn. The American Institute for Research was contracted to conduct a five year evaluation of Proposition 227. In their report, they identify three barriers to implementation: First, there was a lack of time and guidance for establishing regulation

of the law; second, there is a lack of clarity in what the law requires and allows for; and third, there has been confusion over operational definitions for instructional approaches in the English Immersion programs (Merickel, et al., 2006). Ochoa and Cadiero-Kaplan made similar observations in their assessment of various language programs, including those of bilingual education (2004). They called for more frequent and thorough meetings and trainings amongst faculty to ensure clarity and knowledge of the language programs' principles, processes, and strategies. Specific to those schools with bilingual education programs, they found that all lacked Spanish curriculum and resources that met the basic college entrance requirements. Teachers should have access to better resources, and Spanish books should be available to students in their school library. Lack of Spanish resources is also a complaint for many who have undergone the switch to English immersion in California. Due to the English-only rule, students are not able to clarify class concepts in their native language (Merickel, et al.). Lastly, both English immersion and bilingual education programs are lacking in parent involvement. There is a need for training of Latino families to familiarize them with the education system and to show them how they can help monitor the academic success of their children (Ochoa and Cadiero-Kaplan).

Though many hindrances to implementation cross boundaries between language programs, one major point of contention concerns teachers. K. Baker (1998) describes that with English immersion programs, having only monolingual teachers is acceptable, and will not be a hindrance to the instruction of ELLs. Conversely, bilingual education requires bilingual teachers which are in short supply; even in California, the state with the largest Latino population. (Crawford, 1997; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2006a). An important argument toward this accusation is that bilingual education initiatives give rise to well educated and certified bilingual teachers, significantly filling in the student - instructor language gap with time (Crawford, 1997). Additionally, English immersion programs may not require bilingual teachers, but because ELLs are learning English from their teachers, these educators must be excellent models of the English language and speak at a level suitable for ELLs' acquisition (Baker, 1998). This may be difficult to monitor, as well as have negative consequences on the quality of education given to the students. Lapayese (2007) interviewed educators who testified that teaching in English at the comprehension level of the ELLs forced them to "dumb down" the curriculum, despite these students' ability to do more excelled work in Spanish. Consequently, even if ELLs have become English-proficient in the end, they have received a poor general education, reinforcing the racial disparity in education, the economy, and throughout the whole of society.

### **The Political Root**

The debate and theory surrounding English language learning often comes back full circle to the racial divide, drawing the attention of many scholars. Those seeking to get at the true root of the issue argue that it is a war of power and politics, not motivated by benign desires for student well-being and a good education for all. Supporters of English immersion education programs generally view the increasing prevalence of the Spanish language as a threat to the national unity of the United States (Bartolomé and Leistyna, 2005). Cummins, a bilingual education advocate, counters that such a belief is ironic

because of the outright segregation of Mexican American students in the Southwest to entirely different schools as late as the end of the 1960s (1986). Bilingual education proponents view the English-only movement as encroaching on the civil and human rights of non-native English speakers based on the aforementioned consequences of this movement, and the inherent value of every language and culture. They utilize rhetoric such as “disempowerment” and “domination” of language minority groups, making a parallel between today’s struggle for language minorities and historic colonialism (Cummins, 1986; Bartolomé and Leistyna, 2005). The similarity is rooted in restricted freedom for members of the minority group because of their subordination to the dominate group. This is manifested in multiple ways throughout society. Specific to language, scholars believe that language minorities’ struggle to learn the dominant language is distinguished as being a more difficult process than a member of the dominate group acquiring another language. The rhetoric used by English immersion supporters reflects ideas that are in stark opposition to these beliefs of oppression. The U.S. English Foundation, Inc. frequently utilizes language that elicits ideas of the United States being the “Land of opportunity” where citizens can have the “American dream” (2005). They view English acquisition as the necessary means for achieving this dream. Contrastingly, bilingual education proponents back their argument with research that indicates that biliteracy is associated with advancement (Aguilera & Massey, 2003). Lastly, interlaced throughout C. Baker’s (2001) analysis of the language education debate is the broader debate of multiculturalism and pluralism versus assimilation and integration. Advocates of multiculturalism find value in keeping the various cultures distinctly represented in the United States. Assimilationists believe that immigrants should be integrated into the dominate culture. No matter their position, both sides acknowledge that the direction that language education takes will determine the social and cultural future of American society as a whole.

Despite the ideological war that takes place in this debate, students should not be left behind. Both sides therefore encourage teachers to be advocates for their students. The position of educators of language learners is at the crux between theory and practice, allowing them to assume a direct role for empowerment of the students. As one component of empowerment, Skilton-Sylvester encourages classroom instructors to discourage the view that language is a problem and incorporate ways to promote the perspective of language being a resource (2003). This optimistic framework will penetrate the perspective that language learners have toward their education, enabling them to engage their education with greater commitment and hope. One caution with this recommendation is that teachers should not avoid heated debates outside of the classroom. Instead, they are encouraged to take a stance in the interest of their students, and become politically active. Teachers are continually interacting with ELLs directly, and their presence in the political realm could serve to uphold the human dimension of this deeply ideological debate. I believe that classroom assistants and tutors have a similar role in this contentious debate. My time as a tutor with Latino students has aligned my perspective to the true stakes of this issue: the future of these children. ELLs deserve an education that will equip them for advancement, rather than disadvantage them.

## **Beyond Education to Social Justice**

No matter which education program is in place, ELLs face a difficult task: they must learn the content of their core subjects, as well as the English language. Both proponents of English immersion and bilingual education agree on this point; they differ, however, as to how this is most effectively realized (K. Baker, 1998; Cummins, 1986). English immersion supporters highlight the importance of the amount of time that students are exposed to English, viewing use of their native language as a hindrance to this process. Bilingual education supporters seek to keep ELLs on par with their English-speaking counterparts through education of core subjects in their native language in addition to English classes, simultaneously allowing for development of their Spanish and English skills.

While the debate between these two positions continues with vigor, a perspective independent of either side argues that greater attention should be given to poverty as a strong determinant of student success. In their evaluation of the effects of Proposition 227 in California, Parrish et al. (2006) found that nearly 50 percent of California's English learners live below the poverty line, and a startling 75 percent of language minorities live in lower income urban areas. The strong correlation between poverty and academic underperformance demonstrates that an equitable education for language minorities can only be realized as justice and equality is affected in all aspects of society. Despite the importance of language policy, education advocates and policy makers may have to look beyond education policy to social policy for lasting change.

### **About the Author**

I am an undergraduate student in the School of Social Work with a special interest in working with Latino communities. I believe that especially families who have recently immigrated are confronted with a myriad of stressors and oppressions. I hope to help these families and the efforts to confront injustice in our society.

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## **Increasing Latin@ Representation on Campus**

Natalie Fraser

### **Abstract**

Although the population of Latin@s across the country is on the rise, the University of Wisconsin Madison has not had a parallel rise in minority representation on campus. By setting up a reciprocity agreement with states that have higher Latin@ populations, the university can attract academically-qualified students who might not otherwise be able to afford UW tuition. By extending in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants, those immigrants will no longer be denied post-secondary education because of soaring costs. Increased diversity and cultural understanding is important to the success of the university and to the future of this country.

### **A Way to Increase Latin@ Representation on Campus**

Across the country, the Latin@ population is rapidly increasing due to immigration and high birth rates. As more Latin@s reach the university level of education, it is logical to assume that the representation of Latin@ students on the UW-Madison campus will increase proportionally to the rise in population. Although Latin@ representation on campus has risen, it is far from the level it should be. Two possible solutions may help to increase the number of Latin@ students on campus: 1) a reciprocity agreement with a state that has a large population of Latin@s and 2) the provision for undocumented immigrants in Wisconsin to pay in-state tuition. Diversity on campus is vital to increasing the overall success of the students on campus and their cultural understanding. Additionally, higher education for Latin@s will allow them to economically advance their families as they are eligible for higher paying jobs.

Over the past two decades, the United States has seen a large influx in the population of Latin@ citizens. According to the 2000 Census, "the Hispanic population has grown by nearly 60 percent since 1990" ("The Road," 2002, p. 11). This is, of course, an average for the entire country; some states had over two hundred percent growth while others had much less. In recognition of this phenomenal growth, the President's Advisory Commission on Education Excellence for Hispanic Americans was formed. Their interim report, published in 2002, claims that "Hispanic Americans have replaced African Americans as the largest minority group in the U.S." ("The Road," p. 12). Table 1.1 Population by Sex, Age, Hispanic Origin, and Race: 2006, provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, determined that there are approximately 43,168,000 Hispanics in the United States, compared to 54,774,000 other minorities and 195,893,000 non-Hispanic whites ("The Hispanic," 2007, p. 1). Based on these numbers, Latin@s make up about 14.7 percent of Americans, and minorities in general account for approximately 33 percent of Americans. This percentage is higher when the undocumented Latin@s in the country are taken into account. It is quite evident that Latin@s are becoming a dominant force in this country and it is therefore important to understand how they, the future of our country, are impacted by higher education.

Included in the top ten states that were found by the report to house over eighty percent of Latin@s are California, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. In fact, of these ten states, only three – Illinois, New Jersey, and New York – are not southern or southwestern states (“The Road,” 2002, p. 11). The report yielded interesting results in its analysis of the states with the highest rate of Hispanic growth. Minnesota was identified as the state with the 9<sup>th</sup> highest rate of Hispanic population growth, with 166% growth since the previous census (“The Road,” 2002, p. 12). When taken into account Minnesota’s reciprocity agreement with Wisconsin, this is significant.

It seems reasonable to assume that if Latin@s make up 14.7 percent of Americans, then they should also represent approximately the same percentage of the students at the University of Wisconsin – Madison campus. According to a summary article by John Lucas that was published on the University website, 14 percent of this year’s freshmen class is composed of students of color (Lucas, 2007, p. 1). At first, this seems acceptable. Students of color make up 14 percent of the class, and Latin@s make up 14.7 percent of Americans. However, this percentage represents *all* students of color rather than just Latin@s. A chart provided by the University titled “By Ethnicity (Fall 2006)” suggests that there were 1,257 Hispanics on campus in 2006, roughly 3 percent of all students (“Community,” 2006, p. 1). Looking again at the 2000 Census numbers, minorities constitute 33 percent of Americans. It is obvious that not only Latin@s, but in fact, all minorities, are underrepresented on the UW campus. This problem plagues schools across the country, but there are some universities where Latin@ and minority representation is not a problem. For example, at the University of New Mexico in 2004 “minority students [made] up just over half of the new freshmen” (“A First,” 2004, p. 1). Of course, it was mentioned earlier that New Mexico is one of the top ten states in terms of its population of Latin@s. If the University of New Mexico is able to maintain a racially and culturally diverse campus, then the University of Wisconsin, as a leading national university with a stated diversity mission, ought to work towards the same goal.

Other major factors that work against Latin@ students who may otherwise be eligible to attend UW-Madison are economics and immigration status. In their article “Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Hispanic Students,” Esther Devall, Ann Vail, and Jeanne Resendez (2005) report that “Hispanics are disproportionately raised in poor families” (p. 51). Latin@ students from poor families who desire to attend post-secondary education are faced with two options: choose a school in their home state and pay low in-state tuition or apply to an out-of-state school and pay double or even triple the costs of attending college near home. Even in-state costs can pose problems for these students. Shilpa Banerji’s (2004) “Report: Higher Education Fiscal Crisis Hardest on Hispanic, Low-Income Students” quotes a source suggesting that “For every \$1,000 increase in annual tuition, 6 to 8 percent of the Hispanic population loses access to higher education” (p. 10). At the same time as the population of Latin@s in the country increases the cost for tuition increases as well, making it harder for Latin@s to attend post-secondary education. This is coupled with the fact that many Hispanics feel “less comfortable about borrowing large sums of money for college” (Devall, Vail, and Resendez, 2005, p. 51). Lacking the necessary funds to pay for their education out-of-state and not feeling comfortable borrowing money, these students most likely stay in their home states for college and often enter community colleges.



Besides Latin@ students' problems, UW-Madison faces problems of its own regarding fair ethnic representation on campus. According to John Lucas' 2007 article, the top seven states that the University's students come from are Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, New York, California, New Jersey, and Massachusetts (p. 1). Of these states, Illinois, California, New York, and New Jersey also appear in the top ten states ranked by number of Latin@s. With so many students coming from these states, it would seem that more Latin@ students could be attending UW-Madison. However, it is quite likely that the cost of out-of-state tuition for these students is a major impediment to their attending the University. Due to the reciprocity agreement that allows Minnesota residents to pay tuition costs near the in-state tuition Wisconsin residents pay, it is likely that Wisconsin schools will see an increase in Latin@ students coming from Minnesota, where there has been a significant increase in the Latin@ population.

The selectivity of UW-Madison in admitting students also hinders equal representation on campus. According to Carlos Reyes, Assistant Director of Admissions at UW-Madison, the University works to find candidates of all backgrounds, but the pool of eligible candidates coming from Latin@ families is not as prevalent as it might be. The University cannot lower its established academic standards simply to increase diversity on campus. Additionally, Reyes suggests that there are many highly eligible students who cannot afford tuition and the University does not have enough funding to provide full scholarships to all of these students. Thus, for Madison to remain selective and because of the financial conditions of many strongly qualified students, fewer Latin@ students are able to attend the university.

There are, of course, ways around the high out-of-state tuition costs. For example, according to Divya Watal's article, "Think Globally, Pay Locally; Pacts Allow Out-of-State Study at In-State Prices," "The Academic Common Market is a reciprocity agreement among 16 southern states that allows undergraduate and graduate students to enroll at a university in another state while paying in-state tuition" (Watal, 2005, p. 55). Although this agreement is limited to majors that aren't available in a student's home state, the concept of the reciprocity agreement is important. It paves the way for students to attend colleges further from home at the same cost as colleges close to home. For example, the Midwest Student Exchange Program allows students in Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska and North Dakota to attend a university in any of those six states and pay no more than 150 percent of that state's in-state tuition (Watal, 2005, p. 55). Although this isn't as good as paying in-state tuition, the tuition reductions save students "\$2,900 a year on average" (Watal, 2005, p. 55). Unfortunately, not all universities are open to reciprocity agreements. David Longanecker, executive director of the Western Interstate Commission for High Education, stated: "Many big, prestigious universities, like the University of Colorado-Boulder, don't participate – they have no financial incentive" (as cited in Watal, 2005, p. 55). Although on the financial level larger institutions, including UW-Madison, have enough demand that they do not need to extend their discounts to out-of-state students, there are other factors that should convince these universities that reciprocities with other states are beneficial.

If UW-Madison was to create a reciprocity agreement with a state with a large population of Latin@s, it could bolster the University's ability to increase its diversity. The sufficient demand for entrance into UW-Madison by students from Wisconsin shouldn't deter the university from forming an in-state tuition agreement with another

state. After all, if UW-Madison were to receive the same estimated \$8,000 from a White student from Wisconsin as it would from a Latin@ student from New Mexico, would it truly matter which state the money came from? In this case, assuming the two students had more or less equivalent achievements, the student from New Mexico would add differently to the diversity of the campus than would the student from Wisconsin. Since many of UW-Madison's students already come from California, a reciprocity agreement with that state would essentially lower the total funds UW-Madison receives because those students are already paying out-of-state tuition. Therefore, a state such as New Mexico or Arizona would make a better choice for a reciprocity agreement. Not only would the number of Latin@s able to afford tuition to UW-Madison increase, but such an agreement would also provide for an increase in cultural awareness between the state chosen and Wisconsin. It is likely that forming a reciprocity agreement cannot simply occur between UW-Madison and another state, but rather must occur between Wisconsin and another state. The proximity of this campus to the Capitol will allow for UW-Madison to take leadership in the push for another reciprocity agreement. In doing so, the state can increase the overall diversity on all of its campuses by providing the financial means for Latin@ students from low-income families out of the state to attend a Wisconsin university.

There is a second and seemingly easier way for Wisconsin to increase the number of Latin@ students attending its universities. Already, undocumented immigrants attend and graduate from Wisconsin high schools. If these Latin@s have resided in the state and attended Wisconsin high schools, there is little reason to deny them the same opportunities extended to other students who live in Wisconsin and go to Wisconsin high schools. It is only fair that undocumented immigrants who have lived (and most likely worked) in Wisconsin should receive the same in-state tuition discounts as other Wisconsin high school graduates. By rightfully extending this discounted tuition rate to undocumented immigrants, tuition will be much more affordable and they will have the ability to receive post-secondary education. This education will allow them access to higher paying jobs so that they can not only benefit our communities with their skilled labor but also lead their families out of poverty. Thus, not only would allowing undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition increase the diversity on campus through higher Latin@ representation, but it would also provide more workers with the skills needed to take their place in higher level jobs in our economy.

Unfortunately, Carlos Reyes, Assistant Director of Admissions at UW-Madison, brings up a valid point making this possibility difficult. A couple of years ago, he recalled that the Governor was ready to sign a bill that would provide undocumented immigrants access to Wisconsin universities with in-state tuition, but the provision was dropped. According to Jason Smathers' 2007 article "Salas resignation bold, yet justified", this past October, Governor Doyle signed a state budget that again considered but ultimately omitted this student provision. In opposition, UW System Regent Jesus Salas immediately resigned from his post, stating that he did not support "a day of mourning for the future of our children who, through no fault of their own, continue to be denied access to the UW-System" (Smathers, p. 1). Although Salas' comments are noteworthy, there is, Reyes points out, more to the issue than simply giving these students a discount. Many undocumented workers do not have the financial means, even at the low in-state cost, to put up the money upfront to attend UW-Madison. Since they are undocumented,

these students are denied by the state all scholarships, even those that are merit-based. Thus, Reyes says, even if undocumented immigrants could pay in-state tuition most would still not be able to afford it. It would be necessary for the state to reanalyze its standpoint on undocumented immigrants and scholarships before it allowed such students access to in-state tuition; otherwise, this access would have very little significance on the number of Latin@s able to attend UW-Madison.

The horizon looks bleak if no action is taken to increase Latin@ representation on campus. The Interim Report of the President's Advisory Committee forecasts that by 2030, over 70 percent of students in Texas will be either Latin@ or part of another current minority group. The report suggests that "unless college graduation rates for Hispanic students increase, it is estimated that the average Texas household in 2030 will be \$4,000 poorer (in 1990 dollars) than it was in 1990, resulting in a nearly 3 percent increase in the poverty rate" ("The Road...", 2002, p. 16). While this projection focuses on Texas, it is certain that with increasing numbers of Latin@s across the country, other states, including Wisconsin, will see similar effects on the poverty rate if the current percentage of Latin@ representation at the university level is allowed to continue. As tuition costs rise, fewer low-income students are able to gain higher education. According to Shilpa Banerji (2004), on a larger scale the economy will be "denied thousands of much needed, qualified workers for emerging industries" (p. 10). Not only will these Latin@ workers remain in poverty because they do not have the higher education needed to secure high paying jobs, but the economy itself will take a plunge as their potential skills are never developed.

In the long term, the effects of increasing Latin@ representation on campus will benefit not only the UW campus, but also the well-being of the United States in general. Increasing Latin@ representation will result in increased cultural awareness as students are exposed to a greater number of students that differ from them culturally and racially. The higher levels of education for Latin@ students in the long run will lead those students to jobs with higher salaries so that they can begin the process of leading Latin@s out of poverty. As a leading and world-class university, UW-Madison's role in increasing diversity will hopefully encourage other universities to take similar actions so that the benefits of cultural awareness are seen on a nation-wide level.

### **About the Author**

Natalie Fraser is a junior pursuing an Integrated Masters of Accountancy major with a graduation date of May 2011. Outside of classes, Natalie continues to operate an online retail business she started in 2000. Her store, Frosty's Collectibles ([www.FrostysCollectibles.com](http://www.FrostysCollectibles.com)) offers one of the largest varieties of novelty cake pans and baking supplies available on the web. Post graduation, Natalie plans to work in public accounting and hopes to become a partner in a regional firm.

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## **Section Two: Topics in Latin@ Immigration**

Section two contains three pieces dealing with topics in Latin@ immigration. In “Immigrant Detention Centers: Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network,” Kathryn Finley gives a brief overview on the historical and political context of Mexican migration to the U.S. and immigration policies of the U.S. She examines the importance of enhancing immigrant legal representation with a focus on the work being carried out by the Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network in Denver.

Through an examination of the U.S. citizenship process for immigrants, Jessica Derenne in “Immigration Integration: The Challenge of Becoming a U.S. Citizen,” weighs in her knowledge of Wisconsin immigration and refugee services and offers arguments of what might be done to improve services provided to these populations. She presents a critique of the mix of sociopolitical, economic, legal, and cultural factors currently pressing against and obstructing the opportunities for migrants to become U.S. citizens.

In “Health Challenges Facing Latinos in the United States and Multi-Level Social Work Interventions,” Sara Schroeder provides an overview of what is known about deteriorative changes in Latin@ Health over time in the U.S., a discussion of the range of explanations for this phenomena as well as her own reflections on social work strategies that could improve Latin@ health in the U.S.

## Immigrant Detention Centers: Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network

Kathryn Finley

*“No free man should be imprisoned, dispossessed, outlawed, or exiled save by the judgment of his peers or by the law of the land.”*  
(*Shaughnessy v. United States ex rel Mezei* 345 US 206 (1953))

The Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved on December 10, 1948, affirmed the basic principle that human beings shall enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination, including the due process of law, or a course of legal proceedings established to protect individual rights and liberties. In the Fourteenth Amendment, the U.S. Constitution states that “no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without legal protection in the form of being present at a hearing, having the opportunity to be heard, and having the opportunity to present evidence.” U.S. law therefore requires that individuals in criminal proceedings are provided an attorney. In most cases, a defendant uses a public defender that the state government provides.

However, when it comes to immigrant deportation hearings, which are considered *civil* suits, the government does not legally have to provide individuals facing deportation representation in the courtroom. If they are able, these individuals represent themselves and present their own cases simply because they cannot afford an attorney. Many times, however, individuals go unrepresented because of poverty, language barriers, mental illness, and other factors that hinder their basic human right to due process.

In this manuscript, based upon original field research conducted during my undergraduate work at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I argue that U.S. immigration laws have grown stricter and more punitive, especially after 9/11. With unintended implications, countless individuals are caught in the legal web of our immigration system, raising many questions of human rights and the potential moral hazards of strict immigration control. Through a brief summary of the history of Mexican migration to the U.S., we will see how incredibly complex our current U.S. immigration system is and how many obstacles our country faces in finding a balance between strict immigration control and the protection of one's basic human rights. One of the dilemmas that punitive immigration laws create is the lack of representation in the court of law for individuals being held in immigrant detention centers. And in order to further understand these problems and complexities, we must first discuss a brief summary of the history of Mexican migration to the United States, specifically to Colorado. As author Juan Gonzalez (2000) states in *Harvest of Empire*:

It is sometimes difficult for white Americans to understand how deep the roots of Mexican Americans are in that part of the country. Most whites who live in the region, after all, only arrived there during the last fifty years. At best, their migration story goes back a few generations, hardly comparable to that of the old Mexicans. Farmworker leader Cesar Chavez's family, for instance, moved to Arizona in 1880, long before it was a state. The family owned land there until the

Great Depression bankrupted them and forced them to move to California as migrant laborers. (p. 107)

Colorado in particular has been and will continue to be a destination for Mexican citizens because of the state's history, a region that was once a part of Mexico. Notre Dame University Professor Juan Ramon Garcia explains that Colorado, in the minds of many, is *still* a part of Mexico (*The Colorado Springs Gazette*, 1999). Between 1900 and 1930, approximately 45,000 Mexican citizens came to Colorado. Recruited by immigration agencies, most of them came as immigrant laborers from Eagle Pass, Texas, lured to the area by higher wages. Others traveled north from New Mexico and many came as "undocumented" immigrants. They found work mainly in the sugar beet fields, railroads or stone quarries (Fort Collins Local History Archive, 2008).

In August 1942, a guest worker treaty, the Bracero Program, was introduced in the United States. Both the U.S. and Mexican governments reached an agreement to encourage Mexican braceros to enter the U.S. under contract. Colorado, in particular, made special efforts to induce Mexicans to come for beet seasons. Their agreement was that each year, several thousand braceros were brought into Colorado in the spring to work until after the harvest in the late fall, and then return to Mexico (Fort Collins Local History Archive, 2008).

However, following the end of WWII, braceros were not kindly regarded by domestic field laborers and the response by the U.S. government in 1954 was to launch Operation Wetback, in which nearly 4 million Mexican immigrants were deported back to Mexico (Becker, 2008). Since 1965, U.S. government has set out to discourage Mexican immigration by introducing the Immigration and Nationality Act which limited legal immigration to 120,000 immigrants per year from the Western hemisphere (Fort Collins Local History Archive, 2008). As former Governor of Colorado Richard D. Lamm said, "Just as a house needs a door, a nation needs a border."

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, border security has intensified and in the last few years, Congress has attempted to pass comprehensive immigration reform bills in both the House and Senate. The efforts ultimately stalled because Congress could not reach a consensus. House Republicans, such as Representative James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), demanded greater border security, including the construction of more fencing, while a broader bipartisan Senate reform bill, known as McCain-Kennedy, called for enhanced security along with a guest-worker program and a path toward citizenship (Becker, 2008).

There are continual demands for more effective border control, which has a tremendous impact on the individuals migrating to the U.S. without papers. Non-profit groups like Colorado Alliance for Immigration Reform (CAIR) are seriously concerned with America's rapid population growth and the devastating effects that growth will have on the future of Colorado and the nation (CAIR, 2008). Groups like CAIR believe that 'America is now full' and express concern over the doubling of the US population, as 70% of this doubling will be caused by mass immigration – roughly twice as many houses, cars, roads, prisons, hospitals, schools, water treatment facilities which will only result in twice as much pollution, sprawl, and pressure on our dwindling natural resources (CAIR, 2008). Even U.S. lawmakers, like the late U.S. Congresswoman, Barbara Jordan, believe that "people who should get in, get in; people who should not enter are kept out; and people who are deportable should be required to leave."

Yet stricter border control creates conflict for the many recently arrived Mexican immigrants who can usually point to long historical ties to the U.S., specifically in the Southwest (Gonzalez, 2000, p. 107). In a study of the old Mexican neighborhood of Lemon Grove in San Diego, for instance, ethnographer Robert Alvarez documents nearly two hundred years of a migratory circuit between Mexico's Baja California and California by the same extended families of miners and farmers. Family members would travel back and forth between the two territories in response to economic conditions. The two Californias, Alvarez maintains, have historically been one in geography, economics and culture. Only in the last fifty years did the border become a barrier to those ties (Alvarez, 1991).

Even within the Mexican-American community, individuals divide into two camps. One group empathizes with immigrants. This group is primarily working class, often made up of long-term Mexican residents of the US, sees the mirrors rather than the walls. They make the shared experience of discrimination primary in shaping their views of Mexican immigration. The other side, perhaps best exemplified by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), gives primacy to their identity as Americans (Gutierrez, 1996).

As we can see from the brief historical context, this issue is incredibly complex and there are many viewpoints and opinions to take into consideration when examining the issue of Mexican migration. As we shall now see through the discussion of immigrant detention centers, there are many obstacles in finding a balance between strict immigration control and the protection of one's basic human rights.

One of the dilemmas that punitive immigration laws create is the lack of representation in the court of law for individuals being held in immigrant detention centers. Scholar Daniel Wilsher explains that the detention of non-U.S. citizens pending either admission or expulsion is common practice in this country. Indeed, the U.S. has resorted to detention more frequently and for longer periods in recent years. This is, in part, a response to large numbers of migrants who fled persecution, economic ruin or natural disasters, particularly from Mexico and other areas of Latin America. Recent national security legislation has also promoted detention, such as the United States Patriot Act. Detention restricted the admission of detainees while the government processed their entrance applications (Wilsher, 897). Immigration legislation generally permits such administrative detention indefinitely, and in practice, non-U.S. citizens face lengthy periods of detention amounting to *several years*. This is the result of delays in the decision of whether to expel or refuse admission. Clearly such lengthy detention raises serious human rights concerns (Wilsher, 897).

Undoubtedly, within these immigrant detention centers, not enough legal representation exists for the individuals being held in these facilities. Due to insufficient funding, strict policies in state and federal law regarding immigration, and the lack of attorneys, the government often denies individuals due process of law. Additionally, the state deports many individuals back to their home countries, where they await poverty and dangerous situations that they initially ran away from in the first place.

Sadly, many children occupy these immigrant detention centers. The Department of Homeland Security border agents apprehend more than 113,000 children a year and under a 2002 law, unaccompanied children must be sent to facilities of the Department of Health and Human Services. According to federal records, 8,212 unaccompanied



children were held at these juvenile facilities in 2007, up from 5,000 in 2003 (*The Denver Post*, 2007).

The story of Santos Herrera depicts the hardships that these children face. When he turned 14, Herrera set out on his own from his Guatemalan mountain village for the United States. His relatives borrowed \$8,000 for smugglers and counted on him to send home at least \$400 a month to make payments. Herrera's expenses included "money so [his mother] can have an operation for her eyes. And ... money for [his] siblings so they can eat and go to school." Joined by other young Guatemalans of Mayan descent, Herrera rode buses through Mexico. Then, during a four-day desert trek across the U.S.-Mexico border, U.S. border agents nearly caught him, and he hid alone for two days, lost and terrified. But he made it to Colorado, where he earned \$5.50 an hour picking onions and up to \$7 at other jobs. After a short time, a Wyoming sheriff's deputy caught him driving without a license. (*The Denver Post*, 2007).

Attorney Kristin Petri explains that there are no children under the age of 18 held in immigration custody in Colorado. The Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention facility that holds up to 450 individuals at a time in Aurora, Colorado only has those 18 and over. The ICE is an agency of Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which does not have authority to detain undocumented unaccompanied minors. Due to flagrant abuses of children held in ICE or Customs & Border Patrol (CBP) custody in the past, the DHS transferred care and custody of these children to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), organized under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. ORR has detention "shelters" located primarily along the U.S.-Mexican border and in Miami, Chicago, and rural Indiana, where it holds proceedings of unaccompanied minors. These children may be deported or released to family "sponsors" throughout the country (personal communication, December 2, 2007). ICE has two "family" detention facilities that holds children accompanied by their parents during the child deportation proceedings. These facilities are in Hutto, Texas and Berks, Pennsylvania. In 2008, the media exposed the deplorable conditions of the Hutto center.

The National Center for Refugee & Immigrant Children's website states that each year, over 7,000 unaccompanied immigrant children arrive in the United States. Many flee domestic abuse, gang violence, human trafficking or poverty and some simply want to reunite with friends or family. The majority of these children go through immigration proceedings without meeting an attorney. Under the banner of "voluntary repatriation," border agents turn around between forty and fifty thousand children each year (USCRI, 2007). Furthermore, the *Denver Post* reports that about 15.3 percent of migrants seeking asylum protection in the U.S. are under 18, up from 14.8 percent in 2004 (*The Denver Post*, 2007).

To examine this issue further, we can look to a specific city - Denver, Colorado - in order to understand how immigration and immigration policy affects everyday people. The U.S. Census Bureau recently announced that the "mile-high city" of Denver, Colorado, has crossed a cultural threshold: sometime between 2005 and 2006, white non-Latino residents became a minority. Denver is the largest of eight counties nationwide to cross this line during that period, as 50.01 percent of the population of 566,974 is non-white (*The Denver Post*, 2007). Nearly half of Denver's public school students are Hispanic and many of them are believed to have arrived illegally from Mexico (Colorado Springs Gazette, 1999). The city is one of the main centers to the immigration reform

movement because many illegal immigrants reside in the city and county. This population shift emphasizes the urgency of addressing immigration, education and health insurance reform (*The Denver Post*, 2007).

One organization in the Denver area that is addressing the immigration issues that surround this quickly changing demographic group is the Rocky Mountain Immigrant Advocacy Network (RMIAN), a Colorado nonprofit corporation. The founding of RMIAN in 2000 reflected an expansion of the work begun in 1993 by the Pro Bono Committee of the Colorado Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. One executive director, Mekela Goehring, three attorneys, interns, a Director of Program Development, and several volunteer attorneys who accept pro bono cases, staff this 501(c) (3) federal tax-exempt organization. RMIAN also has a Board of Directors, who oversees many of the organization's operations (RMIAN, 2007).

RMIAN is a great example of an organization taking action against strict immigration legislation and policy. Located in Aurora, Colorado, RMIAN believes all people should be afforded due process and an understanding of their legal rights. The organization strives to provide legal services to the most vulnerable immigrant populations in Colorado: men and women in immigration detention centers, and abandoned or abused children throughout the state (RMIAN, 2007). Although the government provides public defenders and legal aid attorneys to indigent criminal defendants and civil litigants, individuals in deportation proceedings have no access to legal representation unless they have money to hire a private attorney. As a result, 85 percent of the people detained at the immigration detention facility in Aurora, Colorado go unrepresented, primarily due to poverty. This organization offers a know-your-rights presentation to every detained individual scheduled for a hearing before an immigration judge in the detention center. Furthermore, RMIAN trains and provides volunteer attorneys for individuals without the money for a private lawyer, and does not charge for any of its services (RMIAN, 2007).

As current RMIAN executive director, Mekela Goehring explains, RMIAN's referrals include cases of United States citizens erroneously detained by immigration authorities; survivors of domestic violence whose abusers refused to file immigration papers for them but who are eligible to remain in the U.S.; refugees and asylum-seekers who are fleeing persecution in their countries; and long-time lawful permanent residents who have committed minor crimes but are eligible for a one-time waiver of their deportation (personal communication, November 26, 2007). The majority of RMIAN's clients are from Mexico and parts of Central America. Because RMIAN cannot provide a free attorney for every immigrant, the organization also conducts self-help workshops at the detention center to help prepare individuals to represent themselves (RMIAN, 2007).

In 2006, RMIAN served over 2,500 men and women in immigration detention in Colorado from 67 different countries of origin. RMIAN's pro bono attorneys represented 68 people in that same year, and RMIAN staff provided direct representation to 24 men, women and children. As Executive Director Goehring states, "We measure our successes not only by the number of people served but also by the quality of its services and representation. We count it as a success each time a family is reunited, an individual leaves detention and gets a second chance at life in the United States, an asylum seeker is protected from persecution in his or her home country, a survivor of domestic violence

files the visa petition her abuser withheld from her, and an abandoned child earns his or her lawful permanent residence” (personal communication, November 26, 2007).

In September 2005, RMIAN initiated a Children’s Project to provide immigration-related legal services to non-citizen children in Colorado who have suffered from persecution, abuse, abandonment, family violence, forced labor, or violent crime. The Children’s Project works extensively with social services caseworkers, juvenile court officials, and local juvenile detention facilities to identify immigration relief and facilitate free legal representation for children. The children’s attorney also gives presentations at local schools to educate children about immigration laws and rights. In 2006, RMIAN’s Children’s Project provided additional legal assistance to 552 children and gave 61 legal information presentations to over 1,800 people.

Unfortunately, one obstacle the organization continually faces is the current anti-immigrant legislation in Colorado, which restricts the money that RMIAN receives in state funding. Therefore, some of the legal orientation programs, like the ‘Know Your Rights’ workshop, receive funds from the U.S. Department of Justice in order to increase efficiency in justice. And lastly, many RMIAN programs, like the Children’s Project, depend on funds from local foundations, individual donors, and an Equal Justice Works fellowship. Despite the many financial challenges RMIAN may face at times and the many complexities of strict immigration policy in Colorado, the organization has been successful in attaining its goals and managed to give 178 legal rights presentations to a total of 2,270 detained individuals from over 60 different countries in 2007. That same year, RMIAN referred out 81 detention and children's cases to volunteer attorneys.

Although organizations like RMIAN are not the most lucrative and demand a great deal of time, passion, and hard work, the payoff is truly rewarding. Even if just one individual receives the right to leave the Aurora detention center and a second chance at life in the United States, the organization’s efforts mattered to that one person. This organization is taking action against the moral hazards that strict immigration control can present, as it provides justice and legal representation for a segment of this world’s population that desperately needs it. Without passionate individuals and organizations like RMIAN, no one would ensure equal access to justice, individual rights and liberties.

As we have seen, the need for organizations like RMIAN is tremendous, given the incredibly strict immigration laws enacted in our country, both at a state and federal level. With unintended implications, these laws and policies are forcing countless individuals, including children, to be caught in a complex legal system, which oftentimes fails them. Abuses of civil and human rights are brought to light through these immigrant detention proceedings and demand further investigation. Clearly, our current immigration system needs reform and change, but not without careful consideration of the plethora of complexities included within it. Yet we must not continue to hurt the individuals that suffer most by our legal system, as they are not the direct target of our immigration laws, but the weakest segment of this vulnerable population.

### **About the Author**

Kathryn Finley has bachelor's degrees in Sociology and Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. During her undergraduate career, she studied and conducted research in Buenos Aires and traveled

through South America. Upon graduation, Finley participated in an internship program in Mexico related to Mexican migration to the U.S.

Finley is now a bilingual education teacher in Madrid. Currently studying for her LSAT, she hopes to attend law school in the near future back in the U.S., and pursue a career in immigration law.

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## **Immigration Integration: The Challenges of Becoming a U.S. Citizen**

Jessica Derenne

As the immigrant population continues to grow in the United States, the funding for services still lacks. The federal government continues to neglect to pass comprehensive immigration reform that would assist our current immigrant population with obtaining documentation, attending citizenship classes, obtaining jobs, and other services that would assist immigrants in socially, economically, culturally and politically integrating into communities within the United States. The public knowledge and education about immigration continues to come from the media or word of mouth, which may not always be accurate. Without ever utilizing the United States immigration system, many Americans lack an understanding of the difficult, expensive immigration process in the United States. As the cost to become a citizen continues to increase, the need for competent, affordable citizenship services in Wisconsin also increases. This paper, informed by research on immigrant populations and personal field experience at the Bureau of Migrant, Refugee and Labor Services, will give some context on socio-economic factors pulling immigrants to the U.S., examine Wisconsin funding for integration services, undocumented population, the need for immigrants in workforce as well as existing wage disparities, the issue of lawful permanent residents not naturalizing, and the New Americans Initiative.

### **Factors Shaping Undocumented Immigration to the U.S.**

There are many reasons for undocumented immigration to the United States (Sandy Magana, personal communication, October 16, 2008). One reason that undocumented immigrants may come to the United States is to reunite with their family; and due to the difficult, expensive immigration system in the United States, many family members cannot apply for the undocumented immigrant to become a citizen. (Sandy Magana, personal communication, October 16, 2008). Another reason that undocumented immigrants come to the United States is due to the conditions of the immigrant's country of origin including poverty, lack of jobs, political conditions (wars), and/or a desire for a better life.

The United States has pulled undocumented immigration, via a demand for cheap labor. For example, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) treaty caused many Latinos to lose jobs or businesses in their home country (COHA, 2007). In the years since NAFTA, subsidies received by U.S. corn farmers caused overproduction. The overproduction of corn flooded the market causing the market rates to decrease dramatically and many Mexican farmers lost their farms due to the low market rates. The unemployment rate in agriculture has spiked in Mexico due to NAFTA. By the end of 2004, over 6.8 million Mexican agricultural workers were unemployed. Although the United States created NAFTA to help the Mexican agriculture industry, it has actually caused the industry to decrease dramatically, which in turn pushed many undocumented agricultural workers to migrate to the United States for work (COHA, 2007).

## Undocumented Immigrants

Although a majority of the immigrant population has proper documentation, many immigrants lack proper documentation to work and live in the United States. Based on the 2002 current population survey, the urban institute estimates that 26 percent of the foreign-born population lacks proper documentation (Passel, Capps, & Fix, 2004). Mexicans represent over half, 57 percent, of the undocumented population (Passel, Capps, & Fix, 2004).

Not having proper documentation can have a variety of challenges on the lives of families and individuals. Many individuals feel inferior if they have to depend on someone else for everything, which can cause domestic violence or other mental health issues within undocumented families (Pancho Oyarbide, personal communication, November 20, 2008). One way to address the situation is to make the person feel equal (Pancho Oyarbide, personal communication, November 20, 2008). As the undocumented population continues to grow, the need for education about domestic violence and abuse also increases. *Unidos*, as well as other organizations in Wisconsin, work hard to educate the Latino community about domestic violence and the federal laws that assist victims with obtaining documentation after being a victim of a crime or domestic abuse (Julie Andersen, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

In my experience working with the Latino community, I often see hesitation from citizens to help the undocumented population within Wisconsin due to an increase in anti-immigrant laws and ordinances in our communities. As raids become more prevalent in the country and communities pass anti-immigration laws and ordinances, undocumented individuals continue to be scared to leave their homes and live a normal life. Recently in Madison, the Dane County Sheriff David Mahoney began requiring that officials report the names of all people detained in the jail, who may have immigration violations, to the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency (Porton, 2008). It is not required by law that law enforcement officials report names to ICE (Porton, 2008). As discussed by Adam Porton (2008), deporting individuals causes separation of families as well as fear and paranoia within the undocumented community. The fear of law enforcement officials created by these procedures and ordinances hurts local communities because undocumented individuals may not report crimes or come forward as witnesses. A parent or both parents being deported can also cause a family to be in crisis (Sandy Magana, personal communication, October 16, 2008). If a child is a United States citizen, the child could be placed in custody/Foster Care and be separated from his/her parents or family (Sandy Magana, personal communication, October 16, 2008).

The public opinion of undocumented immigrants plays a role on the amount of laws, ordinances, and policies implemented in an area. Espenshade and Calhoun (2005) state that public opinion varies around the country, but we do not know what contributes to the difference in opinion about undocumented immigrants. Most United States citizens do not want to see their tax dollars paying for services for immigrants because many people believe the myths about undocumented immigrants.

One of the myths is that “Undocumented immigrants come to the United States to get welfare” (Capps & Fix, 2005, p.1). In reality most undocumented immigrants come to the United States for work and are ineligible for food stamps, welfare, Medicaid, etc.

due to their undocumented status (Capps & Fix, 2005). Although some people believe that all undocumented immigrants crossed the Mexican-American border illegally and without inspection, about 25-40 percent of the undocumented immigrants in the United States entered legally, but overstayed their visas or violated the terms of their admission. Another myth is that undocumented immigrants do not pay taxes (Capps & Fix, 2005). Undocumented immigrants pay real estate taxes, sales tax, and other consumption taxes just like every other person residing in the United States. As stated by Capps & Fix (2005), “The U.S. Social Security Administration has estimated that three quarters of undocumented immigrants pay payroll taxes, and that they contribute \$6-7 billion in Social Security funds that they will be unable to claim” (p.1). As one can see, many myths that we hear about undocumented immigrants are in fact false. Many of the myths stated about the undocumented population are difficult to believe if a person has ever worked with the population. As the public continues to base their negative opinions about undocumented immigrants on myths portrayed in the media or spread by word of mouth, advocates and others working with the Latino community must work to combat the myths about the vulnerable population.

During my senior year as an undergraduate, I organized an immigration debate. The immigration debate had local experts on both sides of the debate discussing the important topics related to undocumented immigration such as border security, myths, reasons for immigration, and immigration history. With over 100 community members and University students in attendance, people obtained knowledge that allowed them to create their own opinion about the undocumented immigration in our society. The audience was able to ask the local experts questions regarding immigration. The local experts helped change the negative vocabulary that many people use when discussing the immigrant population as well as the myths about the immigrant population. Public events, such as a debate, allow not only the presenters to obtain a new view on immigration, but also the public attending the event.

### **Lawful Permanent Residents Not Naturalizing**

As Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR) become eligible to naturalize, many choose not to naturalize for various reasons. Many believe that the benefits outweigh the costs when LPRs decide to naturalize. One benefit of naturalizing, as data continues to show, naturalized citizens earn more money than LPRs. Another benefit of becoming a citizen is obtaining the right to vote. At the Bureau of Migrant, Refugee, and Labor Services, two workers recently became citizens. I had the benefit of interviewing both to create a write-up for the Department of Workforce Development Bulletin. When I ask both of them the best part of becoming a citizen, they both responded with the ability to vote. Since both became citizens shortly before the November election, they both had the opportunity to vote for the first time soon after becoming citizens. Although voting is often a right that many American citizens take for granted, voting was very important to both of these individuals because it allowed them to feel connected to and a part of the country.

Another benefit of becoming a citizen is the ability to petition for family members to reside legally within the United States. One of the workers that I interviewed came to the United States from Somalia. Unfortunately, his wife and child reside in Canada and

his mother still resides in Somalia. He is excited that he can now petition for his family to reunite and live with him in Milwaukee. The ability to travel is also another benefit of becoming a citizen. As a United States citizen, one is able to travel to any country, but many citizens from other countries do not have the benefit of being able to travel anywhere in the world due to visa limitations. A person with LPR status cannot leave the country for more than 6 months at a time without losing his/her LPR status (Watsula, 2005).

With all of the benefits of becoming a citizen, one may ask why people still choose not to naturalize. Josse and Rosenzweig (1990) found in their research that naturalization depended on prior knowledge of American life, for example, prior knowledge of the English language. Josse and Rosenzweig (1990) found that socio-economic status could also be a reason that someone may not naturalize. Although many studies state that occupation, education, income, and English competence are naturalization factors, Yang (1994) states that other studies have shown that these are actually not naturalization factors. Yang (1994) criticizes studies such as Josse and Rosenzweig for not including all countries of origins. Yang offers, that conditions in the country of origin often play a role in a person's decision to naturalize. Citizenship also includes costs that may cause an immigrant to choose not to naturalize. The costs include increased responsibilities in host country such as military obligation; lost or reduced political, social, or civic rights in country of origin; giving up original nationality by oath in the United States; and the long, costly immigration process itself (Yang, 1994).

### **Wisconsin Workforce and Wage Disparities**

As Wisconsin begins to look toward the future of our workforce, we begin to understand the growing need for workers to replace the retiring baby boomers. Governor Doyle's Grow Wisconsin Initiative (2003) emphasizes that the Wisconsin workforce will experience dramatic reductions as the first wave of baby boomers begin to retire and as the birth rate over the past twenty years has been very low. With the retiring baby boomers and low birth rates, Wisconsin will soon see a stunning gap between available workers and unfilled positions. The Governor's report (2003) also states that even with the positive migration, there would not be enough workers to replace the retiring workforce.

One way to fill the gap in workers is to invite immigrants to our state and provide services to the immigrant population. In the state of Wisconsin, the number of foreign-born workers increased by 45.6 percent between 2000 and 2006 with foreign-born representing 4.8 percent of the Wisconsin civilian workforce in 2006 (Migrant Policy Institute, 2008). About 6 million out of the 9.3 million undocumented people are working in the United States. The wages of undocumented immigrants continue to be considerably lower than United States citizens, LPRs, and other individuals with proper documentation. As stated by Passel, Capps, & Fix (2004), "About two-thirds of undocumented workers earn less than twice the minimum wage" (p. 2).

Although many undocumented immigrants cannot complete paperwork to obtain proper documentation to work and live in the United States, many eligible LPRs do not complete the paperwork to become a citizen of the United States. Data persistently shows the necessity and benefits of becoming a citizen of the United States with 25.1



percent of noncitizens living in poverty in 2006 compare to 10.4 percent of naturalized citizens (Migrant Policy Institute, 2008). Naturalized citizens earn on average \$14,000 more per year than noncitizens (Migrant Policy Institute, 2008). Keeping this data in mind, one may better understand the importance of having linguistically and culturally competent citizenship services within the state of Wisconsin. The citizenship process and paperwork can sometimes be confusing to the immigrant population (Migrant Policy Institute, 2008). If Wisconsin could provide citizenship services to the immigrant population, many immigrants would continue to reside in Wisconsin as well as migrate to Wisconsin to replace our retiring workforce.

### **Background on Wisconsin Funding**

As a Masters of Social Work student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I completed my fieldwork at the Bureau of Migrant, Refugee, and Labor Services. The Bureau of Migrant, Refugee and Labor Services (BRMLS) receives funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which is part of the federal government, to disperse to local organizations that serve the refugee population in Wisconsin. Unfortunately, federal funding only allows the BRMLS to provide funding to agencies that serve the refugee population. BRMLS also inspects all of the migrant labor camps in the state of Wisconsin, as well as certifying all foreign workers in Wisconsin.

BRMLS examines the refugee services and the need for increasing the immigrant integration services within the state of Wisconsin to include immigrants outside of the refugee population. Although within two years the refugee population will decrease dramatically in Wisconsin due to naturalization, the need for funding of competent, bilingual services continues to increase. Unfortunately, the state of Wisconsin does not receive any federal funding to provide services to non-refugee immigrants. Federal funding also does not assist refugees after becoming citizens, which they must do after five years of residing in the United States in order to keep their benefits. Without funding of services for non-refugee immigrants and refugees who are now citizens, many immigrants do not receive the services that they need to become self-sufficient and contributing members of our country.

Fix, Zimmerman, & Passel (2001) discuss how immigration funding and integration policies have primarily been centered in California, New York, Florida, Texas, Illinois, and New Jersey. With the increase in immigrants settling in states outside of these six states, immigration integration must expand. Wisconsin receives funding for refugee services for the Hmong population and some African populations that reside within the state. As shown by Fix, Zimmerman, & Passel (2001), the Mexican population has quadrupled since 1980 and rose by 70% from 1990-1999. This data shows the need for linguistically and culturally competent services for the Mexican population.

Even without linguistically and culturally competent services for immigrants in Wisconsin, the immigrant population continues to increase. In 2006, the foreign-born or immigrant population in Wisconsin was 245,006, which was a 26.5 percent increase in foreign-born population from that of 2000 (Migrant Policy Institute, 2008). The foreign-born population represented 4.4 percent of Wisconsin's population in 2006 (Migrant Policy Institute, 2008). The Migrant Policy Institute (2008) states, "Of the foreign-born

population residing in Wisconsin in 2006, 22.8 percent entered the country prior to 1980, 16.4 percent between 1980 and 1989, 31.0 percent between 1990 and 1999, and 29.8 percent in 2000 or later” (§ 8). 39.5 percent of Wisconsin’s foreign-born population is from Latin America, which is the largest portion of the foreign-born population compared to 31.0 percent from Asia, 22.8 percent from Europe, and other immigrant populations of lesser percentages (Migrant Policy Institute, 2008). As the data continues to show a growing foreign-born population, Wisconsin needs to provide and expand services to this vulnerable population in order to allow immigrants to successfully integrate into Wisconsin communities.

The Bureau of Migrant, Refugee, and Labor Services encourages the agencies it funds to educate their communities about the foreign-born populations that they work with. Although currently the Bureau only funds refugee agencies, educating the communities about these populations continues to be important. Public education could help eliminate some of the myths created by the media or from word of mouth about the immigrant populations because the public would receive facts.

### **New Americans Initiative**

The federal government continues to fail to pass a comprehensive immigration reform in the United States. Without a guideline or funding to assist the growing immigrant population, some states have begun to take the lead in immigration reform. Illinois was the first state to adapt the comprehensive immigration integration initiative in 2005. The principal outcome of the Illinois New Americans Executive Order was to increase the number of Illinoisans that became US citizens by including the following directives in the executive order: (1) the development of a New Americans Immigrant Policy that builds upon existing strengths to expedite their journey towards self-sufficiency and full participation; (2) the appointment of a 15-person New Americans Immigrant Policy Council comprised of public/private stakeholders to make recommendations to the Governor; (3) the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Illinois Department of Employment Security (DES) had to lead the initiative by developing and recommending statewide best practices, policy, and procedures (Blagojevich, 2005). The key recommendations from the New Americans Immigrant Policy Council were to enhance the delivery of services, break down barriers among agencies and service providers, and increase access to English classes and other opportunities for self-sufficiency (New Americans, 2008). Illinois has also created a New Americans Welcoming Center which provides all essential immigrant services in one location (New Americans, 2008). Within one year of the Executive Order, the naturalization rate of Illinois immigrants rose dramatically (New Americans, 2008).

In the past couple of years, three other states followed Illinois’s lead and created New Americans Initiatives. At the 2008 Governor’s council meeting in Washington D.C., the New Americans Initiative was one of the primary topics discussed and presented by the Illinois groups. Unfortunately, Wisconsin became a member of the council after the meeting and was not able to be a part of the meeting. Although Wisconsin representatives were unable to attend the meeting, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights as well as the New Americans Council have released reports which discuss the success of the New Americans Initiative and the next steps of

the initiative. The information is beneficial to serve as a guideline for a similar initiative in Wisconsin, as the reports show the implementation steps that Illinois has taken.

In order to address all of the issues relating to assisting the immigrant population in the United States, I believe Wisconsin should adapt the New Americans Initiative. The New Americans Initiative would provide services to all New Americans. Some of the services that the initiative includes are citizenship services, English language classes, and bilingual staff within government. Within the State of Wisconsin, many of these services already exist, but the New Americans Initiative would provide needed funding, expand services across the state, and standardize the services to ensure that they are similar throughout the state. It would also create a test for the state agencies and other agencies to ensure that a person being hired for a bilingual position is able to provide competent bilingual services.

The Illinois model for the New Americans Initiative includes two phases. The first phase includes the focus areas of: citizenship, English acquisition, human services, healthcare, and education (New Americans, 2008). Phase two includes the focus areas of: housing, homeownership, public safety, and workforce and entrepreneurial development (New Americans, 2008). I believe the first stage of Wisconsin's New American Initiative should focus on ensuring adequate language services, available to all of Wisconsin's residents, and the creation of standards to ensure state agencies and subcontractors provide bilingual and competent services. Such a process, could involve developing training for all state staff on linguistic and cultural competency, to ensure that immigrants and refugees can obtain all vital documents in their primary language.

Creating Welcoming Centers in Wisconsin, like Illinois's model, would also be a benefit for our communities. The Welcoming Centers assist immigrants and refugees with obtaining citizenship, learning English, applying for social services, gaining job skills, securing health care, understanding their children's education, advancing their education, and much more. The Welcoming Centers would be a one-stop place where immigrants and refugees could receive all necessary integrations services. Understanding the social service system in the United States is often difficult for anyone including immigrants and refugees who need many services in order to become economically and socially self-sufficient. The Welcoming Centers would have linguistically and culturally competent staff and would be easily accessible to immigrants and refugees.

When Wisconsin creates a New Americans Initiative, the immigrant population in Wisconsin will be able to obtain linguistically and culturally competent services that will assist with socially, economically, culturally and politically integrating the population successfully into our society. With Illinois's model being fairly new, the research has yet to show the benefits of the immigration integration initiative on the immigrant population. Unfortunately, with the economy and lack of research, the New Americans Initiative in Wisconsin may have difficulty reaching the Governor's desk.

Through my experience, I continue to see the need for immigration integration in Wisconsin. Many counties in Wisconsin do not have affordable citizenship services for the immigrant populations. The non-profit agencies in Wisconsin that do provide the citizenship services for immigrants have difficulty obtaining funds to hire sufficient staff for their program needs and to keep their programs running. The New Americans Initiative would help fund agencies that provide citizenship services as well as create new

citizenship services around the state of Wisconsin to ensure that all immigrants have access to affordable citizenship services.

## **Conclusion**

With the increasing need for the immigrant population in Wisconsin, one can see the importance of creating immigrant integration services that would encourage the immigrant population to reside and migrate to our state. The New Americans Initiative would help meet some of Wisconsin's workforce needs, as well as more successfully integrating our new population. Immigrants will continue to come to the United States; but without linguistically and culturally competent services, they will continue to struggle and be unable become self-sufficient citizens of our country. As a progressive state, Wisconsin must move forward in assisting these vulnerable populations toward successful integration into our society and state.

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# **Health Challenges Facing Latinos in the United States & Multi-Level Social Work Interventions**

Sara Schroeder

## **Abstract**

Research has found, despite immigrating to the nation that spends more money than any country in the world on healthcare, Latinos' health actually declines the longer they live in the United States. Latinos are also disproportionately represented in several disease categories. These phenomena have been found to be true for numerous diagnoses. A variety of personal, social, political, and cultural factors are cited as contributing to these trends. Fortunately, social workers are in a unique position to be able to respond to these health challenges on an array of levels.

## **Introduction**

Since the beginning of the millennium, population growth among Latinos accounts for 50.5% of the overall population increase in the United States (Pew Hispanic Center, 2008). As the Latino population in the United States grows, so does the research related to the health of these people. In 2006, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that Latinos accounted for 18% of the 35,314 new cases of HIV/AIDS reported in 33 states. While Black Americans, not Latinos, make up the largest population group infected with HIV/AIDS, Latinos are still disproportionately affected. As a group, Latinos are three times more likely than non-Latino Whites to be diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. This rate increases to seven times for the Puerto Rican subgroup (Organista, 2007). The American Cancer Society (2006) determined that slightly less than half of Latinos and approximately one-third of Latinas will be diagnosed with cancer. The CDC (2009) has found that heart disease is the leading cause of death for most population groups, including Latinos, non-Latino Whites, Black Americans, Alaska Natives, and American Indians, in the United States.

The United States spends more money on health care than any other developed nation. The thousands of well-trained doctors have seemingly unlimited access to specialists, cutting-edge technology, and advanced pharmaceuticals. In 2006, health care spending made up 16.5% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product, or GDP (Zamora & Moffit, 2007). It is important to note that not all of these funds go directly to care for the health of people in America. In 1999, one-third of health care dollars were spent on hospital and clinic administration (Woolhandler, Campbell, & Himmelstein, 2003). This figure, which was approximately \$295 billion, did not include the costs of operating the massive web of public and private insurers, nor did it take into account retail pharmacy sales. Despite this immense spending and these vast resources, the health of many Latinos actually declines as they acculturate to life in the United States. For example, it has been found that children born in the United States of Latino immigrant parents are more than twice as likely to be obese than Latino children who immigrated to this country (Popkin & Udry, 1998).

While this fact may be discouraging, there is much that social workers can do to improve the overall health of their Latino clients and the Latino population as a whole. For the purpose of this paper, I will be focusing on three areas social workers are likely to encounter in working with Latino clients: the Latino mortality paradox, health problems associated with obesity; and problems with access to health care. I will also be providing suggestions for social work interventions.

### **The Latino Mortality Paradox**

There have been findings, consistent worldwide, that a lower socioeconomic status (SES) is associated with poorer health (Organista, 2007). Yet one surprising phenomenon, especially in light of the many health challenges Latinos in the United States face, is that despite their overall higher rates of poverty and lower rates of both education and health insurance coverage, Latinos in the United States enjoy a lower mortality rate and longer life-expectancy than non-Latino Whites (Abraído-Lanza, Chao, & Flórez, 2005). This is known as the Latino mortality paradox. While heart disease and all types of cancer are the leading causes of death in America, Latinos are less likely to die from these than are members of other groups (Organista, 2007).

Many hypotheses have been proposed to explain this paradox. Two of the most well known are the healthy migrant hypothesis and the salmon hypothesis. The former posits that only the healthiest members of a population emigrate, thereby causing the immigrant population in the destination country to feature the best physical samples of a group of people. The salmon hypothesis asserts that large numbers of immigrants return to their countries of origin later in life and die there, so that their declining health and ultimate deaths are not tabulated into statistics in their former host nation (Abraído-Lanza et al., 2005). Since both of these theories have been largely disproven, other factors are now being considered to account for the paradox.

One concept that is supported by research is that of protective health factors common among Latinos. Abraído-Lanza and colleagues (2005) conducted a secondary data analysis of the 1991 National Health Interview Survey and found that when sociodemographic factors were controlled for, Latinos are less likely than non-Latino Whites to smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol (p. 1244). Strong cultural proscriptions of these risk-increasing habits are found in more traditional Latino communities. When this information is combined with the better nutritional profile of less acculturated Latinos living in the United States, the Latino mortality paradox should not be entirely surprising.

Despite this seeming health advantage, the overall picture for Latinos is less positive. Unfortunately, Abraído-Lanza et al. (2005) also found that rates of smoking and drinking among Latinos increase along with the amount of time spent in the United States.

Factors that impact Latinos on an individual level are not the sole negative influence on health. Larger social pressures have also been found to contribute to decreased healthy behaviors among Latinos. Viruell-Fuentes (2007) found that discriminatory and stigmatizing messages of “othering” negatively impact the health of second-generation Mexican-American women. This prejudice can lead members of the stigmatized group to behave in ways that compromise their health. This includes, but is

not limited to, the use of readily available yet unhealthy coping mechanisms such as alcohol, drugs, food, and cigarettes.

### **Health Problems Associated with Obesity**

Obesity is a health problem that affects Americans of all races. The National Institutes on Health (2007) consider a person with a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or above to be obese. A person's BMI, calculated by multiplying his or her weight in pounds by 703 and dividing in by his or her height in inches squared, provides a measure of his or her weight relative to his or her height. A BMI measurement is preferable to a mere weight measurement, since it takes into account the person's height. While concepts of physical beauty are often culturally mediated and therefore variable, the health problems associated with obesity are very real. Obesity is strongly correlated with increased incidence of diabetes mellitus, coronary heart disease, hypertension, gallbladder disease, and certain types of cancer (WHO, 2000). According to the Kaiser Family Foundation (2007), nearly 60% of non-Latino Whites, 62% of Latinos, and 69% of Black Americans are overweight or obese.

Diet is the factor that contributes most significantly to weight gain, and is also the factor that individuals can address and control independently. Unfortunately, the quality of diet is negatively associated with the amount of time Latinos have lived in the United States. One study found that 61% of Latinas interviewed stated that they had eaten a healthier diet in their country of origin (Ayala, Baquero, & Klinger, 2008). These women reported a decrease in low-fat protein sources such as fish and other seafood, and an increase in the consumption of fat-laden pizza and hamburgers in the United States. They reported that fresh meats, fruits, and vegetables had been more readily available in their countries of origin, primarily in street markets. These women also experienced difficulty in incorporating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables into their diets in the United States because they encountered many unfamiliar foods that they did not know how to prepare. Latinos who are less acculturated (as measured by preferred language, self-identification, and length of time in the United States) have been found to consume significantly more servings of fruit and vegetables per day than their more acculturated counterparts (Pérez-Escamilla & Putnik, 2007). Lower levels of acculturation have also been associated with higher consumption of low-fat foods like rice and beans and lower sugar intake (Ayala, et al., 2008).

Numerous explanations have been offered for this negative trend in Latino eating habits. The convenience and affordability of fast foods, which are typically high in calories and low in nutritional value, are used to explain increasing obesity rates among members of all races. That these meals are frequently available for only a few dollars makes them even more appealing. Women cite that the need to work outside of the home leaves them with little time to prepare meals the ways in which they are accustomed (Ayala, et al., 2008). In a study of Honduran woman, 52% reported having never eaten at a fast food restaurant in their country of origin, despite feeling that fast food was as accessible there as in the United States. Since arriving in the United States, all of these women have eaten fast food, and fully half of them reported eating it every weekend (Ayala, et al., 2008). Latinos are overrepresented in jobs that demand long hours in



exchange for low pay (Ayala, et al., 2008), and these two factors can be seen as combining in a way that makes frequent fast food consumption an appealing option.

Time constraints are not the only impediment to healthy cooking. Smaller grocery stores, the type of food store most frequently found in low-income neighborhoods, provide a limited selection of healthier food options (Jetter & Cassaday, 2006). When these products are available for purchase, whole grains, skinless poultry, and lean cuts of meat all cost more than their less healthy counterparts. This study found that both price and availability disproportionately affect the approximately one-third of Latinos who live below the poverty line (Organista, 2007).

Latina mothers often cite the desire of their children to “eat American” as a reason for preparing and serving fewer traditionally Latino meals (Ayala, et al., 2008). Children, who attend American schools and watch American television programs, typically acculturate at a much faster rate than their parents. This means they are more likely to ask their mothers to order a pizza than for meals like *gallo pinto*, the popular Costa Rican dish of rice and beans seasoned with scallions and cumin.

Obesity has been found to be a contributing factor to the development of diabetes mellitus (also known as adult-onset diabetes, Type II diabetes or DM2). DM2 accounts for more than 90% of diabetes cases in the United States today (Organista, 2007). Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans living in the United States are twice as likely to develop DM2 than Cuban Americans and non-Latino Whites (Organista, 2007). While diet and exercise is key to preventing the development of DM2, early detection and proper maintenance can inhibit DM2 from becoming a life-threatening disorder. Maintenance includes consistent monitoring of blood sugar levels, using medications to preserve these levels, and preventative podiatry care. All of these require the care of at least one medical specialist, and can be expensive even for Americans with quality health insurance. Since one-third of Latinos are without health insurance (Organista, 2007), this level of care can be difficult for many to attain. Puerto Ricans are two times more likely than other Latinos with DM2 to be hospitalized for complications of this condition (Pérez-Escamilla & Putnik, 2007). Complications from diabetes include retinitis (which can lead to blindness), kidney failure, dementia related to stroke, and the need for appendages to be amputated (Organista, 2007).

### **Problems with Access to Health Care**

Lower rates of health insurance among Latinos have many significant repercussions in the community, which is the largest and fastest growing minority group in the United States (Willerton, Dankoski, & Sevilla Martir, 2008). For women, having health insurance and a regular primary care physician are highly predictive of receiving mammograms and PAP smear screenings. While more than 70% of non-Latina White women between the ages of 40 and 64 have had a mammogram in the last two years, only 59% of Latinas have done so (Warren, Londoño, Wessel, & Warren, 2006). Faced with this dearth of diagnostic care, it is not entirely surprising that Latinas have the greatest incidence and mortality rates, adjusted for age, of invasive cervical cancer. Latinas are at least two times more likely than non-Latina Whites to be diagnosed with cervical cancer (Buki, 2007). Overall rates of participation in cervical and breast cancer screenings have increased steadily over the past two decades. Utilization rates among Latinas, however,

have not improved to the same extent as they have among other racial and ethnic groups (Warren et al., 2006). As is the case with diabetes, early detection and proper treatment are integral in increasing positive health outcomes against breast and cervical cancer. Clearly, much work needs to be done to improve health outcomes for Latinos of all ages and genders.

While it is difficult to determine if there is a causative link between health insurance and improved health (Levy & Meltzer, 2001), it has been found that uninsured individuals regularly postpone and avoid healthcare procedures due to the cost (Gibson, 2006; Hsia et al., 2003). This has been found to be true for fully half of uninsured Latinos (Organista, 2007). Additionally, studies indicate that when they do seek health care services, patients without health insurance receive lower quality care than insured patients, even when the diagnoses are the same (Jackson, 2001).

The fact that healthy behaviors decrease due to increased acculturation, structural and contextual factors, combined with staggeringly high rates of poverty and low rates of health insurance coverage, these could provide a dismal prediction of health outcomes for Latinos in the United States. Latinos are, however, a resilient people who, like other immigrants, come to this country with hope for a better future. There is no reason, therefore, that social workers and other health professionals can't support Latinos in their drive to decrease health disparities and ameliorate the health challenges they face.

### **Social Work Interventions**

Social workers can strive toward socially just health care and health outcomes by capitalizing on strengths already established in Latino communities. When it comes to educating people about the importance of good nutrition and physical activity, family-based, encompassing interventions have been found to be the most successful with Latino families. Holcomb and colleagues (1998) analyzed the *Jump into Action* diabetes prevention program, which targeted Mexican-American children in border areas. The curriculum sought to increase the students' knowledge and self-efficacy regarding diet and exercise in diabetes prevention. The researchers found that while explicit knowledge increased among participants, there was little change among dietary behaviors (as cited in Organista, 2007). This is a logical finding, considering that it is adults, and especially mothers, who purchase groceries and prepare meals. A more effective program would provide education for all members of the family. This program would provide recipes, cooking classes, community meals, a community garden, and suggestions and opportunities to increase physical activity. This familistic approach would help children understand why their mothers choose to purchase certain foods and not others, strengthen the desire of mothers to prepare healthier meals, and provide all family members with an understanding of the importance of exercise and physical activity. Healthier ways of preparing favorite meals could be taught to replace less healthy, traditional Latino cooking that frequently uses lard and whole-fat dairy products (Ayala et al., 2008). Physical activities could include the passing on of traditional dances and popular sports, such as *fútbol*.

Social workers can improve access to health insurance for Latinos on many levels. On a macro level, social workers can drive policy changes that either require employers to provide affordable health insurance or that expand other forms of health

insurance coverage. Social workers can support politicians who espouse the importance of access to quality health care, and educate others about these important policies. Social workers can play an important role by continuing to research how paying for health insurance can actually save on health care costs, either through reduced emergency room costs or through decreased loss of productivity. Many working Latinos lack employer-sponsored health insurance due to their over-representation in fields that do not offer this benefit, such as construction and agriculture (Organista, 2007). Expanding state and federally funded health insurance programs to include sliding scale premiums and fees could provide access to affordable, quality health insurance to these and other working families. Social workers can also support legislative measures to change the Farm Bill. This program currently provides subsidies to farmers who grow corn and soy, which are made into some of the nation's unhealthiest foods. A revised version of the Farm Bill would increase incentives for growing fruits and vegetables, and would decrease the cost of these items in the marketplace.

Social workers in the health care field can develop and expand programs to make them more accessible to members of ethnic groups. Many immigrants come from countries with single-payer health care systems, and might be confused by the maze of public and private insurance in the United States. They are likely to prefer some aspects of the American health care system and other features from the health care program in their country of origin.<sup>1</sup> Social workers should be prepared to provide a basic explanation of what is available to patients in their hospitals, and then work to ensure they receive any benefit to which they are entitled. These benefits might come in the form of Medicaid, Medicare, SCHIP, state programs such as Wisconsin's Badger Care and Badger Care Plus, and community health providers.

Lack of health insurance and cost of health care are not the only barriers that prevent Latinos from seeking services. More than one-third of Latinos cite language as a

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<sup>1</sup> A common complaint about the current American health care system is that decisions regarding medical procedures are often made not by doctors but by insurance companies. In June of 2008, I spent three weeks in Costa Rica, and was fortunate enough to have had a very different - and positive - experience with their national health care system.

Costa Ricans are able to access the expertise of *los medicos* (doctors) who work in *las farmacias* (local pharmacies). *Farmacias* serve a much more critical health care need in Costa Rica than they do in the United States. Costa Ricans can have their symptoms assessed by *el médico en la farmacia*, who will either refer them to the area hospital or provide them with medication. Medications are dispensed a few days at a time in Costa Rica, rather than in monthly supplies as in the United States. This practice was implemented a few years ago, when a study found that 80% of homes in rural Costa Rica contained expired medication, and that patients were sharing their prescribed medications with friends and family members (M. Brogdeschku, personal communication, June 19, 2008). A change like this in the United States could not only decrease problems such as antibiotic resistance and prescription drug abuse, but could also lead to considerable cost savings. While the services provided by the Costa Rican national health care program are not always as technologically advanced as in the United States, Costa Ricans can access care without receiving astronomically high bills afterward (Biesanz et al., 1999).

reason they do not seek care, while a full 27% fear the system that is supposed to be helping them. Transportation issues and a lack of knowledge of available services are also significant barriers to health care for Latinos (Willerton et al., 2008). A culturally competent and socially just health care facility would be physically accessible and provide access to both mental and physical health care services to underinsured and uninsured individuals, regardless of documentation status. While many states mandate the availability of interpreters in hospitals, Latino patients are likely to self-censor when in the presence of another person during what is supposed to be a private exam (Willerton et al., 2008). It has been found that bilingual and bicultural providers increase treatment attendance and treatment adherence among Latinos (Willerton et al., 2008). Latino providers should be used whenever possible, and family members should not be used as interpreters. In areas with large Latino populations, facilities can improve the care they provide by encouraging or requiring employees to attain at least a basic proficiency in Spanish.

Health care workers can also support Latinos facing health challenges by addressing what Warren et al. (2006) call the “lack of preventative culture” (p. 513). The authors cite the belief common among Latinas to seek cancer screenings only after symptoms are present. In regards to cervical and breast cancer, waiting this long to seek treatment can be deadly. Currently, Latinas diagnosed with breast cancer have a much greater risk of mortality than do non-Latina Whites. This translates to a 76% rate of five-year breast cancer survival, a statistic markedly lower than the 85% survivorship rate after half a decade enjoyed by non-Latina Whites (Buki, 2007). This same propensity to wait to see a health care provider until symptoms are bothersome is also true of pre-diabetic Latinos, and can have similarly dire consequences (Pérez-Escamilla & Putnik, 2007). Education about symptoms and at-home assessments, such as breast self-exams, can provide Latinos with life-saving knowledge and skills.

On a micro level, social workers serving families and individuals can assist their clients in locating accessible and acceptable health care facilities. In the Madison area, the Mental Health Center of Dane County’s Clinica Latina provides culturally competent mental health services. Planned Parenthood has begun advertising its services and providing information about the Wisconsin Well Woman Program in Spanish. Both Planned Parenthood and the WWWP provide preventative health care and education, family planning services, and STD and HIV/AIDS testing. Culturally competent and empowering interventions are very important in these areas, since traditionally Latino culture doesn’t encourage women to take charge of their sexual health (Romero, Wyatt, Chin, & Rodriguez, 1998). Social workers can also support clients in determining which, if any, health insurance options are available to them. For Latinos living in Wisconsin this could mean applying for Badger Care Plus, or weighing employer-sponsored and private insurance choices.

## **Conclusion**

Americans from all racial and ethnic groups face increasing rates of obesity. This trend has serious implications, since the prevalence of a variety of serious health problems is correlated with obesity. Poverty and time constraints are only two of the factors that contribute to Latinos being disproportionately affected by health problems

related to obesity. Social workers and community leaders can combat these oppressive forces by implementing and encouraging action on levels ranging from individual interventions to working on the social and cultural planes.

Barriers to accessing health care also disproportionately impact the overall health of Latinos. Being without health insurance negatively affects not only individuals, whose health suffers, but also society as whole, in the form of unpaid medical bills incurred for illnesses that could have been treated more cost effectively earlier. Again, social workers can support Latinos in accessing health benefits available to them on an individual basis. On a larger scale, agitating for structural change in regards to access to health care matches with many of social work's core values and ethics.

From medical diagnoses including obesity, diabetes, and cancer to difficulties obtaining quality health insurance and accessing acceptable care, Latinos in the United States face a variety of health challenges. They also possess numerous strengths and resources that can be developed to decrease the disparities in the health care they receive and its outcomes. Social workers on all levels can assist Latinos in addressing these areas of need so Latinos can live healthier lives.

### **About the Author**

Sara is eagerly anticipating earning a Master of Social Work in May 2009. Her studies and field experience have been in the mental health concentration. She has professional interests in the intersecting fields of mental health, substance abuse, and physical health. In addition to traveling to Costa Rica, Sara has toured extensively in Europe and has lived in Wisconsin, Boston, and France. She hopes to one day open a foster home for wayward Chihuahuas.

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### **Section Three: Chican@ & Latin@ Artistic Expression as Political Project**

This section is a collection of scholarly and poetic explorations of Latin@s' artistic expressions as political project, beginning with a historical overview and personal narrative by Julie Covarrubias about the important role that music and dance have played in the lives of Latin@s as well as other communities of color, within the past century. Covarrubias focuses her essay on how dance and music have been used as a strategy of resistance and resilience against the dehumanizing workplace experiences of working class peoples.

In another historical examination of Latin@ artist expression as political project, Christina Springfield in "Communities and Revolution: The Nuyorican Poet's Café as a Social Movement," contextualizes the political experience, cultural pride, and poetry that was part of 1960s-1970s Nuyorican Poet's Café social movement.

Lastly, three of our Latina students, Guadalupe Fonseca, Rosalilia Mendoza, and Jessica Rajtar offer personal poetic reflections on the Chicana/Latina cultural and political experience, ranging in topics from field labor exploitation, gendered ethnic marginalization in the U.S., the interaction of their cultural perspective with dominant discourses, and their expressions of identity.



## Music and Dance: Activities of the Working Class

Julie Covarrubias

### Liberation through Music & Dance

Leisure time and days off from work are taken for granted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If one were to remember that work took up most of people's time in the past, they would be grateful to the individuals who paved the way for recreational time. As early as the 1900s, many working class people took initiative to take back their minds and bodies that were being abused at work. Employers viewed employees as machines, and because of this many working class people rebelled. These people began to strategize ways to resist the dehumanization of the workplace. One strategy was music and through musical sounds, lyrics, and beats the working class were able to express what they preferred and despised about the cultural norm and the labor industry.

Dance and music was a means to physically express themselves and an emphasis that the working class was not a machine, but people who were taking back their bodies from the inhuman treatment found at the workplace. Dance halls advocated the reordering of spaces for the working class. The working class constructed and gave meaning to their lives through customs, values, and public style that shaped their leisure time. Many working class people dealt with injustices during the workday but through leisure, many people were able to reconstruct their self-identity away from the dehumanization of work to affirm who they were in a nation that viewed them as inferior due to being labeled "working class".

Music is a form of expression that aids individuals to reshape their identity and assimilate to the National identity. Music was a pastime to help escape the realities of life and express the feelings workers had against employees and work. Although, music was not the only way for people in the working class to express themselves, it helped to shape their identity to not feel the dehumanization of work they had to endure for most of the week. The working class has always been viewed as inferior to the other types of classes found in the United States. As a result of this "inferiority" Malone believes that, "The southern working class and their music have been intensely class conscious, driven by anger and resentment and a sense of outrage concerning privileged people."<sup>2</sup> Due to the industrialization of the south, many songs talked about the reshaping of it. As this reshaping of the south occurred so did the reshaping of peoples lifestyle. Before, people owned farms and lived in rural areas, but that began to change with industrialization and people flocking to the cities to obtain jobs to make their living. Malone illustrates this idea of being pushed away from the past to the realizations of the present time best. "Music proved to be an invaluable resource, though, in the transition from rural to urban life, serving as a source of sustenance and identity as a medium of expression."<sup>3</sup> Music provided this migrating population who had left their familiar surroundings, a chance to explain how they did not feel accepted in their new lifestyles, and say how they really felt.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., viii.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 14.

The sense of liberation that many working class people got from writing, singing, and playing country music helped them release all the suffering they felt with their new lifestyle and occupations. Malone portrays how workers from the mills, mines, and oil industry dealt with their new life. “Mine and mill workers also played their banjos, fiddles, and guitars during work breaks, and between shifts.”<sup>4</sup> Oil workers continued the old southern rural practices of inviting neighbors in for an evening singing hymns and parlor songs around the little pump organ.”<sup>5</sup> Although, working in the factories led to a dramatic change in lifestyle without much freedom, people still used music to shape their identity to rejuvenate themselves and escape the harsh realities of their new life.

Song lyrics served as a source for the general public to decode how the working class felt about their situations at work and home. The following are selections of song lyrics that demonstrate how working class people felt and what they did to forget about work for even a short period of time. Bill Malone facilitates ideas of how the working class used country music to try and comprehend their new lifestyle. “Class consciousness was apparent in such songs such as “These Hands” and “Small-Time Laboring Man”, recognized the clear distinctions between hard working people and the bosses who profited from their labor.”<sup>6</sup> These songs assisted in comprehending how they felt about their jobs and about their bosses. Malone helps us understand this concept with other songs as well. Johnny Paychecks, “Take This Job and Shove It” and Tippin’s “Honky Tonk Super Hero” discusses how quiet hard working factory hands leave work with a sense of hatred and how some would go to bars on weekends to release stress through dance.<sup>7</sup> Rachel Lee Rubin also interprets many song lyrics that deal with how the working class felt about their jobs. The song “Quittin’ Time” by John Anderson speaks about feeling dehumanized at work because he has to wait for his boss to tell him when he can take his breaks and how poorly paid he is.<sup>8</sup> Rubin’s describes this idea as “a concept of alienated labor.”<sup>9</sup> As people began to feel more dehumanized at their work places, they used music as a way to rebel and regain their identity. The lyrics that make up these songs paint a picture of an oppressed population, who yearned for the opportunity to cleanse themselves of the labels, generalizations, and identities forced upon them by their employers. The working class was determined to regain their identity because work was not the sole component of their being.

## **My Parents’ Experience**

My parents, Ismael and Maria Covarrubias, used music not only to learn how to speak English but to help them assimilate to the dominant culture. Ismael and Maria immigrated to the United States in 1979 from Guadalajara, Jalisco Mexico. They left a country that held no future for them. Although my parents decided to take the journey to the United States, they were thrown into a whirlwind of a new lifestyle and a new

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>8</sup> Rachel Lee Rubin, “Working Man’s Ph.D.” *New Working-Class Studies*, in *New Working-Class Studies* ed. by John Russo and Sherry Lee Linkon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 174.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 174.

language. As my parents learned to assimilate and accommodate to this new culture, they used many different leisure activities to reshape their own identity and to conform to the National Identity. My mother, Maria, listened to Linda Ronstadt who helped her handle the stresses from being in a different country and not understanding her employers at work. “Blue Bayou” was her way to break away from the harsh realities of living in a different country and a time where she could truly be herself and mold her identity to her new life in the United States. Although at first glance this song does not speak to how the working class felt about their occupations directly, it did allow my mother to express emotions that were suppressed at her workplace. Upon analyzing the lyrics and listening to the gloomy, heartbreaking song about leaving the place that Ronstadt considered home, you can begin to comprehend and get a glimpse of how Maria felt when she was singing the song. This song even begins to describe how my mother felt after coming home from the fields as a migrant worker.

I feel so bad I got a worried mind  
I'm so lonesome all the time  
Since I left my baby behind  
On Blue Bayou

Saving nickels saving dimes  
Working til the sun don't shine  
Looking forward to happier times  
On Blue Bayou

I'm going back someday  
Come what may  
To Blue Bayou  
Where the folks are fine  
And the world is mine

Linda Ronstadt, “Blue Bayou” (1980)<sup>10</sup>

“I worked several jobs, but the hardest job was working in the fields and being out there before the sun rose and working for what seemed forever. I began to think that this move to the United States was not the best decision I had made.”<sup>11</sup> When Ronstadt converses to her audience about saving money to move back to her blue bayou and working from sun up to sundown, it united the two women. This song not only comforted my mother, it also assisted with her learning a new language, English. “When we left Mexico it was really hard for me. I could not communicate with anyone because I did not know English, and I knew no one. I felt alone, isolated, and frustrated. When I first heard the song, ‘Blue Bayou’ I did not know what she was saying but I liked the beat. I began to learn the song because I listened to it on repeat while I did the domestic work at home.”<sup>12</sup> Even though my mother did not listen to this song at work, she still used it as a form of

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<sup>10</sup> Linda Ronstadt, “Blue Bayou,” Best of Linda Ronstadt, Greatest Hits, vol. 2 (New York: Elektra Entertainment, 1980).

<sup>11</sup> Maria D. Covarrubias, interview with the author, Madison, WI, November 16, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

recreation. One added bonus of listening to Linda Ronstadt that my mother learned was that this particular artist was Mexican American. My mother viewed her as an individual who made it in the United States. She also felt that Linda Ronstadt and her had something in common such as the customs and traditions of Mexico. As she began to learn English and meet new people it became easier for her to have more possible leisure activities to participate in. Many working class people felt the same dehumanization at work, and music gave them the power to think for themselves and participate in leisure activities that made sense to their identity. My parents said it best, “I knew that how I was being forced to act at work was not who I was inside. I am an individual who has feelings, and should not be treated as machinery.”<sup>13</sup>

### **The Jamaican Experience**

Many working class people have used music to get through the atrocious demands of the workday. In New York City many Jamaican construction workers listened to music during the workday to help them stay connected to their roots and their community. According to John Calagione, management was trying to force a division between the different ethnic groups of workers.<sup>14</sup> The employers wanted to make sure that they prevented worker solidarity. Without worker solidarity their employees would not rebel against the working conditions or the regulations that were being imposed on them.<sup>15</sup> The employers made sure that workers would not rebel against their decisions because if the employees did they could be replaced.<sup>16</sup> Management wanted the workers to believe that because of the various negative assumptions about different ethnic groups, it was impossible to work well with one another at a particular work site.

However, the Jamaicans knew that something had to be done to bring solidarity to everyone working in construction. When the Jamaican started to play music it was a chance to unite all the different ethnic groups. Not only was music a way to rebel against what their employers were pushing on them, but the type of music being played was also bridging differences among workers. Jamaicans discussed in Calagione’s essay were playing Freddy Fender, who sang in English and Spanish. The Jamaicans were trying to reach out to their coworkers to begin to build solidarity. Freddy Fenders song, “Before the Next Teardrop Falls” (1975)<sup>17</sup> was a very popular song at this time:

If he brings you happiness  
Then I wish you all the best  
It’s your happiness that matters most of all  
But if he ever breaks your heart  
If the teardrops ever start

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> John Calagione, "Working in Time: “Music and Power on the Job in New York City,” in *Workers’ Expressions: Beyond Accommodation and Resistance* ed by John Calagione, Doris Francis, and Daniel Nugent (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 18.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>17</sup> Freddy Fender, “Before the Next Teardrop Falls”, *Before the Next Teardrop Falls* (New York: ABC-DOT Records, 1975).

## I'll be there before the next teardrop falls

According to Calagione, many Jamaicans were using the phrase “The Next teardrop” to discuss life in general and how they were scared of being replaced with workers who would accept lower pay.<sup>18</sup> His song was a signal that certain possibilities of alliance and resistance in the midst of struggle can allow workers to reshape their identities and fight against the dehumanization of work that the employees were forcing on them. Using music to liberate themselves from all of life’s struggles aided the workers to unify. The Spanish-speaking workers appreciated the fact that the Jamaicans were trying to achieve worker solidarity because all the workers were being forced to act like machines with no say as to how they were treated on the worksite. Although many of the Spanish-speaking employees did not particularly like Freddy Fender, the workers could see how working together could lead to some form of independence at work. This was not viewed as acceptable to the employers because they did not want unification at the worksite. Management believed that listening to music made the workers slower at their jobs.<sup>19</sup> The workers on the other hand believed that, “Playing music created a public discourse that simultaneously recognized difference and allowed the possibility of further action together.”<sup>20</sup> Listening to music was a way to regain their identity at work when their employers rejected any idea that made workers human.

### **A Mexican-American Experience of Dance**

Dance was another form of expression used by the working class to relieve themselves from the brutalities of their occupations. Mendoza aided Mexican-Americans living in Los Angeles by providing a public space where they could dance, listen to music, and reconnect with their community. Rainbow Gardens was one such public venue that Mendoza used, which allowed Mexican-Americans to come listen to music in Spanish and dance the night away.<sup>21</sup> Many Mexican-Americans made Los Angeles their home after World War II and Garcia discusses that the businesses started to cater to these new customers.<sup>22</sup> With the population rising, many jobs that were physically strenuous were passed to these people. Many Mexican-Americans worked the fields picking the fruits and vegetables in California. This job was very back breaking and people would work 12-hour days or more at times. There was no job security due to the constant influx of immigrants willing to put up with the poor working conditions, low wages, and demanding physical labor. Maria Covarrubias illustrated how hard it was to be a migrant worker. “I worked ten-hour days for two dollars per basket of zucchinis. I would wake up at 4am to be at the fields by 5. I would not get home until the after the sun had set. My back hurt, I had blisters on my hands and my feet hurt because I was standing on

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<sup>18</sup> John Calagione, "Working in Time: "Music and Power on the Job in New York City," in *Workers' Expressions: Beyond Accommodation and Resistance* ed by John Calagione, Doris Francis, and Daniel Nugent (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 20.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

them all day. It was not the best job but I had no choice.”<sup>23</sup> After all that pressure at work, people needed a place to be themselves. When people went dancing, they liberated themselves from all the hard times faced at their workplace. Señora Covarrubias helped illustrate a part of her day where she had no say and having her body treated as a machine made her want to rejuvenate with leisure activities that would help her regain her identity as a women and a Mexican. Following the discussion about migrant work, I proceeded to ask Señora Covarrubias if she ever went out dancing even after a hard day of work. “I mean I did not go dancing every night but sometimes I wanted to feel like a women, be free from all the hostilities I faced at work, and listen and dance to the music that reminded me of home. Even on days where I did not want to go someplace to dance, I would still dance at home to the records I had.”<sup>24</sup> Rainbow Gardens was a public space where Mexican workers, such as Maria Covarrubias, could go and be entertained. Rainbow Gardens helped expose the Mexican workers to all types of music, while providing a place where they could break loose form the exertions of work. As Mexican Americans were feeling the strain of work, they needed a place to venture to, enjoy life, and discover recreational activities that led them to feel more human. Mendoza also brought musicians that represented the working class.<sup>25</sup> The melodies of *conjuntos*, *orquestas*, and local working class bands filled the night air with beats that anyone could dance too and many people did. By having a public space that allowed the working class to be viewed as important, it was a change of pace for many of them.

The appreciation of allowing the working class to encounter a change from always feeling like machines to be treated like equals was an advancement and innovation that Mendoza recognized. Not only did Mendoza cater to the working class but he also made it possible for the working class people to enjoy their whole weekend. Garcia states, “On Sundays, Mendoza also hosted a less formal, but well attended *tardeada*, or afternoon dance, which usually featured a local band or mariachi.”<sup>26</sup> Having Mendoza, someone who had grown up in the community, made the working class feel like home. This was crucial because if Mendoza were not the emcee for these gatherings, many people would not have been able to enjoy a night out to dance due to racial tensions at this time period. Mendoza broke this barrier to give the working class an opportunity to experience music and dance and to express their cultural identities in a country pushing the Mexican working class to feel disconnected in every aspect of life.

### **African-American Women**

The idea of leisure and resistance to the dehumanization of work has been around since people have been working. Another group that represented the working class and felt the same constrictions from work, were the working class African-American women in the south in the 1900’s. Tera Hunter depicts how many working class women in the south were venturing out of their employers homes to work from home. When working at home, these women could have a sense of freedom that was otherwise obscured when

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<sup>23</sup> Maria D. Covarrubias, interview with the author, Madison, WI, November 16, 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 194.

working in the homes of their employers. Hunter states, “Domestic workers continued to work 7 days a week and had little time off for themselves.”<sup>27</sup> Many African-American women were trying to redefine who they were, in terms of finding alternatives to the 7-day workday. Many women had families and friends they barely saw working such outrageous hours. Hunter explains how many women changed to laundry work because it allowed them to juggle family responsibilities and work obligations.<sup>28</sup> Hunter then goes on to state, “Washerwomen picked up loads of dirty clothes from their patrons on Monday washed, fried, and ironed throughout the week; and returned the finished garments on Saturday. This work yielded a day off and exempted workers from employee supervision.”<sup>29</sup> African-American women in Atlanta were beginning to reconstruct their identities molding them into ones that worked for them, not their employers. Women who still spent most of their time in their employers home wanted to break loose from their employers grasp. They chose to break this dependence and insisted on moving into their own homes. With this new independence African-American women were going out more because they had the free time to explore leisure activities. Hunter describes a street in Atlanta where people from all ethnicities and racial groups interacted and other races mingled through leisure activities that could be found there. “African-Americans were especially devoted to the dance halls that were concentrated on Decatur Street.”<sup>30</sup> Decatur Street was redefining public space where African-American women and other ethnicities could go and participate in leisure activities. African-American women were able to truly embody the beats from the music being played and tried to reclaim their bodies by expressing their feelings through dance. Dancing was a way to channel all the hardships and differences African-American women had with their employers to escape from hostility to redefine their identity. Hunter describes what dance meant to the working class best and states, “The affirmation of life embodied in dancing captivated working-class women and men and offered moments of symbolic and physical restoration of their subjugated bodies for joy, pleasure, and self-delight.”<sup>31</sup> African-American women and men were using dance as a way to escape the realities of life. African-American women wanted to control every aspect of their lives. Dance was a fun recreational activity and helped working class African-American women to recover from being mistreated at work.

Around the same time African-American women in the south were breaking away from the control of their employers so were working class women in the Northeast. Working class women worked in factories and as a leisure activity after work would go out dancing as well. Kathy Peiss recounts how dance halls and dancing palaces offered a social space for women to participate in public life.<sup>32</sup> As more working class women went to the dance halls, more dance halls began to spring up. “The number of public

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<sup>27</sup> Tera W. Hunter, “Work that body: African-American Women, Work, and Leisure in Atlanta and the New South” in *Labor Histories: Class, Politics, and the Working-Class Experience* ed. by Eric Arnesen, Julie Greene, and Bruce Laurie (Urbana: University Of Illinois Press, 1998), 153.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>32</sup> Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusement: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-Of-The-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 90.

halls in Manhattan rose substantially in a short period; business directories listed 130 halls in 1895 and 195 in 1910, an increase of 50 percent.”<sup>33</sup> Many dance halls were located in the working class neighborhoods, which made it easier for women to get to these venues. Dance was a way to express their cultural identity and gave the working class women the excitement, and self-expression often oppressed in the workplace. Dance provided a much needed outlet from work.

## **Conclusion**

Many workers loathed their employers because they tried to control every aspect of their employees' lives. Many working class people were met with injustices during work but through leisure, they were able to reconstruct their self-identity away from the dehumanization of work to affirm who they were in a nation that viewed them as inferior due to the label of “working class” placed upon them. Music was an expression that gave the working class a chance to explain why they felt inequality at work. Dance was a recreational activity that gave the working class a chance to break free from the ruthlessness felt at work from the employers. All of these leisure activities were strategies to resist the dehumanization and destruction of self-identity in the work place.

## **About the Author**

Julie Covarrubias is a senior majoring in Elementary Education with a Certificate in Chican@ & Latin@ Studies. Born in Madison, she is a huge Badger fan. She worked in the CLS program as a student hourly from January of 2008 to January 2009. She has taught Spanish for kindergarten through 5th grade at Gompers Elementary.

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# Communities and Revolution: The Nuyorican Poet's Café as a Social Movement

Cristina Springfield

## Abstract

This essay is an introduction to the relationship between art, activism, and nationalism as it intersected in the Nuyorican Poet's Café in the 1970s and 1980s. By placing the poetry in a historical context, the author shows how art can act as a tool to fight oppression and assimilation. The article also attempts to show how today's Nuyorican Poet's Café has evolved to fit the needs of others who have been welcomed into the Nuyorican experience.

### *Puerto Rican Obituary*

By Pedro Pietri of the Nuyorican Poet's Café (Pietri 16-17)

They worked  
They were always on time  
They never spoke back  
When they were insulted  
They worked  
They never when on strike  
Without permission  
They never took days off  
They were on the calendar  
They worked  
Ten days a week  
And were paid only for five  
They worked  
They worked  
They worked  
And they died  
They died broke  
They died owing  
They died never knowing  
What the front entrance  
Of the first national bank looks like  
[...]

And will die tomorrow  
Always broke  
Always owing  
Never knowing  
That they are beautiful people  
Never knowing  
The geography of their complexion  
[...]

Aquí se habla español all the time  
Aquí you salute your flag first  
Aquí there are no dial soap commercials  
Aquí everybody smells good  
Aquí TV dinners do not have a future  
Aquí wigs are not necessary  
Aquí we admire desire  
And never get tired of each other  
Aquí qué pasa Power is what's  
happening  
Aquí to be called negrito y negrita  
Means to be called **LOVE\***

Here lies Juan  
Here lies Miguel  
Here lies Milagros  
Here lies Olga  
Here lies Manuel  
Who died yesterday today

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\* "Aquí"="here," "se habla español"="one speaks Spanish," "Aquí que pasa"="Here what's happening," and "negrito/a"="little dark one" (but is a term of endearment)

"Our cry is a very simple one. Puerto Ricans came to this country hoping to get a decent job and to provide for their families; but it didn't take long to find out that the American dream that was publicized so nicely on our island turned out to be the amerikkkan nightmare."

-David Pérez of the Young Lords Party (Young Lords 7)

In the preceding poems, one can see into some of the most pressing issues facing Puerto Ricans in New York. "They worked/And they died/And they died owing" speaks strongly to the poverty that ran rampant in the barrios of New York City. "Never knowing/That they are beautiful people/Never knowing/The geographies of their complexion" strongly alludes to "dead" Puerto Ricans who lacked self-worth and auto-identity. "They never spoke back/When they were insulted/They worked/They never went on strike without permission" recognizes the political passivity of these "dead" Puerto Ricans who didn't fight the system. All of these lines are intricately linked to the platform and ideology of the Nuyorican Poet's Café as it began in the 1970s and 1980s. What role did the Nuyorican Poet's Café contribute to organized resistance movements like the active Young Lords Party? What was the relationship between the two? How did each relate to community formation and rebel against white hegemony? While an explicit connection between political organizations like the Young Lords Party and the Café is hard to ascertain, it is useful to see a more easily recognizable social movement like that of the Young Lords Party next to the Café to recognize their similarities. The Café created its own movement by rallying against injustice that permeated the streets, fostering self-worth within a dominant society that rejected Puerto Ricans and Puerto Rican-Americans as rubbish, and most importantly, resisting assimilation from within the colonizer's sphere of influence.

While the long history attached to plight of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. is important to understand, suffice to say that U.S. colonialism, Operation Bootstrap<sup>1</sup>, and institutionalized racism all had a profound impact on Puerto Rican communities throughout the middle twentieth century. By the 1960s, "Suffering from substandard housing, high unemployment and low incomes, poor educational and health services, and frequent discrimination, these [Puerto Rican] citizens had the dubious distinction of being among the poorest of the poor" (Torres 2). Societal ills plagued the community that struggled in these conditions: "Unfortunately, many of us [Puerto Ricans] fell into depression, apathy, disappointment, despair. And since there are many ways of

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<sup>1</sup> Operation Bootstrap (*Operación Manos a la Obra*) was an industrial incentive program implemented in 1947 by the Puerto Rican governmental agency Department de Fomento. The program brought a large number of U.S. companies to the island, greatly increasing industrialization. The program also attracted tens of thousands of workers from the Puerto Rican countryside to urban areas, a process both of hope and pain. As the employment in the sugar cane industry collapsed and as employment opportunities in the U.S. grew, Operation Bootstrap helped stimulate the massive migration of the 1950's and 1960's (Scarano 827-863).

committing suicide, some went into drugs, like me; others began to drink, others took out their frustrations on their families and beat their wives, and still many other remained decent people" admits one founding member of the Nuyorican Café, Piri Thomas (Hernández 174).

At the same time, a rebirth of Puerto Rican radicalism was taking place. Historian Andrés Torres points out how this awakening was sparked by its historical context: the national liberation movements in African and Asia, the Cuban Revolution, the Civil Rights movement, the War on Poverty, and Vietnam War protests. Furthermore, "Student unrest, growing labor militancy, feminism, Black power, Chicano and Native American militancy—these were all part of the political contest within which the new Puerto Rican radicalism was to emerge" (Torres 3). The Young Lords Party was one such organization that advocated, to some extent, militancy. Modeled after the Black Panthers, the Young Lords Party goals were to fight injustice, economic exploitation, and fight for a Puerto Rico free of the United States. Among many other things, the Young Lords organized free breakfast programs, staged protests, raised consciousness about women's rights, and publicly demanded rights for the people of their barrios. However, on another level, as one former-member recalls, "We reclaimed our identity, our heritage, our place in society. [...] We declared, 'We're Puerto Rican and proud'" (Morales 213). It was from this social environment of activism that the Nuyorican Poet's Café was born.

In the early to mid-1970s, a group of Puerto Rican poets (Puerto Rican by birth or by heritage) began to congregate in the house of Miguel Algarín. Poets such as Jesús Papoleteo Meléndez, Miguel Piñero, Lucy Cienfuegos, Bimbo Rivas, Shorty Bonbon, Piri Thomas, Pedro Pietri and his brother "Doctor" Willy, would gather to share their poetry. Many came from very hard backgrounds. Pietri reflects the innocence of the organization at its birth when he relates, "We felt really good about it because at that time we didn't have a space, we didn't have an audience, we were all we had. It was exciting in the beginning. We were young, struggling artists. It was like magic; everything was so important (Hernández 117). The oral tradition is strong in traditional Puerto Rican culture. Miguel Algarín explains, "*La trova*—the desire to compete by improvising poetry—is something that is alive. [...] That performance value is part of our history and I think that we have never forgotten it (Hernández 41-42). It was this gathering of oral-based poets that grew little by little, eventually turning into the formalized "Nuyorican Poet's Café," a Café that would act as a non-for-profit sector and as an avenue for community formation and resistance among its members and audience.

It is interesting to note that the Young Lords Party themselves, not any outside editor, chose to include a poem by Pedro Pietri, a well known Nuyorican poet, in the book they wrote about their organization in 1971<sup>2</sup>. In fact, Pedro first read "Puerto Rican Obituary" at the First Spanish Methodist Church in solidarity with the Young Lords when it briefly took over the church in 1969 (Associated Press 1). So it seems that Pedro at least had an impact on recruitment for the young Lords Party. More interesting, perhaps, when one of the Café's principal founders reveals that he became active in theater "Because all those political organizations—the Black Panthers, the Young Lords, the *Movimiento pro-Independencia*—wanted to control your mind, control your thoughts, I said 'To hell with all of you!'" (Hernández 116). There seems to be some ambiguity and

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<sup>2</sup> The poem included in the book was that of "Puerto Rican Obituary," quoted in part at the beginning of this paper

tension as to how this poet, at least, felt about this particular political organization that shared many of the goals of the Nuyorican Poet's Café. There are no Nuyorican Poets who were also members of the Young Lords. A direct relation between the two seems to be limited to the activities of Pietri.

The link between art, activism, and nationalism has been established in the scholarship surrounding the black arts and the black power movement of the 1960s and 1970s. As political activism and new political institutions grew and thrived in New York, political membership became the momentum for a wave of artistic growth and expansion among writers, playwrights, poets and other artists. One prominent example is that of the Harlem (or New Negro) Renaissance (Smethurst 108). But, "There is not much concrete consideration of the relationship of the work of the black avant-garde of the 1950s through the 1970s to that of their white, Chicana/o and Nuyorican counterparts—or to the development of the Black Arts as a cultural and political movement." (Smethurst 6). The influence of the civil rights movement and black activism on the political consciousness of Chicano/as and Nuyoricans cannot be forgotten though the relationship between different ethnic and racial groups and how they influenced each other certainly deserves more scholarship.

However, by examining the two movements side by side, it becomes clearer what the tenets of the Nuyorican Poet's Café were. Many saw cultural resistance as an important and necessary component of their community's survival. The Young Lords clarify this when they speak of cultural genocide among Puerto Ricans. Cultural genocide was seen as a necessary component for the oppressor to subjugate a particular group of people and its remedy was culture: "Language is one of the ways that people are able to communicate and to build a way of fighting back against the enemy—to maintain those ties of identity and therefore strengthen themselves to fight" (The Young Lords 65-66). They go on to point out that cultural genocide creates a "colonized mentality," or "a strong feeling of not being as worthy as the Americans because the structure tells them that to become American is always a goal that they have to attain" (The Young Lords 66). One Young Lord, David Pérez, goes on to say that using "culture as a revolutionary weapon" is critical to making the people stronger, allowing them to understand who they are and where they came from and therefore able to correctly analyze what they have to do in order to survive in the U.S. (The Young Lords 68). This was something that the Nuyorican Poets understood quite well and contributed to in their work.

By using Spanish, Spanglish, cultural history and cultural markers in their poetry, Nuyorican Poets were able to foster a group identity that worked towards fighting the threat of complete Americanization within the Nuyorican community (a strong threat in reality). In a poem by one of the fathers of the Nuyorican Café, Jorge Brandon, he talks in Spanish about the massacre of Puerto Ricans by American troops in Ponce, Puerto Rico on March 21, 1937. The people killed were either members of the Puerto Rican Nationalist party or passersby's who happened to be near when the Nationalists were protesting the incarceration of their leader and demanding Puerto Rico's freedom from the U.S.. After using the names of the people died and explaining what had happened, Brandon writes, "*A Ponce, ramos de honor, y todos juramentan/hagamos de Puerto Rico/un pueblo libre de esclavos*"<sup>3</sup> (Brandon 307). This same strategy can be seen in the

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<sup>3</sup> "Everyone swears the oath to Ponce and to branches of honor/We make of Puerto Rico a community free of slaves"

newspaper put out by the Young Lords, *Palante*, that included articles on the history of Puerto Rico and on other massacres within the island of Puerto Rico<sup>4</sup> (Latin Revolutionary News Service, Vol. 3, No. 12; Vol. 3, No. 14). Completely bilingual, *Palante* could appeal to and be read by all generations of Puerto Ricans in the barrio. Incorporating the history, language, and ideology of their ancestors, in many cases Nuyorican poets acted as cultural-preservationists within the community while maintaining a fresh and current political message.

Other early poets confronted the assimilation that had already started in first- and second-generation Puerto Ricans. In one poem, by Tato Laviera, the poet laments the fact that he speaks an imperfect English and an anglicized form of Spanish and calls himself *tonto* (stupid) in both languages: "*hablo lo ingles matao/hablo lo español matao/no sé leer ninguno bien/so it is, spanglish to matao/what I digo/¡ay, virgen, yo no sé hablar!*"<sup>5</sup> (Lavieria 332). Not knowing "how to speak" also speaks to the symbolical and literal reality of the lack of voice Puerto Ricans had in mainstream politics in New York. By pointing out his assimilated speech and the loss of his Spanish fluency, Laviera makes a powerful connection between political impotency and cultural destruction. Other Poets "retook" Spanglish as something positive as well. Since it would be hard for Nuyoricans to return to a pure, Puerto Rican Spanish, Pietri explains how he responds to those who criticize his use of Spanglish: "*Mira, si no hablo bien el ingles es porque no nací en España; si no hablo bien el ingles es porque no soy hijo de puta*"<sup>6</sup>. Spanglish is what we use. We mix both languages, and that's not the sign of an inferior mind but a sign of an advanced mind" (Hernández 181).

Other Poets more directly included political messages in their poetry, which would be read at the Café and within the community, spreading and concretizing a political message (which could later be taken up more directly by the various political organizations of the barrio). The conditions within the ghetto, AIDS, the drug problem all took central places in their poetry where they could be criticized, analyzed, commented on, and in effect, inspire calls for change (For examples of these themes, see "The Book of Genesis According to St. Miguelito" by Miguel Piñero, "HIV" by Miguel Algarín, "Two Poems for David Allan" by Sandra María Esteves and "New York City Hard Time Blues" by Piñero). These poets advocated a change within their communities, not only related to community-formation and the preservation of a cultural identity that was fast disappearing, but also changes that were fundamentally tied to the politics of the era. One critic argues that while the Nuyorican poets may not have been "outlaws in the style of the Weathermen or Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional, which [sought] to subvert the dominant society," the Poets saw themselves as "a separate but equal society with power to negotiate the establishment" (Mohr 98). Negotiating the establishment included such criticism of institutionalized racism and its effects, making the Café an outlet of political commentary that could garner support for political activism.

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<sup>4</sup> See articles entitled "In 1950 this is what amerikkans did to Puerto Ricans" and "Historia de Boriken-Parte 10" (History of Boriquen [Puerto Rico])

<sup>5</sup> "I speak a killed English/I speak a killed Spanish/I don't know how to read either well/so it is, Spanglish all killed/what I say/oh virgen, I don't know how to speak!"

<sup>6</sup> "Look, if I don't speak Spanish well, it is because I wasn't born in Spain; if I don't speak English well it's because I'm not a son of a bitch"

Another important function of the Café was that provided a way for its members to celebrate cultural pride in a society that otherwise rejected them. The Café worked against public misperceptions and distortions of Puerto Ricans in the U.S., often by highlighting cultural worth and value specific to Puerto Rico. In one poem by Pedro Pietri he writes "PUERTO RICO IS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE/PUERTORRIQUENOS ARE A BEAUTIFUL RACE" perhaps dichotomizing the notions of the majority of Americans (Mohr 95). Most Americans see Puerto Rico as a beautiful place--a place filled with swaying palm trees, lush rainforests, and colorful sunsets. However, the majority of White America saw Puerto Ricans as dirty, lazy, and inferior foreigners. Racism against Puerto Ricans was very strong, and so it makes sense that the admiration of Puerto Rico and its culture be strong as well among this labeled, stereotyped, and spurned community. Also celebrated were the same barrios the poet's often critiqued: "Lower East Side/I Love You/You're my lady fair/no matter where I am/ I think of you!/The mountains and the/valleys cannot compare./my love to you/Loisaida, I love you![...]even with your drug-infected/pocket parks, playgrounds/where our young bloods/hang around/waiting, hoping that/one day when they too/get well and smile again/your love is all/they need to come around. Loisaida<sup>7</sup>, I love you." (Rivas 361). This redefinition of what it meant to be Puerto Rican and to live in a Puerto Rican neighborhood instilled pride in Puerto Ricans. The poets, who later gained fame as talented writers, could show Americans that Puerto Ricans could be intelligent and gifted people, capable of organizing themselves and fighting for what they believed to be right.

Today, the Nuyorican Poets Café is a very different establishment from the one created in the early 1970s: perhaps most noticeably, the artists and artistic forms explored are much more diverse. Miguel Algarín, one of the founders of the Café and one of the original members and a Board of Director of the Café today, explains this saying "During the last few years the Café has become multicultural welcoming poets from every nationality and race. Our movement could not get ahead if it excluded non-Puerto Ricans [...] We Puerto Ricans are living in this society in global company" (Hernández 35). With the commercial success of many of the individual Poets like Miguel Piñero came increased visibility of the Café and its history. Piñero's play *Short Eyes* was accepted and eventually moved to the Vivian Beaumont at Lincoln Center. Other successes in theater include the café's Ntozake Shange's for his play "for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf" which moved to Broadway and was nominated for a Tony, Emmy and Grammy. "Cuba and his Teddy Bear" by Rei Provod was first produced and directed at the Nuyorican Café and later moved to Broadway "with Robert De Niro, Burt Young, and Rapph Maccio in the starring roles" (Algarín, *Action*, xvi). Algarín was very happy with these successes, explaining that these plays prove that off-Broadway and non-for-profit theater are far from being fourth rate and can achieve commercial success.

However, some other former Poets see the changes in the Café differently. Pedro Pietri expresses his conflicted feeling about the newer Café: "Now it's a business, before it was a real movement. A lot of the people from the old school don't go to the Nuyorican Poets Café anymore. They feel uncomfortable there because it's been yuppified. But that's where we started, that's where we got the publicity." In other words, he is distasteful of the changes made in the Café but still honors the role it played in giving him success. Pietri continues, "Bob [Holman, a newer member of the Café] stated in the *New York*

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<sup>7</sup> "Loisaida" is a word play on "Lower East Side" as well as a term born out of the Spanglish tradition

*Times*, 'Anybody can be a Nuyorican.' That's bullshit." (Hernández 118). Because of the Café's new heterogeneous public, it must cater to that public to survive (even if it continues to run as a non-for-profit organization). The new artists still continue to battle some of the same issues that were facing the Puerto Rican community in the 1950s-1980s like poverty, racism and self-identity politics, but many are African American, White, or Asians that are battling issues specific to their own communities. The original purpose of the Café has been modified, in turn changing the original themes of social advocacy and change in favor of more diversified ones. The outcome? The older generation of Nuyorican Poets feel they have to go elsewhere to regain their community: "Now we're looking for our own space, a space where we can again come together and read our own poetry. Right now there isn't that space, but we're working on it" (Hernández 115).

It is useful to see how such an artistic and grassroots organization could act as a social movement within New York in the past few decades. Miguel Algarín explains the connection between the Café and its social effects well by elucidating, "When a people are oppressed, the only way to hold their cultural space is to start talking. Language communicates to people who have already been put down in how society regards them; in their case, often with little respect" (Algarín *Action*, xv). This is nothing new in history. In 1923, long before any of the Nuyorican Poets were born, the Porto Rican Brotherhood was founded in New York City. "The purposes for incorporation, as stated in its charter sever years later [stated] 'the promotion of sociability and friendship among its members, their social and intellectual advancement, and with this end in view, to provide a club house [...] for the use and benefit of its members'" (Korrol 147). Community is what all oppressed peoples need for survival. However, specifically creating self-respect and societal-respect through the power of the spoken word shows just how strong these cultural outlets are in our communities in America. Without them, a people, be they migrant communities, immigrant communities, Puerto Rican communities, Chinese communities, Dominican communities or any other ethnic or religious group, risk losing their communities, cultural knowledge and pride, and self-determination. The Nuyorican Poets campaigned hard for societal change through these same channels.

### **About the Author**

Cristina Springfield graduated from the Certificate Program in 2008. During her time at UW-Madison: She worked for four years at the Chican@ & Latin@ Studies Program, was a Chancellor's Scholar, and was very active in the La Mujer Latina Conference on campus. She is looking forward to attending graduate school to receive her Masters degree in Library & Information Science.

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## POETIC REFLECTIONS

*“Que ironía, te has convertido en lo que mas odiabas”/*

**“You have become what you use to hate”**

Guadalupe Fonseca

*“Que ironía, te has convertido en lo que mas odiabas”*

*Que ironía amigo mío,  
Que ironía que te has convertido en lo que  
Más odiabas.*

*Te has convertido en el opresor.  
Olvidando que en el ayer  
Fuistes oprimido.*

*Que ironía amigo mío  
Que ironía te digo,  
Porque hoy me persigues  
A ami y a todos los míos  
Y a todos los que no consideras los tuyos.  
Cuando en un ayer  
Tú fuiste perseguido  
Por no ser como “ellos.”*

*Hoy por hoy tu te has convertido en “ellos.”  
Los que algún día odiaste  
Y a los que un día aborristes.*

*Hoy por hoy los amas tanto  
Que sigues sus leyes.*

*Que ironía amigo mío  
Que ironía...te has convertido  
En lo que un día odiaste.*

“You have become what you use to hate”

It's an irony my friend  
I am telling you, what irony this is.  
That you have become what you use to hate.

You have become the oppressor.  
Forgetting that in the past you  
Were oppressed.

What irony, what irony.  
I say to you dear friend,  
Because today you hunt me.  
And all my people,  
And all the people  
That you don't consider to be yours.  
When one day you were hunted for not  
Being one of “them.”

The ones that one day you  
Hated, the ones that once  
You were disgusted by...

Today my friend you follow  
Their same norms.  
Until this moment  
You have shown such love for them  
That you follow their rules.

What irony, dear friend,  
That you have become what one day  
You use to hate.

### **Reflexión de la autora:**

Lo que puedo decir sobre que fue lo que me inspiro para escribir el poema de “Que ironía que te as convertido en lo que mas odiabas”, fue que durante una de mis clases de Chicanos Studies, estábamos estudiando sobre la inmigración de todos

diferentes grupos étnicos hacia el continente americano. Fue entonces cuando me di cuenta que la mayoría de los primeros migrantes al continente Americano, los anglosajones, vinieron a las Américas en busca de una vida mejor. Donde su libertad no consistía ni dependía de la posición económica ni mucho menos en la religión que profesaban. Es por esta razón de que se me hizo tan irónico que fueron estas tierras las que les dieron tantas esperanzas a tanta gente de poder decir que están viviendo y ahora que hay otros grupos que migran a este país buscando lo que no pueden encontrar en su tierra natal son criticados, marginados y hasta privados de llevar el nombre de humanos. Es irónico ver como las competencias de cosas nos hace a nosotros los seres humanos olvidar los estragos que hemos pasado, y nos incitan a solo apuntar dedos de culpabilidad para lavarnos las manos de la misma manera que Poncio Pilato lo hizo.

**“Mi hijita”**  
**“My Darling”**  
 Guadalupe Fonseca

*¿Que no vez?  
 Que no quiero despertar,  
 Que no vez que no quiero  
 Que me des la oportunidad,  
 Que no vez que es ahora  
 Cuando me puedes tomar  
 Y yo, si yo te puedo echar  
 La culpa a ti y a mi verdugo  
 Y aliado el amor.*

“Don’t you see”  
 That I don’t want to wake up,  
 Don’t you see that I do not want you to  
 Give me an opportunity  
 Don’t you see that this is the time  
 That you can make me yours,  
 And I, Yes me could blame you  
 And my curse  
 And good friend “love.”

*Que no vez que si me entrego a ti  
 Sabiendo lo que puede pasar  
 No puedo echarle la culpa ni  
 A ti ni a mi amor.  
 Sino ami, ami que queriendo y  
 Sabiendo, lo hice  
 Y no se si podría vivir.*

Don’t you see that if I give myself to you  
 Knowing what can happen, I cannot blame you  
 Nor the love that I had for you.  
 But I would have to blame myself,  
 That willingly and wanting it  
 Did it...  
 And I don’t know if I will be able to survive with this

*Sin embargo si te echo la culpa  
 A ti “hombre” todos me van a creer,  
 Menos mi madre que me conoce,  
 Como toda madre, no solo por ser mujer,  
 Sino como madre me conoce bien.*

However, if I blame you  
 Yes, you “man” everyone would believe me,  
 Except my mother who knows me well,  
 Like all mothers would know their daughters  
 Not only for being women  
 But, because she is my mother and she knows me well.

*Pero no me dirá nada,  
 Solo me acariciara la cabeza y mi cabello  
 Y me dirá “todo esta bien mi hijita”...*

But she won’t say anything,  
 She will only caress my race and my hair,  
 And she will say “everything will be fine my darling”

*Y yo podré suspirar*

And I will be able to breathe

*Porque mi titulo se pudo  
Mantener en “mi hijita” y no  
En “la gran putita”.*

Because my title stayed as “my darling”  
And not changed to “you whore”

*Y dormiré tranquila hasta  
Cuando me toque despertar.  
Pero mientras abrazare mi almohada,  
Me cubijaré en mis cobijas  
Para agarrar las fuerzas  
Para luchar contra el mundo  
Que mi papito y mi amado  
Han preparado para mí  
Su hijita.*

I will sleep tranquil  
Until I am forced to wake-up.  
But until then I will hug my pillow,  
I will get in my covers  
So that I can gain strength  
To be able to fight against the world  
That my daddy and my lover  
Have prepared for me,  
Their darling.

### **Reflexión de la autora:**

El poema de “Mi hijita”, este poema esta escrito para criticar los dos estandartes entre la sexualidad de una mujer y la sexualidad de un hombre. Como se puede observar en el poema las mujeres en la cultura mexicana/chicana, solo tiene dos modelos de lo que es se mujer. Por ejemplo la mujer que decide conservar su virginidad hasta el matrimonio esta siguiendo del modelo de una buena mujer y ha esta se le compara con la Virgen de Guadalupe. Mientras que la mujer que decide entregar su virginidad antes de un matrimonio a decidido seguir el camino de una mala mujer, el modelo de la mujer “chingada o de la puta”. En este poema se critica como la mujer esta tratando de liberar su sexualidad pero al mismo tiempo sabe cuales son las consecuencias que le esperan. Pero al mismo tiempo la protagonista del poema recuerda que su frustración es porque este mundo se lo han creado los hombres a quienes ella mas ama. Por que es algo cultural donde al hombre no solo no se le pide que guarde castidad sino que se le apremia de gran hombre por cada una de las mujeres que el logra convencer que rompan la suya. Es importante notar que mi intención no es de privar a ninguno de ellos, tanto como hombres y como mujeres, en como vivan su sexualidad, sino que el propósito de este poema es criticar los estandartes que por ser tan opuestos están destinados a crear una gran confusión.

### **About the Author**

My name is Guadalupe Fonseca, I was born in Ayutla Jalisco, Mexico, but I’ve been moving back and forth between Mexico and the United States since I was 2 years old. I always considered myself to be Mexican. However, once I started taking Chican@ Studies classes I understood that a Chicana in not only a person who was born in the United States with Mexican roots, but it was someone like me, trapped between two worlds. Now I consider myself to be a Chicana even though I am a first generation immigrant. I am the first in my family to graduate from High School and attended college. I use poetry to “desaugarme” and give a voice to the Chicana experience, especially that of young women that struggle with understanding who they are.

*Promesa al Tiempo*  
Rosalilia Mendoza

Los abuelos cultivaron tierra café  
Y les dio el chile, maíz y la fe  
Pero el tiempo si que fue traicionero  
Imperialismo manejo el dinero  
Perdiéndolo todo menos un gran sueño  
Nacieron raíces entre tierras sin dueño

Padres cruzaron fronteras y mundos  
Humillados tomaron pasos profundos  
Yendo en búsqueda de un tesoro  
Que vale más que cualquier  
Prenda de oro  
El tiempo ya les hizo esta promesa  
Será propia sangre quien dará riqueza

Los Hijos son como la caña muy fuerte  
Contra machetes, vientos, sigue la suerte  
Los libros si que fueron su liberación  
Ahora presentes en esta graduación  
Miren los botones que abren sus flores  
Llenos de vida, futura promesa y amores

**About the Author**

Rosalilia Mendoza is currently completing her first year of a Masters of Arts Program in Latin American, Caribbean & Iberian Studies, with an emphasis on cultural resistance, alternative ways of healing, and transnationalism. She plans to teach social studies (e.g. Latin American History), create Arts & Music programs as a form of resistance, organized transnationally, and eventually pursue a doctorate.

**Se Habla Español**  
Jessica Rajtar

So many curves following brown-ness breaking the mold of American Beauty.  
They call it exotic.  
I call it family.  
Friends centered around a kitchen exploding with sounds, chistas, and aromas unknown to the whitewashed world.  
Too loud, too much love, too much Latin-ness everywhere escaping from every crevice.  
**¿Se Habla Español?**  
We come in droves searching for that American Dream dangled in our faces then pulled away abruptly as it appeared in a mirage in the color of green then revoked telling us to go back kicking and screaming.  
To a world filled with TACO-BELLS misrepresentin', MISUNDERSTANDIN', misconstruin' who we are and who we AREN'T  
**¿Se Habla Español?**  
Viewed as a parasitic toxin attempting to eradicate whiteness.  
When that's not the case, because when we speak, our well trained tongues speaking the language of our ancestors we are NOT speakin' about you,  
Tryin' to BE you or BREAK you.  
SO GET OUT MY BUSINESS  
Cuz I am who am  
And the sun loves this golden brown skin so why can't you see who I am within?  
Or is it that you don't give a shit  
Too ignorant to see that I am a part of you as you are a part of me  
As much as we'd both like to forget we are part of the same HUMAN tree.  
You may be white  
But unless you've been bleached, there ain't nothin' that this golden brown woman can't reach.  
Think you're sittin all up high as you employ me to clean your bathrooms and fold your clothes  
Breakin' my back with tedious work  
But you WILL NOT break my spirit NOR MY PRIDE  
Because I have LOVE FOR WHO I AM INSIDE  
**¿Se Habla Español?**  
Antagonize me  
Crucify me  
Because I appear to be less educated when really it is you who could learn a lesson from my family ties.  
Your dinner is set on the table at seven, full of flavor and Latina spice  
A dish cooked with love for DISAPPROVING EYES  
Yet no one joins you at your family table of lies.  
You have the home, family, and the green  
But your values are hidden behind a screen  
One that makes you SCORN what you ARE NOT and make you wish you had WHAT I GOT

Cuz my kitchen explodes with sounds  
TOO LOUD, TOO MUCH LOVE and YES aquí **SE HABLA ESPANOL**.

**I Am Latina**  
Jessica Rajtar

So who am I to them  
A pair of succulent lips  
Gyratin' hips  
Spicy Latina Mamí  
How **DARE** you speak to me like that  
And follow me with your eyes  
Arrancando mi falda  
Leading me away from the true me  
So sick of the **DICK** dominatin' this world  
**DICK-TATING** to me who I must be  
Regardless of my own hopes, dreams and wishes  
Well I got news for you  
That I'm through  
Being either your **PUTA** or **VIRGEN**  
Standin' up and finally being more than  
Puerto Rican Barbie  
Manufactured for **ALL YOUR PLEASURING NEEDS**  
Beyond the men there's this little box in which I reside  
It says **HISPANIC/LATINO**  
**CHECK ME PLEASE**  
You want this full figured Colombiana and Polish beauty to fit inside somethin' that  
small  
**PLEASE!**  
Not even an ounce of my pride  
Could TRY to reside in that humiliatin' thing  
So they make it all better by adding **OTHER**;  
As if that's a big enough space

**Author's Note to Reader**

I am a UW-Madison senior. My writing gives me a place to set my thoughts out in some sort of order. It helps me understand who I am and the environment around me. These two pieces were originally created as a final project for my Chican@/Latin@ Studies 210 class. They started out small, but as I put my pen to the paper, all of my thoughts, feelings, and emotions ran out of me. These poems are an expression of who I am, and how I battle with issues that any "ethnic minority" person might face as they continue their education and expand their mind and resources. While my voice may be solitary in these two pieces, it is by no means small. These narratives speak of aspirations and tell of the strength that struggling brings to life. Alone, they are two



works written by another Latina woman, but when set amidst other pieces, they become a powerful voice. It is this voice that I hope shines through in my writing and the works of others in this journal.