

# *Concientización*

*A Journal of Chican@ & Latin@  
Experience and Thought*



***Concientización:***  
***A Journal of Chican@ & Latin@ Experience and Thought***

***Concientización*** is a student journal dedicated to promoting the study of Chican@ and 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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# *Concientización: A Journal of Chican@ & Latin@ Experience and Thought*

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Figure 1. Miguel Cabrera. 4. *De Español, y Negra; Mulata*, 1763, oil on canvas. 132 X 101 cm, Private Collection, Mexico. From Maria García Saiz Concepción in *Las Castas Mexicanas: Un Género Pictórico Americano*. S.L.: Olivetti, 1989, 81.

### **Transcendent Contours: “Thirdspace” Re-figurations of Kinship and Hybrid Ethnicity in the Works of Josefina Pelayo Mendoza, Alma Lopez, and Noni Olabisi**

**Lisa Rappaport Hendrickson**

In the composition *De Español, y Negra; Mulata* (From Spaniard and Black; Mulatta) (1763), Spanish colonial painter Miguel Cabrera (1695-1768) depicts a black woman in profile, standing against the wall of an unidentified building. She appears to be reasoning with, or perhaps scolding, a white man who stands across from her. One hand is held aloft in a gesture of appeal while the other clings to a basket filled with various fruits. The artist has labeled the basket “Chayote,” a Native American squash that is pictured alongside other produce. A man stands on the opposite side of the wall and hugs their daughter, who is seated on top of the wall, in a slightly lecherous and disquieting embrace. His half-obsured face, hidden by a large brimmed hat, intensifies the inappropriate gesture. The father offers the child a piece of fruit. His figure, shown in three-quarter view, is placed against a backdrop of trees. The child is placed between the adults in an ambiguous space flanked by two constant figures. In this position the child is explicitly depicted as a liminal entity, one who can no longer be defined in terms of her binary background. Instead, this child represents a newly created form. Her ambiguous position is further emphasized in her placement between an urban, man-made space and a natural, bucolic one (Fig. 1).



Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this oil-on-canvas composition is that it represents one part of a larger series of sixteen similar paintings. Together they complete a *castas*, or caste cycle. *Castas* cycles represent how Spanish colonial elites manipulated bonds of biological kinship to protect their economic and political interests. As a group, these painting cycles set up distinctive categories of identity for visual consumption to contain a rapidly emerging American hybrid reality. The intended recording capacity of these works is located in paint on the canvases, where the ethnicities of the mother and father are indicated in writing along with a term that is assigned to the resultant offspring, as in the image above.

Some researchers suggest that these series might have been created to account for interaction between different races, or lineages, in the Americas during the Spanish colonial era, when contact between Spanish, Native American, and imported and enslaved African people increased.<sup>1</sup> Because these works primarily exist in Spain and not in Mexico, scholar Miguel Angel Fernández suggests that the series might have served as souvenirs. Spanish travelers might have commissioned these works or purchased them ready-made to remember their journeys to the "New World."<sup>2</sup> Whether the works were designed exclusively for tourist consumption or not, these images reflect important classificatory tendencies established during the Enlightenment era.

These visual recordings illustrate the increasing commonality of interracial relations that spurred panic among the Spanish and Creole (American born Spanish) elites because such intermixing threatened their systems of social order, challenging their political authority, which was couched within a stringent class system. Scholar Magali Marie Carrera points out that the paintings indeed depend on such "confusing and ambiguous" aspects of race to be effective.<sup>3</sup> In this respect, the *castas* represent a way to chart a myriad of physical characteristics.<sup>4</sup> It was for this reason that the *castas* system was successful as a tool for social organization as early as the fifteenth century and continues, in a more subdued manner, into today.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This list does not include people of Asian origin, as I concentrate on those migrating to the New World en masse mostly between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Though some Asian people did immigrate to New Spain during this time period, I am interested in focusing in this essay on those who populated the New World en masse. Later, in the mid-twentieth century, Asian people began populating more and more of the Americas, especially Brazil. Also, during the same time period, many Jews immigrated to the Americas from Nazi-occupied territories.

<sup>2</sup> Miguel Angel Fernández, cited in "Casta Paintings: The Construction and Depiction of Race in Colonial Mexico," by Christa Johanna Olson [website on-line]; available from <http://hemi.nyu.edu/archive/studentwork/colony/olson/Casta1.htm>; Internet; accessed 03 March 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Magali Marie Carrera, "Locating Race in Late Colonial Mexico," *Art Journal* 57 (Fall 1998): 43.

<sup>4</sup> "They attempt to bring order to the deceptive and equivocal nature of the physical markers of race by constructing it as social—encountered, negotiated and lived between and among specific boundaries," Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> At first only a series of words that denoted the father's and mother's backgrounds, the *castas* became more complex as the years moved on. The visual system of painting the "couplings" and their results became a more acceptable and concrete form of representation. Magali Marie Carrera explains that these images "may better be understood as a set of visual practice embedded in broader regulatory narratives . . . . They were a visual practice that made the colonial body knowable and viable." In other words, perceived colonial control over interracial procreation was key in the conception of these works. Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 54.



The impact of those visual representations, manifest in ideological terms, have influenced the way we continue to consolidate identities throughout the Americas despite the highly complex, hybrid reality in which we live. Today, though we are no longer legally constrained by our race, many forms of bureaucracy in the United States still use statistics based on the biological makeup of the nation to define and guide social, economic, and political policy—for better or for worse. As U.S. citizens, we are primarily taught to identify with an English colonial past. However, it is shortsighted to refute the impact of the Spanish colonial government on matters of race politics throughout the Americas today.<sup>6</sup>

The series of *castas* and their attendant social ideologies provide evidence that a political preoccupation with hybridity was widespread, representing a collective American issue. This discussion of the *castas* genre will reveal how biologically-based representations of identity were constructed to favor the political, social and economic interests of the elite and how such constructions continue to inform our present. As the *castas* paintings show, fundamental structures of order were patterned upon a heterosexual biological paradigm. Such heteronormative patterns are used to maintain general and popular understandings of identity construction. By divorcing identity from a traditional biological archetype, current reliance upon a system that was largely devised to reinforce the project of colonialism might be redirected towards an alternate and transcendent direction more suited to our current hybrid existence.<sup>7</sup> Art critic bell hooks

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<sup>6</sup> Warren Cariou is a contemporary Canadian literature scholar who has made an important contribution to field of hybrid ethnicity studies with his article "The Epistemology of the Woodpile." In it he shows how the anxiety associated with the proliferation of interracial mixing in Canada contributed to the colloquial phrase "the Indian in the woodpile." This saying alludes to a majoritarian anxiety of such "hidden" racial transgressions, such as miscegenation, which occurred in spite of the social taboos that were instituted to discourage such "incidents" of hybridity. Cariou argues that the Canadian phrase, and its associated ideologies of separation, has its roots in the similar, derogatory and disquieting United States phrase "a nigger in the woodpile." This woodpile, he explains, "emerges from the pervasive fear of miscegenation in Antebellum America" (912). Using several examples of the phrase ranging from the eighteenth century up to our current time, Cariou illustrates how anxiety about this emerging liminal identity was prevalent throughout North America and how such an ideology of separation continues into our current time. Cariou's discussion, however, remains within the border of those white French and English settlers of the North, and the equally Caucasian settlers of the South; his examination misses the equally paranoid Spanish preoccupation with issues of hybridity, as is represented in the *castas* paintings. In his article, Cariou concedes that there was a concern about multicultural mixing shared by the U.S. and Canada, but by locating such concern with hybridity only as far south as the U.S. southern states, he misses the major historical component of the Spanish Americas. The *castas* are not only documents of visual representation, they include writing and thus might also be considered literary documents. Racial systems of organization were a colonial phenomenon that spread throughout the Americas, extending well below the temporal and geographic region of the antebellum South. See Cariou, "The Epistemology of the Woodpile," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (2002): 910-916.

<sup>7</sup> This is because the accepted biological model that is taken as "natural" today is actually a relic of the modern era, where it was employed as a tool of control and conquest. In the early modern "making of nations" through cartography recounted by social theorist Valerie Traub, identity formation and national affiliation became "implicitly gendered," providing Europe with a means to establish hegemony over recently colonized subjects. In Traub's discussion of the plotted and human constructed cartographic body, she explains how the "bodies of the world," not only become "terrain to be charted," but represent how "global erotic normativity" was communicated through the form of the map. See Traub, "Mapping the Global Body," in *Early Modern Visual Culture: Representation, Race, and Empire in Renaissance*



aply connects the necessity for such change to liberty, which will only be found, she argues, when individuals "transcend" labels with such "narrowly defined limits."<sup>8</sup>

In this essay, I will compare two contemporary artistic projects that are actively challenging such Enlightenment era "limits." The first is a collaborative effort by the Homegirls, a creative enterprise involving Alma Lopez and Noni Olabisi, who identify as Chicana and African American respectively; their work is called *Education is a Basic Human Right*. The second is a painting by Josefina Pelayo Mendoza, who works in Veracruz, Mexico, and identifies as Latina. Her work is entitled *Mi Yo/My Self*. These two projects create points of intersection between concepts that are perceived as disparate, and that thus reconnect the Americas with Africa.<sup>9</sup> I have selected these two works in particular because they most explicitly show how the Americas and Africa might be observed as united and not separated, as classificatory systems of the Enlightenment, such as the *castas*, suggested. In order to convey this connection, these three artists have developed pictorial languages that provide alternatives to the natural heterosexual biological model. By incorporating multiple temporalities and positionalities simultaneously in their visual language, these artists develop distinctive visions of hybrid identity. In re-presenting identity, the Homegirls and Pelayo offer an alternative to the traditional heteronormative male/female construct displayed in such images as the *castas* paintings. Instead, they create a sort of antithesis to the Enlightenment period *castas* project. One of the most important aspects of these works is that these artists reconnect people through the reality of hybrid American identity. In particular, *Education is a Basic Human Right* and *Mi Yo/My Self* reframe common forms of visual language with innovative and subtle juxtapositions of representation to repair such fractures caused by Enlightenment era classification systems. They provide the viewer with a visual form of re-unification. Before discussing these contemporary works, I will provide a historical background, illustrating how social, political, and economic motives of colonial control were instituted visually through the *castas* projects to protect Spanish and Creole interests in the Americas.

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England, ed. Peter Erickson and Clark Hulse (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 46. To carry this theory into a contemporary context, I quote queer theorist Michael Warner, who astutely observes that the colonially based ideology of domination continues and this "regime of sexuality that first transformed Europe has now been registered not only in the New World but in all reaches of modern colonialism." "Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet," *Social Text* 29 (1991): 7.

<sup>8</sup> bell hooks, "Art on My Mind," in *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: New Press, W. W. Norton and Co., 1995), 8.

<sup>9</sup> The concept of *intersectionality* is taken from Kimberle Williams Crenshaw's approach of *intersectional analysis*. This draws upon lines of interconnection between seemingly disparate social movements, using her theoretical tool of intersectional analysis. Crenshaw illustrates how such a technique can be applied in her study of violence against black women, explaining that the benefits of intersectional analysis allow us to connect "contemporary politics [and] postmodern theory." From a black feminist stance, Crenshaw employs intersectional analysis to mobilize a "methodology that will ultimately disrupt the tendencies to see race and gender as exclusive or separable categories." By employing the methodological construct of intersectional analysis, Crenshaw "facilitate[s] a merging of race and gender discourses to uncover what lies hidden between them." By looking to points of intersection, one is able to design a viable approach to the study of liminality. See Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew," in *Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Assaultive Speech, and the First Amendment* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 114.



## Visualizing Biology—kinship and the *Castas* genre

Miguel Cabrera's *castas* works are characterized by an astute attention to detail, including a concerted effort to depict interior, market, and urban spaces. He seemed intent on paralleling people and the natural bounty of the Americas, depicting in almost all of his panels some form of uniquely "American" flora and fauna, such as the basket of produce in *De Español, y Negra; Mulata*.<sup>10</sup> Cabrera was a firmly established artist before he received commissions to complete paintings in this genre, which he created from 1750 until 1768. Art historians Iлона Katzew, Abby Sue Fisher, and María Concepción García Saíz have identified over twenty painters working in this genre, though several paintings are still officially listed as anonymous. Though the reasons for these commissions remain unclear, scholars like Katzew suggest that they were visual tools employed to represent to the Spanish crown "that Mexico was still a rigidly structured society" in spite of the seemingly overwhelming racial integration throughout the colonial American provinces.<sup>11</sup> There is evidence of specific commissions to particular artists; however, Katzew reports that many of these works are now missing "perhaps due to restrictions imposed by the church."<sup>12</sup> Significantly, this genre reached its height of popularity during the Spanish Bourbon era, a period marked by increased peninsular Spanish control over her colonies. Reforms instituted within this era were intended to reduce Creole power in New Spain and to increase revenues from the New World to the Spanish crown.

This heightened insistence on Spanish superiority in the Americas characterized the Bourbon period. However, from the beginnings of New Spain, the Spanish were outspoken about their need to preserve the purity of their blood. This logic derived from a conquest mentality; in order successfully to take control of the New World, the Spanish had to be unified as a European race. Historian Magali Marie Carrera explains that as early as 1530, European Spaniards clearly set themselves apart from "Indian-Spaniard offspring" by creating the "mestizo designation" in the sixteenth century to indicate "illegitimacy."<sup>13</sup> However, as time passed, and fewer women than men immigrated to the colonies, Spanish men and Native American women procreated.<sup>14</sup> Because of this, Native American blood was redeemable in the minds of the Spanish. Black blood, however, was not.<sup>15</sup> American inhabitants of the New World were people; they were

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<sup>10</sup> Iлона Katzew, "Identity and Social Stratification," in *New World Orders: Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America*, ed. Iлона Katzew and John A. Farmer (New York: Americas Society Art Gallery, 1996), 21.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>13</sup> Magali Marie Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 36.

<sup>14</sup> "The near absence of Spanish/European women in the Americas during the first decades after contact led to the birth of a considerable number of genetically mixed offspring." J. Jorge Klor de Alva, "Mestizaje from New Spain and Aztlán: On the Control and Classification of Collective Identities," *New World Orders: Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America*, ed. Iлона Katzew and John A. Farmer (New York: Americas Society Art Gallery, 1996), 60. But this biological fact did not necessarily imply that a new, ethnically distinct community was being created.

<sup>15</sup> "The common opinion of both Indian leaders and colonial officials was that Africans, regardless of status, should be encouraged to marry only among themselves in order to avoid concubinage and the social disruption in the native communities that followed from involuntary and transient relations between the two groups. In fact, this form of miscegenation was assumed to represent so great a threat to social peace that,



cultured, as evidenced by the great civilizations that existed before Spanish contact. These "pagan" American inhabitants, explains Katzew, "merited the protection of the Spanish crown. Blacks, on the other hand, were brought to the New World as slaves and were in theory situated at the lowest echelons of society."<sup>16</sup> While enslaved Africans also came from sophisticated civilizations on the opposite side of the Atlantic Ocean, their social position as slaves explicitly established them as property. Color, however, was only one component of identification in the *castas* system.

Katzew describes the process of the *castas* as a bifurcated endeavor that assigned both "social ranking and social disability a biological basis."<sup>17</sup> The *castas* were an early colonial form of defining race. At this time, its principles were still vague;<sup>18</sup> the term was used synonymously "to denote 'biological ethnicity'" as well as "cultural alliances."<sup>19</sup> In the eighteenth century, this system developed into something Katzew calls a "rhetoric of race" that "was used to invent distinctions between what we now call classes."<sup>20</sup> Thus, identity was not only a mark of biological association, it determined where one would be placed socially as it also established people's prospects for an economic future.

These *castas* paintings visually represented the Spanish at the top of the heap, both racially and economically. The common strategy artists employed to depict Spanish dominance in *castas* paintings was to place images of Spaniards in the initial panels of the series. Such visual representation of identity became more complex as time went by, incorporating into the system even more racial combinations. Soon those who were identified as hybrid, such as the young "mulatta" depicted in Cabrera's work (fig.1), were no longer anomalies.<sup>21</sup> Instead, representations of racial hybridity became more elaborately displayed.<sup>22</sup> The visual devices of the *castas* were instituted to represent an ideal outcome of Spanish control over the colonies' populations.

Thus, the *castas* genre was generally created to denote different bonds of kinship, explicitly depicting biological connections as the primary source of identity construction. The Spanish were so committed to building up *castas* documentation that today scholars have a hard time pinning down an official number of *castas* categories; some scholars

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while serving as viceroy of New Spain, Martín Enríquez petitioned Philip II (in vain) to request from the Pope either a total prohibition against African-Indian marriages or a requirement that their children be considered slaves." J. Jorge Klor de Alva, "Mestizaje from New Spain and Aztlán: On the Control and Classification of Collective Identities," *New World Orders: Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America*, ed. Ilona Katzew (New York: Americas Society Art Gallery, 1996), 60.

<sup>16</sup> Ilona Katzew, "Identity and Social Stratification," in *New World Orders: Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America*, ed. Ilona Katzew and John A. Farmer (New York: Americas Society Art Gallery, 1996), 9.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 12

<sup>18</sup> "In fact, the term 'race' was used in shifting and unstable ways during the colonial period." Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> María Concepción García Saíz, "The Artistic Development of Casta Painting," in *New World Orders: Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America*, ed. Ilona Katzew and John A. Farmer (New York: Americas Society Art Gallery, 1996), 33.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



cite as few as sixteen,<sup>23</sup> another lists one hundred and fifty-eight.<sup>24</sup> These names include: *castizo*, from a Spanish father and a light-skinned mestizo mother; *chino*, from a Native American father and a Black mother; *zambo*, from a Black father and a Native American mother; *morisco*, from a Spanish father and a mulatta mother; *coyote*, from a mestizo father and a Native American mother; *torna atrás* (return-backwards), from a mulatto father and a mestiza mother, and the list goes on.

The careful construction of the *castas* have given form to some of the most interesting images from the colonial American period, documenting a Spanish fear that America was emerging as a society flawed by its growing hybrid population.<sup>25</sup> It must be said, however, that the idea of cultural hybridity had been a fact of American life well before the Spanish arrived. Centuries of pre-conquest history had already been marked by successive encounters between opposing American factions.<sup>26</sup> The Spanish, however, lived according to a different system of social organization. Katzew explains that "the subordination of State to Church and the ideology of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood)—where the absence of Jewish or Muslim blood defined an honorable Old Christian—were factors contributing to Spain's hierarchically organized society, whose members had clearly delineated roles."<sup>27</sup> Spain had been chasing out her own demons of cultural hybridity centuries before the New World was "discovered." The Spanish Crown, in concert with the Church, sought to eradicate the Muslims throughout the Middle Ages, and the Spanish Inquisition was established as an official policy to purify Spain by ridding the country of Muslims and Jews. The decision to take such grand measures of purification was rooted in a governmental desire to control and thwart non-Christian growth, an aspect of social management that began in Christian ideology and ended in ultimate political control.

Another demonstration of the viability of the groupings is that they, along with the complexity of hybrid identification, grew exponentially as the centuries passed. It is no surprise that such organization of hybridity reached its acme, in both linguistic terms

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<sup>23</sup> Magali Marie Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 12.

<sup>24</sup> Robert J.C. Young, "Colonialism and the Desiring Machine," in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 177.

<sup>25</sup> "For the colonial elite, the classificatory system purveyed in casta painting was devoid of negative connotations." However, the genre was meant to distract from the problems that such a system of order created among the colonized and the colonizers. According to the serial construction of a *castas* cycle, "the placement of Spaniards at the beginning of these classifications underscored the fact that Spaniards presided over society. The deployment of the family trope created a sense of unity within hierarchy, and it promoted an image of domesticity that masked racial tensions." Ilona Katzew, "Identity and Social Stratification," in *New World Orders: Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America*, ed. Ilona Katzew and John A. Farmer (New York: Americas Society Art Gallery, 1996), 12.

<sup>26</sup> These groups included the Maya, Mexica, Tula, Toltec, and Aztec peoples, among others. At Cortés' arrival, much of present-day central Mexico, which was composed of various ethnic groups, had been subjected to Aztec rule. Mesoamerican art historian Michael Coe explains, "Quite a number of other cities of central Mexico . . . between the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and the Chichimec frontier had about 11,000,000 inhabitants, most of whom were under Aztec domination." Michael D. Coe, "The Aztecs in 1519," in *Mexico: From the Olmecs to the Aztecs*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 164.

<sup>27</sup> Ilona Katzew, "Identity and Social Stratification," *New World Orders: Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America*, ed. Ilona Katzew and John A. Farmer (New York: Americas Society Art Gallery, 1996), 9.



used to name the categories and the complexity with which they were depicted visually in the *castas* genre, during the eighteenth century, during the European Enlightenment. While the *castas* seemed to function as a sort of guidebook denoting official categories, in reality, explains Carrera, they “may not be about the social reality as much as they are about a social engineering that was being carefully put into place by Bourbon reformers as they attempted to construct, control, and maintain colonial bodies and the spaces they occupied.”<sup>28</sup> Such “social engineering” was the catalyst for several important visual modifications that took place within the *castas* genre.

### **“To Market to Market”: re-imagining the intimidating spaces of urban life**

In the eighteenth century, the linguistic and visual labeling that had been instituted by the Spanish elite was losing its effectiveness (if it ever had been effective). Such loss of classificatory control might have incited Spanish administrators to reconsider how spatial arrangements were depicted in the visual arts. This concern may have stemmed from a preoccupation with public spaces, particularly the marketplace. Seen as foreboding, the marketplace was unavoidably multicultural—a place where various economic, social, and racial statuses intermingled.<sup>29</sup> To the Spanish and Creole elite, the marketplace symbolized all of the things that might disrupt the best-laid plans for successful “social engineering.”<sup>30</sup> Carrera explains that the *castas* actually represented “non-existent people, and thus, as a visual practice, these images diagnose markers of hybridity and simultaneously actually construct the colonial bodies and their spaces.”<sup>31</sup> Assigning a “space” to the appropriate group became important because the laws that were instituted to divide the castes into categories were evaded in spaces like the marketplace.<sup>32</sup> Increased attention to such laws, especially those strategies that were used to elude them, namely “passing,” might have been why the *castas* paintings began representing space more explicitly as the eighteenth century progressed.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Magali Marie Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 43. From Ilona Katzew, “The strategies of self representation in the casta pictorial genre can be summarized as follows: first, the emphasis on the overall stratification of society through the metaphor of race; second, the highlighting of the wealth and abundance of the colony as a way of proving to Spain that Mexico did not lag behind Europe; third, the deliberate mediation of reality evinced through the scenes selected for representation. The idea of racial hierarchy is clearly at the heart of these works. In this sense, they provide an image of society that might not seem, at first glance, to be entirely sympathetic, especially for the modern viewer. But, if we accept that casta paintings were commissioned by Spanish and Creole elite, we understand why hierarchy, as a necessary condition for the subsistence of any imperial order, becomes the main subjects of these works.” Katzew, “Identity and Social Stratification,” in *New World Orders: Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America*, ed. Ilona Katzew and John A. Farmer (New York: Americas Society Art Gallery, 1996), 27.

<sup>29</sup> Magali Marie Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 34.

<sup>30</sup> This is Carrera’s term for the overbearing attempt of Spaniards and Creoles alike to take stock of, and then document, the intermixing going on between the races. Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>32</sup> These laws dictated which castes were entitled to wealth and property, which ones had to pay tribute, and which ones were bound to servitude.

<sup>33</sup> “Casta unions and the resulting births were responsible for these population metamorphoses; passing occurred among all casta groups and at an accelerating rate in the late colonial period. There was little



Generally, space was meagerly depicted in early *castas* series. Such representations depended on the significance of the words used to describe the relationships between the people included on the canvas. The works attributed to Juan Rodríguez Juárez during the first quarter of the eighteenth century showed careful attention to costume and physical appearance, and focused on the words that were used to describe the particular racial categories. By the middle of the century, painters such as Cabrera were defining space more explicitly in their compositions. Though he was working to represent space accurately, Cabrera's paintings betray that he was still not as interested in depicting place as he was in carefully recording the subtleties of wardrobe and the unusual flora and fauna of the colonies. As the century ended, representation of space moved to the foreground of these works. For instance, in a complete set of *castas* by an unknown artist, painted circa 1790, one notices the artist's definite allusion to space, and his explicit representation of scenes in the marketplace and in the suburbs. One of the more interesting works represents the dangerous racial combination, *De Mulata y Español nace Morisca* (*From Mulatta and Spaniard, a Morisca is Born*). It depicts the family in the busy center of the marketplace. Their presentation in the center of the market draws attention to how such a coupling was perceived. According to the eighteenth-century *castas* principles, the market square was the region where such couplings were kindled. One might deduce, in this historical context, that the mulatta used the marketplace as a strategic position from which to seduce the unsuspecting Spaniard. This point will be explained in more detail momentarily. By the end of the eighteenth century, it was standard for *castas* cycles to depict the spatial positions of the colonial bodies within their frames.

Officially passing as Spanish or Creole in colonial New Spain made for less complicated access to social and economic markers of status. For instance, becoming established in eighteenth-century New Spanish aristocracy afforded one the right to wear fine textiles and to assume important leadership positions.<sup>34</sup> Such visual representation of "social engineering" commissioned by the elite Spanish government did little, however, to diminish the occurrence of passing throughout New Spain.

The rules that were to guarantee successful "social engineering" in the Americas, to keep disparate groups apart, extended to all living in the Spanish colonies. Such organization was reinforced through the process of "racial" labeling. These racial names adhered even though the *castas* failed to recognize specific racial variations. Yet the elite

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worry about passing among the lower *casta* groups. As one would expect, the issue of passing from a *casta* group in the Spaniard designation was of more critical concern to the elite." Magali Marie Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 43.

<sup>34</sup> Historian J. Jorge Klor de Alva explains that people who could pass for Spaniards "enjoyed royal privileges, such as permission to dress in silk, to carry and use arms, to ride horses, to reside in certain privileged areas, to travel and trade within the maximum allowable freedoms granted by the Crown, to marry Spaniards, to be appointed to ecclesiastical and governmental posts." Klor de Alva, "Mestizaje From New Spain to Aztlán," in *New World Orders: Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America*, ed. Ilona Katzew and John A. Farmer (New York: Americas Society Art Gallery, 1996).



powers liked to believe that their categories were “finely calibrated.”<sup>35</sup> Further, certain social and moral stigmas were also attached to particular names. For instance, J. Jorge Klor de Alva explains, “the fact that most hybrids were the product of unmarried couples, led both ‘mestizo’ and ‘mulatto’ not only to take on the connotation of adultery and illegitimacy, but to become closely associated with every kind of social transgression.”<sup>36</sup> Cabrera alludes to the colonial Spanish view that the “mulatto” was a harbinger of such indiscretions in his work *De Español, y Negra; Mulata*. In it, the father holds his daughter in a disquieting embrace that crosses the line of paternal love and instead hints at child molestation. Such visual representations of moral transgression are common in the caste paintings, as in the work *De Mulata y Español nace Morisca* discussed above.

Artist José de Páez, a student of Miguel Cabrera, also included such moral indiscretions in some of his *castas* paintings. In his 1780 work, *De Sambaigo, y Mulata, produce Calpamulata* (*Zambaigo and Mulatta Produce Calpamulata*), he represents the destitution associated with alcoholism. In this image a mulatta woman and a zambaigo man work within the city square. Clearly, the father is more destitute than his wife, who appears to be keeper of a modest shop. The wife wears pearl earrings and necklace and her child takes after her exactly in both physical attributes and costume. The father wears torn clothing and sits near the door of the shop while he rolls tobacco. Could he be preparing to venture out into the market to sell these cigarettes while his wife remains inside?

The moral depravity associated with the husband is evident in his appearance. And such representation has a purpose in the *castas* genre. He is a zambaigo, the son of a mulatto father and an American mother, and the artist uses such specific visual language to show that this man is a drunk. Katzew explains this connection between alcoholism and hybrid identity: “certain mixtures – particularly those of Spaniards or Indians with Blacks – could only lead to contraction of debased sentiments, immoral proclivities, and extreme susceptibility to a decivilized state.”<sup>37</sup> One of the “decivilized states” most often invoked by the Spanish was that of the American becoming intoxicated by *pulque*, an alcohol extracted from the maguey plant: “The beverage was blamed for causing the famous riot of 1692. *Pulque* was often mentioned as a cause of random acts of violence and sexual crimes, and this is precisely what is often represented in the literature and in numerous illustrations.”<sup>38</sup> With such negativity associated with certain castes, along with the myriad privileges assigned to those who could visually qualify as either Creole or Spanish, there should be no question why many hybrid individuals adopted passing as a strategy.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>37</sup> Iлона Katzew, “Identity and Social Stratification,” in *New World Orders: Casta Painting and Colonial Latin America*, ed. Iлона Katzew and John A. Farmer (New York: Americas Society Art Gallery, 1996), 24.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



### **"Separating out their dangerous mixtures": toward a new hybridity**

The visual devices of the *castas* were linked to projects of "social engineering" intended to ensure Spanish political superiority. Magali Marie Carrera has likened "social engineering" to Foucaultian "panopticism."<sup>39</sup> Explaining this connection between the *castas* and Foucault, Carrera says, "as in written documents, the gaze/surveillance in the *casta* genre images gave visual form to the body by illustrating and circulating imagined knowledge about the protean conditions of, and interactions among, colonial bodies and spaces."<sup>40</sup> Nothing of the colonial body could be contained within the parameters set by the state; yet it was still subjected to an impossible system of order. The *castas* quickly outgrew the artificial confines of the elites' plan. While categorization and the illusion of control represented an ideology of panoptic vision to the elite in Spain, the reality was that hybridity could not be controlled.

One could argue that such a system is still at work in the Americas. Except now we are asked to define how we identify within a stringent categorical system established by the U.S. Census and other forms of official paperwork. Though some changes are underway, such as the recently instituted category of "multicultural," ideologies of identity generally still swing back to the traditional biological model.

Multicultural identity, or hybridity, is very much the standard in our world today. However, we spend much time, money, and energy attempting to understand, work within, and control it according to panoptic parameters that rely on the effectiveness of surveillance techniques. Thus, reconsidering the concept of kinship-based identity might be a more efficient means of understanding how race identification actually poses a hindrance to the smooth functioning of our society. As we have seen, colonial Mexican *castas* paintings tried to enact the "natural" form of biological kinship to enforce a stringent form of visual categorization. The age-old prototype of a biological, kinship-based structure is thus part of a larger reality of bureaucratic and governmental panopticism. It is for this reason that a new means of defining identity is in order.

Removing identity formation from a biological prototype makes room for a more complex construction to emerge—a concept that can be aligned with the ideology of diasporic history. Scholar Stuart Hall sees the character of the Americas as unique because of their distinct diasporic history. The Americas represent "the beginning of Diaspora, of diversity, of hybridity and difference," a place where "identities . . . are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> According to Michel Foucault, there are "two ways of exercising power over men, of controlling their relations, of separating out their dangerous mixtures." Michel Foucault, "Panopticism," in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, ed. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 62. Magali Marie Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 104.

<sup>40</sup> Magali Marie Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 134.

<sup>41</sup> Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Diaspora and Visual Culture: Representing Africans and Jews*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London: Routledge, 2000), 31.



Scholar Edna Acosta-Belén extends Hall's observation of diaspora ideology to a specifically Latin American context. She does this by invoking historian José Martí's cultural concept of *Nuestra América*, which made reference to the political, economic, and social upheaval that was forcing so many Mexican citizens to relocate to the North for shelter, jobs, and sustenance. In this context, she explains that the expanding Latina/o population in the U.S. is bringing about an urgent need to change the ways in which we understand Latina/o identity. She calls for a reassessment that will incite an understanding of how multiple and fluid Latina/o identities are constructed and juggled in the new transnational context—identities that are reconstituted or remolded across generations from connections with the respective native cultures, with the U.S. mainstream culture that marginalizes ethnoracial minorities, and with the cultures of subordinate groups.<sup>42</sup>

Like Hall, Acosta-Belén cites the American diaspora as setting identity apart from an approach solely dependent upon dualisms. By examining these diasporic entities, we are uncovering a realm that is no longer dictated by the hegemonic binary structure of race identification. Thus, the historical discourse of diaspora represents an alternate way to understand identity and a means to take it out of a biological context. Diaspora history opens up the possibility for establishing something new inside the language of dichotomy upon which our society has been constructed. In this respect, diaspora is closely connected to the theoretical construct of "thirdspace."<sup>43</sup>

Edward Soja illustrates how to establish alternate meanings within the pre-existing binary spaces and structures of our contemporary world. By employing the navigational tools with which we are already equipped, we can re-script our understanding by establishing "an-Other set of choices."<sup>44</sup> The ways in which "thirdspace" and diaspora rhetoric intersect will become clear as I discuss the works of Pelayo and the Homegirls. Given the long diasporic history of the Americas, why are we operating with the remnants of a system that was instituted, and ultimately failed, four hundred years ago?

### **Latina, Chicana, and African American artists working to make a change**

It is interesting that attempts to change the way that we think about hybrid identity are once again located within the visual arts. The works of both Josefina Pelayo and the Homegirls address recent academic discourse on the *Tercera Raíz*, or the *Third Root*, a movement dedicated to uncovering African influence in Mexico. One of the primary purposes of this movement is to resurrect those identities that were obscured by the Mexican nationalist project of the nineteenth century.

<sup>42</sup> Edna Acosta-Belén, "Hemispheric Remappings: Revisiting the Concept of *Nuestra América*," in *Identities on the Move: Transnational Processes in North America and the Caribbean Basin*, ed. Liliana R. Goldin (Albany, N.Y.: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, University at Albany, distributed by University of Texas Press, 1999), 87.

<sup>43</sup> The word "thirdspace" derives from Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 10.



At the time of Mexican independence, the body of the Indian was resurrected as a symbol of Mexican solidarity.<sup>45</sup> The Indian body represented an opportunity for nationalists to reinvent Mexico in a new image. However, this period was also a critical moment for the history of Africans in Mexico. The reason African and Indian bodies fared so differently has its origins in the early years of colonialism. When the tracking of racial intermixture hit its apogee, it was generally accepted that the offspring of a Native American and a Spaniard held hope for the colonial project. Colonialists believed that after one generation, the blood of that offspring, when combined with that of a Spaniard, would be cleansed.<sup>46</sup> However, if African blood entered the mix, the offspring, along with all future generations, would be forever polluted.<sup>47</sup> This is when a subtle reframing of *mestiza/o* identity took center stage in the Spanish Americas, truncating the history of Africa in the Americas, especially in Latin America. Later on, before the *Third Root* discourse gained momentum, *mestizaje*, or mixed-race identity, referred to mixed Native American and European Spanish descent, with little, if any, attention paid to African heritage.

In their work, both Josefina Pelayo and the Homegirls communicate an alternate means of interpreting identity that eschews the exemptions inherent in the traditional model of biological kinship. The work is further reinforced by the backgrounds of the three artists themselves. Both Pelayo and the Homegirls represent Afro-Latina identities, but they are not Afro-Latina. Thus, their Afro-Latina depictions not only represent the hybrid body, they also prefigure an alternative method for establishing bonds of kinship.

### **Josefina Pelayo—putting the puzzle of hybridity back together again**

Several of Josefina Pelayo's portraits address the resurrection of African influence in Mexico. In many of her works, she portrays the inhabitants of Costa Chica, a Pacific coastal region of Mexico that extends from Acapulco in the state of Guerrero to Huatulco in Oaxaca. This area has received special attention from academics since the mid-twentieth century because it has retained a strong African character. However, Pelayo's portraits transcend mere documentation of vestiges from the age of enslavement.

In thinking about Josefina Pelayo Mendoza's visual project *Mi Yo/My Self*, it is useful to recall the popular nursery rhyme, *Humpty Dumpty*. Rewritten in a contemporary, post-colonial context, *Humpty Dumpty* takes on the role of a liminal hybrid figure who falls off of the proverbial "wall" because she is hybrid and does not fit within the expected binary parameters set by the colonial project of the Enlightenment

<sup>45</sup> Magali Marie Carrera describes the colonial body as a "critical nexus in the discourse of origin and authenticity." Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 147.

<sup>46</sup> "In genre painting of castas, the mestizo is formulated in two ways. Mestizo blood that continued to mix with Spanish blood was perceived to be purifiable. That is, the mestizo-Spaniard union produced a castizo, and castizo blood combined with Spanish blood became fully purified, with the offspring returning to the calidad of the Spaniard." Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> "On the other hand, if mestizo blood mixed with African blood, Indian, or other casta blood, the result could only be further denigration." Ibid.



era. But instead of being subjected to the fate of the original Humpty, who was never “put back together again,” Pelayo’s hybrid and decidedly female Humpty is successfully reconstructed in *Mi Yo/My Self* (Fig. 2). Pelayo uses this image to advance an ideology of interconnection, stressing a picture of the Americas steeped in African culture. Pelayo works to convey a sense of culture anchored in a place detached from the surface of appearance.

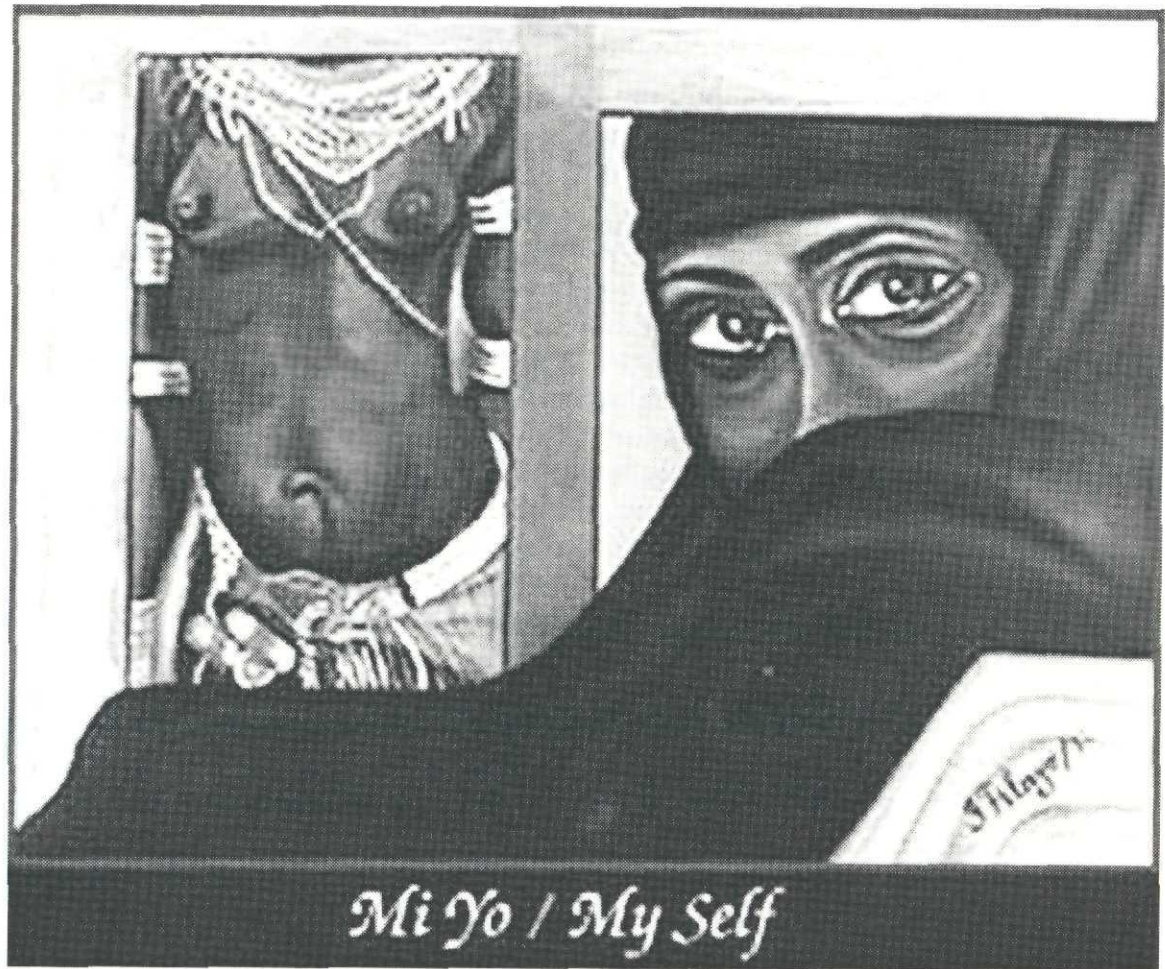


Figure 2. Josefina Pelayo, *Mi Yo/My Self*, oil on canvas, nd., available from [www.afro-mexico/links/pelayo](http://www.afro-mexico/links/pelayo) [artist's website on-line]; internet; accessed 01 October 2002.

The title of this particular work creates a paradox for the viewer. While the subject seems established in the name of the work—a celebration of Pelayo’s “self”—the painting looks as though it bypasses the point. In this work, Pelayo represents an alternate “identification,” drawing on a reunification of the Americas and Africa. She uses a photo-derived aesthetic to present two portions of women’s bodies. By painting them into rectangular constructions, she reminds the viewer of the disturbing reality of ready-made stereotypes. Using this aesthetic, Pelayo represents the torso of a young “African” woman, undressed and adorned in beaded necklaces and armbands, on the left. This image recalls the typecast version of an African pastoral woman, reprinted in such



publications as *National Geographic*. On the right is the portrait of a veiled woman wearing a traditional head covering, possibly depicting the Islamic culture of Africa. By stylistically transcending the boundary of the right rectangle, drawing out the veil so that it envelops the frame, Pelayo visually connects the two rectangular constructions of identity, creating a visual tension that points to specific regional, ethnic, or even religious differences. Perhaps drawing on familiarity with the binaries so often celebrated in the *castas* genre, Pelayo uses this technique to pose an important question: how can these two stereotyped images be reconciled to suit multiple positions of the "self"?

The legible type of Pelayo's composition emphasizes a box-like convention, presenting images as performed, frames within frames, as if painting the ideological image of Africa with which the West is most familiar. The stylistic representation of the women in Pelayo's canvas paired with the purported subject of the painting, *Mi Yo* or *My Self*, functions as an ironic effect to reclaim a body that is not yet represented—the Afro-mestizo body of the Americas. This Afro-mestizo body is unavailable in current circulating imagery and is unrepresentable outside such pre-circulated images; it is hinted at in "thirdspace." Here an identity can only be suggested by the trail of black cloth (trans)negotiating this space. This visual device leads the viewer's attention across and off the canvas and into this world, a mestizo world characterized by hybridity.

Pelayo structures the composition such that the viewer must acknowledge the problem inherent in stereotyping. She does this by presenting the problems of a methodology that constructs identity by literally "cutting and pasting," rather than through the genuine processes of integration that inform human identity. To further elaborate on this point, Pelayo depicts the figure on the left as headless, omitting recognizable "personality" from the canvas, and instead lavishes attention on the anonymous body. The beadwork and jewelry mark this woman as the "other," objectified by the way that her body is represented.

The figure on the right elicits a similar response, though from an opposite position. Any obvious emotions are concealed under the textile draped about her head. The woman's body is concealed under her headwear, emphasizing her modesty. As with the figure on the opposite side of the canvas, for this woman, the distinguishing device of the covering signifies her otherness, making the specific "otherness" impossible to discern precisely. Pelayo's stylistic convention might be used to suggest the vulnerability associated with being viewed from two different viewpoints: the overt and the covert type of sexuality, both of which have been grossly pronounced in investigations of the "other" past.

Given the complexity of identities that Pelayo depicts in her composition, it is telling that the artist entitles this work *Mi Yo* but then does not give her "self" a readily recognizable representation. Such an objectification might be related to Pelayo's "self," a "self" emphasized specifically in the context of complicated cultural identities. Here, in Pelayo's vision, and in her arrangement of that vision in the composition, the artist locates identity as specifically female and African. The images on the canvas might point to Pelayo's own connection with an African past, regardless of her official "nationality."



Pelayo's presentation suggests an affinity among all American women who identify themselves as Afro-mestizo, regardless of their biological makeup. Through this complex means of representation, Pelayo depicts identity that cannot reside in any recognizable facial features. Instead, Pelayo's portrait, *Mi Yo*, alludes to kinship formed not by a "blood mother" but by an alternate, and previously undefined, familial paradigm.

### **The Homegirls—refiguring the voice of freedom**

Like Pelayo's work, the work created by the collaboration of Alma Lopez and Noni Olabisi represents a reconnection of disparate parts to create an integrated voice of the Americas. Outside of their collaboration, both Lopez and Olabisi have participated in mural projects all over California. In addition to Noni Olabisi's numerous mural projects in Los Angeles, this self-taught African American artist has also created many smaller-scale works. Alma Lopez, also a noteworthy California muralist and visual artist, uses computer technology to enrich many of her creations. The chief impetus for the Homegirls' collaboration was to recognize and document the shared struggles in the African American and Latina/Chicano communities. But their mural does more than chronicle the past. Like Pelayo's project, the Homegirls search for a way to picture a new understanding of kinship.

Their mural, *Education is a Basic Human Right*, was named to recall Article 7 of



Figure 3. Alma Lopez and Noni Olabisi, aka, Homegirl Productions, *Education is a Basic Human Right*. Oil on canvas, 1998. Angeles Mesa Branch Public Library, Los Angeles, California. Available from Alma Lopez, *Homegirl Productions*, [almalopez.net](http://almalopez.net) accessed 01 October 2002.



the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, passed in 1959 (Fig. 3). Appropriately, the mural is installed inside the Angeles Mesa Branch Public Library in Los Angeles. It is composed of three registers. The uppermost section chronicles the desegregation cases *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947) and *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954). The second register represents a wave of children demanding their right to education. And the bottom of the mural displays a large opened book that Alma Lopez describes as a reminder that access to books opens the way to "awareness of self, culture and history."

Because of the numerous issues depicted in the mural as a whole, I will restrict my interpretation to the second section of the mural. Here, the U.S. flag represents a field worked by migrant, diasporic labor, and it is also a banner carried by a diverse group towards an unclear future time and geographic space. In the area where the stars on the flag should appear, the mural spells out the title, "Education is a Basic Human Right." The figures in this mural are presented both in black and white and in color.

Two migrant workers are set against the stripes of the flag that the children hold. The artists use an archival convention of photo-derived representation here to suggest a present within the past, with images made to resemble old black-and-white photographs.<sup>48</sup> However, these are two different photographs combined to look like one: a contemporary person shown stooping, wearing a baseball cap and a hooded sweatshirt, picking strawberries, a major agricultural crop of California, and a standing female figure in clothing that connotes the past, gathering cotton into an apron bunched in her hand. The artists archive a past into a present here; such representation aligns the African American experience of inequality with the present experience of many immigrant Latina/o workers, especially regarding access to education.

Like the black and white section of the mural, the color section also asserts an integrated "thirdspace." The artists use color to make a statement of unification between African and Latina communities. Like Pelayo, Olabisi and Lopez use this figuration of thirdspace to point to the bonds of kinship established between the "brown and black communities" who have shared the struggle for education in the U.S.<sup>49</sup>

By subtly altering the conventions of the "stars and stripes" of the U.S. flag, the artists ask the viewer to question the literal and figurative principles of this common national symbol. Replacing the stars with the statement "education is a basic human right" calls into question the common interpretation of the stars, which traditionally connote a unified people pulling together to create an effective union. Education—specifically equal access to it—should theoretically make such a union possible,

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<sup>48</sup> In response to criticism of the mural, Noni Olabisi offers this defense: "this is not something that we fabricated; this is history. That is the importance of using historical images, because we did not create this madness!" "Education is a Basic Human Right" [artist's website on-line]; available from <http://home.earthlink.net/~almalopez/murals/edu/education.html>; Internet; accessed 01 October 2002.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.



disrupting any elitist assumptions and practices. However, the artists project this ideal into the future, representing a wave of "minorities" who openly display anger toward a contradictory system that promises many things, yet fails to deliver. Lopez and Olabisi unite the bodies and histories of African Americans, Latina/os, and Afro-Latina/os to illustrate common claims to the right of education.

The artists' intentional recreation of photography in the bottom section suggests a paradox. While the photography might suggest these people's affiliation with the past, the artists' use of paint to construct this illusion calls to mind a "timeless" fixity of black-and-white photography. The aesthetic of black and white set against the brilliantly colored red and white fabric of the American flag projects an intentional mixed message. Color makes the break from a shaded past, offering the possibility of a brighter present and future. The youth fight for their education, pointing to a hopeful generation that might succeed their enslaved ancestors.

Like Pelayo, Lopez and Olabisi also use color to suggest a common ground of integration and hybridity by picturing the children who represent the future fabric of the U.S. flag. These children of different, indeterminate races appear with slight dissimilarity in their skin tones. The representational ambiguity of these children perhaps refers to the limitations of past binary, black/white racial structures. By placing all figures into an integrated space, Lopez and Olabisi, like Pelayo, suggest a "third root," integrating the elements of the binary structure to produce a third category using the brilliancy of color. This mural actively demonstrates the benefits of integration, stressing the importance of interconnectedness to maintain the integrity of any "fabric." This technique is used not only to connote a shared struggle for the right to education but also to establish bonds of kinship alternative to traditional biological bonds.

### **"Thirling" the positionality of Afro-Latina identity**

Both of these artistic endeavors constitute an important move in contemporary art to represent an alternate reality of Afro-Latina identity that has not been represented before. By unpacking the biological implications associated with using binary structures as the wellspring for identity formation, these artists offer an alternative to the traditional paradigm used to establish bonds of kinship. While they themselves cannot biologically legitimate official claims to an Afro-Latina identity, their works establish a precedent, illustrating in representation what it means to claim identity from within discourses of hybrid identity formation. Using an aesthetic that alludes to photography in both color and black and white, Pelayo and the Homegirls create a picture of alternative bonds of identification, forged through the reclamation of a diasporic past. This form of representation establishes a "thirdspace," delineating a position where modes of kinship can be created as an alternative to the traditional biological model.

The work that Alma Lopez, Josefina Pelayo, and Noni Olabisi are doing is important to the project of reconnection instigated by such social movements as *Tercera Raíz/Third Root*. By making reference to the way that *mestizo* identity is understood today, artists, teachers, and students who support a movement of reconnection are able to

offer a more complex image of the hybrid reality common throughout the Americas. The visual languages that these three artists have developed “refigure” the common binary heteronormativity portrayed by the *castas* project. By pushing forth a new concept of visual unification, these artists effectively transcend the biological norm of kinship. They illustrate important ties between the Americas and Africa, establishing for themselves and the viewers of their works an alternate means to understand the world as interconnected.



## Fiesta San Antonio: Ideology, Space, and the Reproduction of Popular Culture

Lilliana P. Saldaña

### Introduction

Since 1892, San Antonio has celebrated the Texas victory at the Battle of San Jacinto with the Battle of the Flowers Parade, a parade that glorifies the “heroes” and “defenders” of the Alamo: David Crockett, James Bowie, and William Travis.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the years, this celebration of Texas “liberation” has expanded to become Fiesta San Antonio—a ten-day, city-wide celebration that starts on April 19. Today, Fiesta includes a multitude of “traditional” events in the downtown area, such as the Fiesta del Mercado, which takes place at Market Square; NIOSA (A Night in Old San Antonio), which takes place in the historic La Villita; carnivals, such as the Fiesta Carnival, which occupies three blocks and includes mechanical rides and games; and numerous parades, including the two-and-a-half hour Battle of the Flowers parade that showcases “Fiesta” royalty, the Flambeau Parade, and the River Parade.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to these popular events, Fiesta also includes other smaller festivals in the downtown area, such as the San Fernando Festival; the King William Fair, which takes place in the historic King William district; and the Fiesta “royalty” coronations. Throughout the years, other organizations and institutions have created new events to maintain the Fiesta momentum throughout the city. For example, St. Mary’s University offers the annual Oyster Bake; museums include Fiesta exhibits; and the San Antonio Zoo sponsors the Festival de Animales. Other events include A Taste of New Orleans at the Sunken Gardens; Fiesta UTSA (featuring food and the appearance of Texas Cavalier alumni and donors); A Day in Old Mexico; and Charreada, along with smaller community and neighborhood parties.<sup>3</sup>

The Fiesta has had a tremendous economic impact, expanding the city’s tourist economy. According to the Fiesta Commission, in 2002 Fiesta San Antonio made over 250 million dollars, more than other large events in the United States, including the Kentucky Derby, which makes a little over 100 million dollars a year.<sup>4</sup> The report states that tourists contributed more than 148 million dollars to Fiesta, a large amount of capital considering they only made up 35 percent of Fiesta attendees.

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<sup>1</sup> Until recently, historians, filmmakers, and the media have not recognized the role of Tejanos and their contributions to “Texas liberty.”

<sup>2</sup> Melissa Monroe, *San Antonio Express-News*, 5 April 2003, sec. 1C.

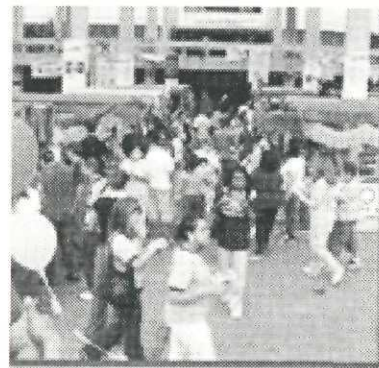
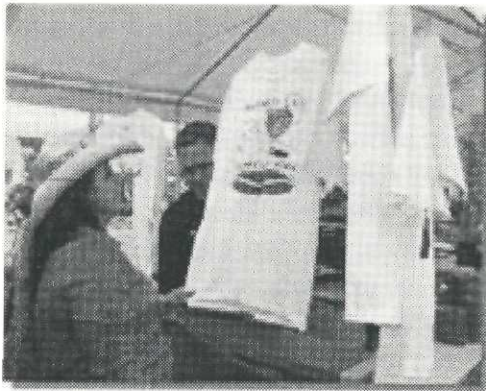
<sup>3</sup> Other Fiesta events include the San Antonio Cactus & Xerophyte Society Show and Sale; 10<sup>th</sup> Street River Festival; Fiesta Gartenfest (offering German music and food); Tejano Explosion (sponsored by the University of Texas Health Science Center); Fiesta Square and Round Dance; Fiesta Pooch Parade; Fiesta Grande Bicycle Classic; Fiesta International Lacrosse Tournament; and Scout Country Fair. See Karen Adler, “Floral fanatics,” *San Antonio Express-News*, 25 April 2003, sec. 1A.

<sup>4</sup> This was the first study of the economic impact of Fiesta in ten years, according to the Fiesta Commission. Melissa Monroe, *San Antonio Express-News*, 5 April 2003, sec. 1C.



Over the years, Fiesta has become a “tradition” in San Antonio, absorbing social life for ten days each year. It has become part of popular culture for San Antonians, including Mexican American and Chicano families. Some families stake out their seats at least two nights before the parades for premium viewing, taking grills and ice-chests. Others take their lawnmowers to clear up tall grassy areas and camp out for days to guard their claimed space—all “in the name of tradition and for the love of Fiesta,” as one San Antonian put it.<sup>5</sup> Some families have been practicing this tradition for years; one family reported that they had participated in Fiesta for a decade.<sup>6</sup>

However, not all Mexicanos, Mexican Americans, and Chicanos participate in Fiesta as parade spectators. Some reproduce Fiesta as popular culture through their participation in parade entries.<sup>7</sup> Others are street vendors, supplementing their low-wage jobs by selling antojitos and Fiesta novelty items. Still others contribute to the Fiesta enterprise with their paychecks at the carnival and other entertainment events. As spectators, vendors, entertainers, and organizers, members of the Mexican and Mexican American community in San Antonio have advertently and inadvertently aided in the reproduction of this popular cultural practice (Fig. 1-3).



Figures 1-3. Fiesta San Antonio 2003  
[www.fiesta-sa.org](http://www.fiesta-sa.org)

<sup>5</sup> Karen Adler, “Floral fanatics,” *San Antonio Express-News*, 25 April 2003, sec. 1A.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that Mexicans and Mexican Americans seldom participate in Fiesta as “royalty.” Such roles are reserved for the Euro-American elite.



Over time, Fiesta has expanded outside of the original downtown parameters, absorbing social life and becoming part of popular culture in San Antonio. Despite Fiesta's popularity, few San Antonians know about the origins of Fiesta, as a recent newspaper article showed.<sup>8</sup> Few have interrogated the ideology of Fiesta and the key institutions that have further expanded this cultural practice, establishing it as an institution in itself. It is important to examine Fiesta for several reasons. First, it is important to expose its hegemonic ideology, which glorifies, celebrates, and monumentalizes the white "heroes" of the Battle of the Alamo, privileging them over the Tejanos who fought against the Mexican army. It is also important to examine the structures and institutions that have played an important role in reproducing Fiesta. Emerging from an ideology of white supremacy, these structures and institutions have produced a cultural practice through the use of public space to maintain power differentials and anesthetize contemporary and historical inequalities in the city.

In this paper, I excavate the historical background of Fiesta San Antonio and examine the way that various institutions have developed Fiesta to reproduce and maintain Euro-American historical, cultural, and political domination. To develop a critical understanding of Fiesta San Antonio as a representation of hegemonic ideology and power differentials, this paper draws from newspaper articles, mostly from the *San Antonio Express-News*, tourist guides, and official Fiesta San Antonio websites that disseminate "official" Fiesta information to newspapers and tourists. These materials are useful as they reveal the Mexican and Mexican American community's beliefs about and practices around Fiesta. City biographies also provide useful information, as they expose the changing social, political, and economic relations between Mexicans and Anglo Americans. They also offer more detailed historical data on the origins of Fiesta, details often left out of contemporary newspaper articles about Fiesta.

An interrogation of power, knowledge, and ideology and the way that those in power have created Fiesta to guard dominant history and maintain institutional power in San Antonio is central to an understanding of Fiesta San Antonio. Indispensable in the exploration of these themes are the writings of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault.<sup>9</sup> Because this is an examination of Fiesta as a contest over public space, this work also explores the way social space is appropriated and dominated to reproduce an ideology that perpetuates inequalities. The work of David Harvey and Henri LeFebvre, as well as that of Dolores Hayden, who draws from both of these writers, is also useful. This paper will also examine Fiesta as popular culture from the top, as distinct from those manifestations of popular culture that start from the bottom up, and the way this cultural practice dissimulates social, political and economic inequalities, while perpetuating inequalities.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> David Uhler, "What is Fiesta? Its parades, cascarones, food, fellowship, fun and more," *San Antonio Express-News*, 19 April 2002, sec. 1A.

<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, trans. C. Gordon, L. Marshall, J. Mepham, K. Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980); Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Newell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. F. Perlman, et al. (Detroit: Black and Red, 1970).



## City Biographies of San Antonio: Exposing Anglo-American Domination

The city biographies under analysis tend to be Eurocentric and androcentric, excluding women, except when discussing the origins of Fiesta.<sup>11</sup> These works are also Eurocentric in that they romanticize San Antonio for its “confluence of cultures” and for its distinct otherness—that is, its Mexican “exoticness” and “charm.” They glorify San Antonio’s military history and monumentalize the Alamo, transforming it into a signifier of white supremacy. Like other institutions, these books support and perpetuate a dominant history and ideology that asserts white supremacy in San Antonio. Nonetheless, these works demonstrate how Euro-Americans in San Antonio emerged as a dominant group from 1880 to 1900, a period of rapid industrialization in Texas that marked dramatic power differentials between Mexicans and the Anglo-American dominant elite.<sup>12</sup>

Before the turn of the twentieth century, Euro-Americans (and a few Mexican Americans, such as Adelina Zavala) became key players in transforming the Alamo, a forgotten mission and fort, into master symbol of Anglo-American superiority. Chicano historian Richard Flores cites memory and modernity as the two features of meaning-making that gave rise to the Alamo in American popular culture.<sup>13</sup> As Flores asserts, cultural memory of the Alamo was produced and invoked to maintain social changes associated with the transition to modernity in Texas. This provided justification for the subjugation of Mexicans and the rise of Euro-American dominance brought about by the material and ideological forces that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>14</sup> It was during this period that Euro-Americans in San Antonio created the Battle of the Flowers.

### Historical Origins of Fiesta

To welcome President Harrison on his visit to San Antonio in 1891, a group of “prominent ladies” inaugurated an annual celebration of San Jacinto Day with a flower parade, which commemorated the heroes of the Alamo as well as Texas victory at the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836.<sup>15</sup> According to a newspaper published in 1911 that recalled the inauguration of the Battle of the Flowers Parade, “this first battle was purely a social event, only friends and neighbors and the descendants of the Texas veterans [participated] and for that reason there was much enthusiasm and gaiety, and the touch of patriotism that [had] been missing in the Carnivals after the commercial side

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<sup>11</sup> Donald E. Everett, *San Antonio: The Flavor of Its Past, 1845-1896* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1975); Donald E. Everett, *San Antonio Legacy* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1979); Edward Werner Heusinger, *Chronology of events in San Antonio, being a concise history of the city, year by year, from the beginning of establishment to the end of the first half of the twentieth century* (San Antonio: Standard Printing, 1951); Boyce House, *San Antonio: City of Flaming Adventure* (San Antonio: Naylor Company, 1968).

<sup>12</sup> Heusinger, 1951.

<sup>13</sup> Richard R. Flores, *Remembering the Alamo: Memory, Modernity, & the Master Symbol* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), xv.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>15</sup> House, *San Antonio*; Everett, *San Antonio Legacy*.



predominated.”<sup>16</sup> Thus the Battle of the Flowers Parade not only reinforced Anglo-American ideology, but also became a commercial enterprise as early as 1911 with the expansion of Battle of the Flowers events and attractions.

The Daughters of the Republic amplified the Battle of the Flowers parade with the First San Jacinto Ball (also called the Cotton Call) organized in 1896.<sup>17</sup> In this event, the Daughters, guardians of dominant history and ideology and henceforth a “hegemonic social force,” to borrow from Antonio Gramsci, selected a “queen” from a pool of white, dominant elite women.<sup>18</sup> For more than a hundred years, this symbolic practice has reinforced Anglo-American domination and hegemony in San Antonio, a city where Mexicans and Mexican Americans make up more than fifty percent of the population.<sup>19</sup>

By 1905, a committee, presumably of the dominant group, created the San Antonio Spring Carnival Association to hold the annual spring carnival during San Jacinto week, an extra attraction to the Battle of the Flowers parade.<sup>20</sup> This exemplifies how the dominant Anglo-American elite was beginning to appropriate and dominate public social space to reproduce a hegemonic ideology of Anglo-American supremacy, as well as to produce capital, turning the Alamo into “the cradle of Texas liberty” and transforming San Antonio into a tourist city.

### **The Production of Fiesta as Popular Culture**

The work of Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist and radical political scientist, helps to explain how the Anglo-American dominant elite, as a “social hegemonic force,” reproduced a dominant ideology with the creation of the Battle of the Flowers and other subsequent events at the turn of the twentieth century. The social and ideological forces, to borrow from Gramsci, have expanded Fiesta from a small, private parade in 1891 to a ten-day, city-wide celebration that has consumed social life. In his discussion of social hegemony and political government, Gramsci argues that hegemony functions as “spontaneous consent” given by the majority of the population to the dominant group. Moreover, “this consent is ‘historically’ caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, the dominant group maintains hegemony because of its class position and ability to control modes of production. In an effort to maintain class position and dominance, Euro-Americans in San Antonio reclaimed the Battle of

<sup>16</sup> Everett, *San Antonio Legacy*, p. 64.

<sup>17</sup> House, *San Antonio*; Everett, *San Antonio Legacy*.

<sup>18</sup> Everett, p. 66. By 1908, the Battle of the Flowers association was organized, with membership of “prominent ladies in the city.” However, it was the Order of the Alamo, an organization of Anglo-American men, who took charge of the queen’s ball, selecting the parade’s queen and royalty.

<sup>19</sup> This domination is perpetuated through miseducation and cultural conquest, the latter being a term I borrow from critical pedagogue Paulo Freire. Schools in San Antonio, particularly the middle schools, offer a Eurocentric perspective on Texas history. This only perpetuates miseducation and domination and renders Mexicans and Mexican Americans ignorant of the way systems of domination operate to maintain social, economic, and political inequalities. See, e.g., Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1993).

<sup>20</sup> House, *San Antonio*, 56.

<sup>21</sup> Gramsci, p. 12.



San Jacinto as their victory, and through time and the processes of miseducation kept those at the margins (that is, Mexicans and Mexican Americans) from interrogating this practice.

In the case of Fiesta, the dominant elite of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century maintained hegemony (and continues to do so) not only through its class position, but also through the production of a white supremacist ideology that glorified the Alamo, its "heroes," and the social, political, and economic "contributions" of the local Anglo-American elite. By doing this, the dominant elite placed themselves at the center of social, economic, and political life in San Antonio. They also guarded the reproduction of an ideology and social practice that celebrated their own "supremacy," which was based on race and class.

### **Fiesta as the Production of Social Space**

The work of Henri LeFebvre and David Harvey reveals how social groups maintain dominance through the appropriation of social and lived space.<sup>22</sup> LeFebvre also contends that "social space is a social product" and that this is often concealed through "double illusion" that obscures class struggle.<sup>23</sup> After all, space is "a product of the capitalist mode of production and an economic-political instrument of the bourgeoisie," and it is not always in the interest of the dominant elite to expose the way space is produced at the expense of the working class.<sup>24</sup> While many may recognize that Fiesta is a city-wide, all-consuming event that attracts both tourists and locals, grossing millions of dollars a year, few know about the origins of Fiesta San Antonio and are aware that Fiesta reproduces a certain ideology that serves the dominant group.<sup>25</sup>

To change the function, form, and structure of space, LeFebvre suggests that one must become conscious of how people produce physical, mental, and social space. By doing so, one becomes aware of the relationship between hegemony and the production of space. His work provides a theoretical framework for understanding how the ruling class appropriates and dominates space to maintain social, political, and economic dominance. As he suggests, one way of doing this is by guarding knowledge and keeping people "miseducated," as is the case in San Antonio, where celebrations like Fiesta "dissimulate" social, political, and economic inequalities between Anglo-Americans and Mexicans/Mexican Americans.

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<sup>22</sup> Throughout this paper, I have defined Fiesta as popular culture, even though the majority working-class and middle-class Mexican and Mexican American community did not create Fiesta. I consider Fiesta to be part of popular culture because it has involved the participation of the Mexican and Mexican American community—participation that continues to reproduce this as popular culture and social practice. Moreover, I consider it part of popular culture because Mexicans and Mexican Americans have recently reclaimed their own spaces to celebrate Fiesta, showing the way this community is countering hegemony. This manifestation of bottom-up popular culture is discussed by George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Minds: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (New York: Verso, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> Henri LeFebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991), 26.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>25</sup> *San Antonio Express-News*, April 2003.

As David Harvey states, "Concepts of space and time affect the way we understand the world to be."<sup>26</sup> In other words, concepts of space provide a way for us to locate ourselves and understand our positionality in the world. Moreover, according to Dolores Hayden, festivals and parades, as manifestations of social space, "help to define cultural identity in spatial terms by staking out routes in the urban cultural landscape."<sup>27</sup> Hayden explains: "Although their presence is temporary they can be highly effective in claiming the symbolic importance of places. They intermix vernacular arts traditions (in their costumes, floats, music, dance, and performance) with spatial history (sites where they begin, march, and end)."<sup>28</sup> Fiesta San Antonio, a celebration that includes numerous parades, mini-festivals, and carnivals, is highly effective in "claiming the symbolic importance of places," particularly for the Anglo-American dominant elite in San Antonio. It mixes Mexican and Mexican American popular culture (food, music, and dance) with Anglo-American exaggerations and stereotypes of Mexicans (big sombreros, peasant blouses, and the like). This in turn, is intermixed with "spatial history" or popular landmarks, as the parades make their way downtown, passing by the Alamo (interestingly, certain rituals like the parade and Fiesta royalty coronations take place in front of the Alamo, which provides these events with a powerful and symbolic backdrop). The work of LeFebvre, Harvey, and Hayden provides a framework for understanding how those in positions of power create and continuously expand Fiesta to assert dominance, enhance economic production, sanitize colonization, and conceal contemporary colonial practices that keep Mexicans and Mexican Americans as second-class citizens in San Antonio.

### **Fiesta as "Spectacle": Implications for the Reproduction of Fiesta**

Another approach to understanding the way Fiesta has been reproduced is through an analysis of Fiesta as "spectacle," to use a concept developed by Guy Debord. As Debord states, the function of the spectacle is to "make history forgotten within culture."<sup>29</sup> This certainly holds true for Fiesta San Antonio, with its myriad events that obscure the historical significance and meaning of the Battle of the Flowers, and other events that celebrate the Texas (that is, Anglo-American) victory over Mexicans in 1836. One of the newest trends in Fiesta promotion is claiming Fiesta as a celebration of "diversity."<sup>30</sup> Powerful planning organizations such as the Fiesta Commission have implemented annual themes. Recently, for example, the Fiesta Commission promoted the theme, "Celebrating Texas' Independence and Diversity," which highlighted the multiethnic composition of San Antonio, while obscuring the immense social, educational, political, and economic inequalities that still exist in the city (Fig. 4).

<sup>26</sup> David Harvey, *Justice, Nature & the Geography of Difference* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 208.

<sup>27</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), 38.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Debord, 41.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.fiesta-sa.org>





Figure 4. Fiesta San Antonio 2003. [www.fiesta-sa.org](http://www.fiesta-sa.org)

In his work, Debord recognizes that power is at the root of the spectacle, as he asserts that “the spectacle is thus a specialized activity which speaks for all the others. It is the diplomatic representation of hierarchic society to itself, where all other expression is banned. Here the most modern is also the most archaic.”<sup>31</sup> As a spectacle, Fiesta is a specialized activity that takes the work of hundreds of volunteers, many Fiesta committees (such as the Daughters of the Republic and the Texas Cavaliers), the City of San Antonio, neighborhood associations, and other institutions, such as churches, schools, and museums, who promote Fiesta and work to make it a “successful” economic and social event. Moreover, as Debord says, “the spectacle,” or Fiesta, institutionalizes the social division of labor and the formation of classes based on race. While Mexicans participate in Fiesta, they do not serve on the large planning committees and are never designated as “royalty” (even the wealthiest Mexican Americans do not enjoy this privilege). Those who are not spectators, however, provide the cheap labor in the downtown hotels and supplement their low wages as street vendors. This aids in the further development of “the spectacle,” which in turn assists in the reproduction of Fiesta as popular culture and social practice.

### Conclusion

Whether Mexicans and Mexican Americans have participated in Fiesta as spectators, street vendors, marginalized planners, or entertainers, I contend that Fiesta emerged not necessarily through the “spontaneous” consent of the majority, as Gramsci would say, but through a process of ideological domination in the media, the schools, and other institutions, and through the appropriation of social space. Today, thousands of San Antonians participate in Fiesta. It has become absorbed into San Antonio culture and social practice. Moreover, this not-so-spontaneous consent is also a result of the collaborative work between the City of San Antonio, the Fiesta Commission, the

<sup>31</sup> Debord, 23.

Daughters of the Republic, the San Antonio Conservation Society, and others who plan Fiesta, while making sure that the events are congruent with the "spirit" (ideology) of Fiesta. This ideology has been passed down by "social hegemonic forces," to borrow from Gramsci, for over one hundred years. Ideology is historically organized and reproduced in lived space. While Mexicans and Mexican Americans have absorbed Fiesta San Antonio as part of local popular culture, it is a social practice that has been institutionalized and systematically designed by the dominant elite to maintain an ideology that safeguards their social, economic, and political position. Fiesta San Antonio is unlike any other celebration or fiesta in the United States.<sup>32</sup> As Paulo Freire so persuasively argues, a critical understanding of hegemony and oppression alter one's sense of oneself in the world and of the ways that one can create transformative change. According to Freire, critical consciousness emerges through an interrogation of ideology and cultural practices. It is through reflection and action that people can change institutions, like Fiesta, and create different systems of meaning and participation that will produce "possible worlds of justice."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> In "The Taos Fiesta: Invented Tradition and the Infrapolitics of Symbolic Reclamation," in *Nuevomexicano Cultural Legacy: Forms, Agency, and Discourse*, ed. Francisco A. Lomeli et. al. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), Sylvia Rodríguez traces the history of Taos Fiesta, which was created by Anglos in the early 1930s. In the 1990s, the Mexican American community changed the meaning of this fiesta to celebrate Mexican American tradition (and not only as a means of stimulating commerce).

<sup>33</sup> Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*.



## Against All Odds: The Lemon Grove Incident

Gerardo Mancilla

The history of desegregation court cases in the United States can be said to have started with the 1931 Lemon Grove Incident, near San Diego, California. In the case *Roberto Alvarez v. the Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District*, Mexican parents sued the Board of Trustees because their children were not allowed to attend school alongside Anglo children. Instead, they attended a separate school built for the purpose of segregating them from white students. The Lemon Grove Incident demonstrates that, during times of immigration restriction and segregation laws, the dedication and persistence of parents resulted in equal educational opportunities for Mexican children. By reviewing the thinking of parents, board members, students, and judges, we can see how the case evolved. Before explaining the incident, this paper will establish the social context from 1900 to 1930 and look at common views of Mexicans. Then, this paper will explain the Lemon Grove Incident as well as some examples of how various people were thinking and how that thinking affected the final decision. It is important to understand that without the parents pushing the issue, segregation would have continued.

Because Anglo Americans rarely came in contact with Mexican Americans, Anglos had assumptions about Mexicans that created an anti-Mexican sentiment. In the early twentieth century, most Anglos did not differentiate between the two types of Mexicans who were living in the United States, the ones who had been living here for years and *los del otro lado* (the ones from the other side) who were immigrating during that time (Gutiérrez, 59). After Mexico lost the Mexican-American War in 1848, Mexico ceded what we now know as the Southwest to the U.S. There were Mexicans who lived in that area. As the years passed, immigration from other parts of the U.S. turned the region into a largely non-Mexican area (Gutiérrez, 39). It was not until the immigration of the early 1900s that the Mexican population began to grow. Some immigrants were escaping the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz during the revolution of 1910 while others were seeking work (Espinosa). Mexican work became cheap labor for Americans (Gutiérrez, 44). Without Mexican labor, some economic enterprises, such as agriculture, mining, transportation, and construction, would not have been possible because the U.S. had implemented the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, restricting immigration from China and Japan, respectively. In essence, Mexicans became the backbone of these industries (Gutiérrez, 43). Similarly, most Americans thought that Mexicans were "backward, slow, docile, indolent, and tractable people" (Gutiérrez, 46). They believed that Mexican education was not important because eventually Mexicans would return to their country of origin (Gutiérrez, 47). Since they also believed that Mexicans were "inferior," they thought that segregation of Mexican children was lawful and that the parents would not rebel. In the eyes of Americans, the only thing that Mexicans were good for was cheap labor. Therefore, even though the new wave of immigrants seemed like a threat, Anglos were not afraid that major changes would evolve in educational opportunities for their own children.



Unfortunately, most minorities, including Mexicans, historically were not always involved in politics (Johnson, 154), and therefore they could not change the policies that were affecting them, such as segregation laws. The first important segregation case was *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). That case was not connected to education directly, because it involved railway facilities, but it could be applied to educational facilities. The railway cars were separate for blacks and for whites. The Supreme Court ruled that as long as the different facilities were "separate but equal," then they could be considered constitutional (González). After this case, Mexicans were faced with similar Jim Crow laws in states such as Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California (Haro, 14). Often, it was the city attorney who decided the meaning of such laws. He would separate Mexican children based on language, age, or regularity of attendance because legally he could not segregate Mexicans based on race (González, 141). Segregation kept Mexican children from prospering through social mobility, because the white schools had a monopoly on resources (Haro, 12). Those resources, like other basic rights, including education itself, were denied to Mexican migrant children (González, 101). Migrant children often pursued their education according to the seasonal agricultural economy. The segregation laws did not provide equal educational opportunity for all children; therefore, changes had to occur.

In 1913, the first institutional form of school segregation appeared when a room was set aside for Mexican students in an Anglo school. The Mexican students were trained for manual labor whereas the Anglo students were prepared academically. It is also important to note that Mexican student attendance was not enforced as closely as Anglo attendance because schools got money based on the school census, not on attendance, and that meant that more Anglo students got resources (González, 102). As the Mexican population increased, such rooms were moved into a separate building, creating Mexican schools (González, 138). However, even the faculty was treated differently within the Mexican schools. The teachers received 80-100 dollars less per year than the Anglo teachers and principals received up to 150 dollars less per year compared to the Anglo principals (González, 142). The new Mexican schools were so defective that when Osman R. Hull and Willard S. Ford studied school buildings and how adequate they were for teaching, Mexican schools took last place. Hull and Ford wanted the Chamber of Commerce and the school board to remodel the schools and to place the students in better buildings, but their requests were repeatedly denied (González, 142). Racial discrimination had occurred in the past, leading to the Lemon Grove Incident. The only way to challenge racism was to have caring people, such as parents, step up and make their voices heard.

Fourteen years before the Supreme Court outlawed separation by race in the case *Brown v. the Board of Education*, there was another important story about segregation that few remember—a story of how an all-white school board wanted to impose segregation on the Mexican-American community (*New York Times*, September 17, 1986). The school board was alarmed about the increasing number of Mexicans who were attending the school (*New York Times*, September 17, 1986). The Lemon Grove School Board met and decided to separate the Mexicans from the Anglos, but the board neglected to inform the Mexican parents. Ironically, what the school board wanted to do



was to create a place to Americanize the Mexicans, but the Mexican school (better known as "the barn") itself was un-American. Mexican parents were outraged that their children were being segregated from the Anglo children. They met with the Mexican consul, and all the families united to fight this decision. Their efforts were apparent when the case *Roberto Alvarez v. Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District* became the first decision on segregation in U.S. history. Roberto Alvarez was one of the seventy-five Mexican students who were sent to "the barn," and he provided enough evidence to prove that the separate school would not benefit the Mexicans. Along with a lawyer, the Mexican community was able to fight this battle and eventually win it. The Supreme Court declared "the barn" separate but unequal. Another point that the judge made was that, at the time, Mexicans were considered Caucasians and it was unlawful for segregation to occur among Caucasians. It was not illegal, however, to segregate Black, Asian, or Indian children (*New York Times*, September 17, 1986). The dedication and persistence of the Mexican parents, which led to equal educational opportunity, will be analyzed further in detail.

Mexican parents have thought positively of education and have wanted to make sure that their children get the best education possible (Carter, 135). One of their main concerns has been with racial discrimination and educational opportunity (Haro, 13). Mexicans work as hard as anyone else does, and they understand that in America, education is everything. In the Lemon Grove case, once the parents found out about the intentions of the school to send their students to the *caballeriza* (barn), they were outraged and immediately held a neighborhood meeting. During this meeting, they formed *El Comité de Vecinos de Lemon Grove* (The Lemon Grove Neighbors Committee) and started looking for legal help and support from the rest of the community (Alvarez). When they met, they talked about the injustice that was being committed against their children as well as what they hoped would be the results of any action they would take. One parent stated, "Our children need to go to school with the Anglo, that is how my child [Roberto] learned English" (*Lemon Grove Incident*). Clearly, this parent saw the benefits that Mexican students obtained from being around Anglo children. If the students were separated, then that would set the Mexican students even further behind. This parent also alluded to the fact that her child already knew English. If the purpose of the segregated school was to help Mexicans with their "language handicap," then it would not help those who had assimilated and learned the English language. Another parent raised a different argument: "In that barn, everything will be second hand, including books, desk, and even teachers" (*Lemon Grove Incident*). The qualifications for teachers in Mexican schools were lower than those for teachers in the Anglo schools. Mexican schoolteachers also were paid less than Anglo teachers. And the parent was no doubt correct that if new books were acquired, the board would determine that since the Mexican students were behind, they should use the old books, leaving the new ones for the Anglos.

On the other hand, some parents worried about breaking the law. As one parent put it, "I work for the county, if I tell my child not to go to school, I might get fired" (*Lemon Grove Incident*). Other parents argued that it was the school board that was breaking the law by segregating the children and not providing equal opportunity for all.



They also argued that the Mexicans did the work that no one else would do, so that parents did not need to worry about losing their jobs. They stated, "who will pick their lemons and who will clean their house?" Ultimately, the county worker was convinced when the parents talked about the respect that they would be lacking if they let segregation happen. "If we accept disrespect from them [Anglos] then how can we gain the respect of our children?" (*Lemon Grove Incident*). It was the children who motivated the parents. The parents knew that education meant power—power for social mobility, power for representation, power for improvement. After that meeting, some parents prohibited their children from going to school on January 5, 1931. Others allowed their children to attend, but told them that if the teachers sent them to "the barn," then they were to return home (*Lemon Grove Incident*). And they did. The next step for the parents was to seek legal aid, without such assistance they would be helpless. They went to the Mexican consulate for legal counsel and support (Alvarez). One Mexican student's father knew the attorney Fred C. Noon, and so, with the help of the Mexican consulate, they were able to get Noon to help them out (Alvarez). The lawsuit was put under the name of Roberto Alvarez, Jr., because he was an exemplary student and spoke English well (Alvarez). If it had not been for their dedication in pursuing what was right for the children, the parents of the Mexican students would have never been able to make such a difference. The parents were ready to take action after the rules were established, but they were not present when the rules were under consideration, during the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings.

The PTA was all Anglo and no Mexicans were involved. This might have been because the Anglos believed that the Mexicans were "inferior" and not as advanced as Anglos. Anglo parents also thought that the Mexican parents would not resist any rules they made, including the segregation of Mexican children. Before the principal stood outside directing the Mexican children to the new barn, the PTA had met with the Chamber of Commerce to support the building of the barn, or, as they called it, the new Mexican school (Alvarez). Anglos saw the Mexican problem as one of overcrowding, and Mexican children as deficient in English and as lacking proper morals and sanitation (*Lemon Grove Incident*). The problem was not about overcrowding, however; it was about more Mexicans coming into the community and the Anglo community not being ready to deal with more Mexicans. Anglos were afraid because they did not understand Mexican culture. Anglos argued that Mexican students' "language was a handicap and that they needed to learn English" (Carter, 67). As the lawyer Noon later proved in the court case, there were some Mexicans who did not speak Spanish, but they were also segregated into the Mexican school. By segregating them, the school forced children to remain behind regardless of ability. Anglos also argued that Mexican schools would protect Mexican children "from having to compete with Anglos and thus feeling inferior" (Carter, 67). But what Anglos called competition was really hazing. To improve school climate, students needed not a new building but better teachers to intervene in the hazing. Another argument made during the trial was that the new school would be safer for the Mexican children since it would be located in the Mexican *barrio* (neighborhood) and they would not have to cross the boulevard to get to school. But attorney Noon demonstrated that some Mexicans lived in the Anglo neighborhood and some Anglo children lived in the Mexican neighborhood; therefore, both races would be put at risk



crossing the boulevard. The parents along with the lawyer had to fight the assumptions embodied in segregation laws and the anti-Mexican sentiment that permeated the town in order to provide an equal educational environment for their children.

The PTA and the Chamber of Commerce made a mistake in not informing the parents about plans to move the children to "the barn" (Alvarez). Within the PTA, this created a dilemma. One PTA member thought that it would be better to warn the Mexican parents so that they could not complain later. However, the majority of the people at the meeting convinced her that the Mexican people would not react to this in any way. Another person who thought this was important was Jerome T. Green, the principal. Since people at the meeting decided not to let the Mexican community know by formal letter, he took it upon himself to ask Roberto Alvarez to have all the people who were going to send their children to "the barn" sign a paper on one side and those who were not to sign on the other side (*Lemon Grove Incident*). Alvarez's uncle ripped the paper up, and became one of the founders of the Lemon Grove Neighbors Committee. Green later felt the consequences of his actions the following year, as he did not get rehired as the principal. Matters would not have been different if the PTA and the Chamber of Commerce had informed the parents about the changes; the Mexican parents would have filed a lawsuit regardless. The parents would have rebelled and the court case would have gone forward.

While the Mexican parents were taking steps to make sure that segregation would be challenged, the PTA and the Chamber of Commerce were taking a couple of steps of their own. The first step that they took was to expel all the students who had not attended class for twenty or more days after the opening of "the barn" (Alvarez). Then they sent a social worker to intimidate the families that were receiving any type of help from the county (*Lemon Grove Incident*). They even threatened and had some Mexican families deported because the parents were doing what they thought was best for the children. Local Anglos told the newspaper, "our Mexicans were never like this, it must be those Mexicans from Los Angeles or the ones that are coming from Mexico. They are corrupting our Mexicans" (*Lemon Grove Incident*). The Anglos accused Mexicans of not having morals when they themselves were intimidating people. They also continued to suggest that Mexicans were inferior, docile people. Meanwhile, Mexican parents maintained their commitment to education, and they were not about to let some Anglo hazing change their minds. They were willing to stand up for what they believed to bring equality to Lemon Grove.

In 1985, a docudrama (documentary mixed with a drama) called *The Lemon Grove Incident* was released. In this docudrama, the producer, Paul Espinosa, was able to interview eighty people who had attended the school or who lived in Lemon Grove during the 1930s (O'Brien). The people who appear on the video, however, are the Mexican pupils assigned to attend "the barn," including Roberto Alvarez. One former student recalled, "We always had that feeling that they [Anglo people] didn't want us." These students were feeling the effects of anti-Mexican sentiment in society, including the local PTA. Another person stated, "I don't remember them pushing any type of education on us, if we misbehaved, we were sent home." If Anglo teachers did not push



education when the students were mixed, then there would be no reason for them to have pushed it once they were segregated. A third person said, "The new school was funny, and we didn't want to be there even if it meant being with our friends. We could see the difference." The separate school seemed inherently unequal. The Mexican parents were correct when they stated that "the barn" was going to have secondhand desks and books and even teachers. If a child could see the difference—a negative difference—then he or she was bound to get an inferior education. One of the former students reflected on a Ms. Mocking, who was able to teach four grades in the Mexican school, while a Mr. Green, who had a Ph.D., taught only one eighth-grade class. Yet another person said, "We had five brothers who were born here, we spend most of our lives here, and then they throw us to another country that we don't know. We didn't know where to belong." This person was referring to the deportation. How can a young child survive who has experienced so much stress over anti-Mexican sentiment in the society, who has been kept away from school, and who is then deported to a country where he or she has never lived? These were the conditions that the Mexican parents faced, and they felt they needed to fight for respect from their children and from the larger community.

On March 11, 1931, the final word on the incident was left to Judge Claude Chambers of the San Diego Superior Court (Alvarez). He had a reputation as a liberal judge; his slogan was, "a court should uphold the dignity of the law and respect the rights of all equally." The case was presented and people were asked to testify, including Roberto Alvarez, Mr. Owens, Mr. Green, and the president of the Chamber of Commerce. The court debated the argument that Mexican students had to be separated because they were backwards and deficient academically (Alvarez). The following day the judge gave his verdict:

I understand that you can separate a few children, to improve their education they need special instruction; but to separate all the Mexicans in one group can only be done by infringing the laws of the State of California. These Mexican students are of the Caucasian race. Therefore, they are excluded from those laws that exclude Negro, Oriental, and Indian segregation. And I do not blame the Mexican children because a few of them are behind (in school work) for this segregation. On the contrary, this is a fact in their favor. I believe that this separation denies the Mexican children the presence of the American children, which is so necessary to learn the English language. (Alvarez; *Lemon Grove Incident*)

The PTA and the Chamber of Commerce considered appealing the case, but because they had spent so much on the new school and on their court fees, and then on the plaintiff's court fees, they did not want to risk losing more money. The Chamber of Commerce was also trying to maintain a clean reputation and did not want more negative publicity.

In his closing remarks, the judge referred to Mexicans as members of the Caucasian race. This was an important factor in the decision, and it might have been the strongest in defending desegregation laws for Mexicans. Before 1930, Mexicans were classified as white and were allowed to be naturalized, based on the 1848 Treaty of



Guadalupe Hidalgo (pbs.org). Then, in 1930, in an attempt to recategorize Mexicans, the U.S. Census Bureau attempted to distinguish Mexicans from Caucasians (Samora, 9). The only problem with this was that according to their definition, a "Mexican" had to be born in Mexico or have Mexican parents. Mexican or Caucasian, segregation was occurring and it was wrong, even if the judge said that in California segregation was lawful against Blacks, Asians, and Indians. Because the plaintiffs were Mexicans, the law stated that the schools could not discriminate against them. Regardless of the judge's motives, the Mexican parents were able to win a victory when all odds were against them. They were able to have their children return to the mixed school and their efforts paid off.

All in all, the Lemon Grove Incident was an isolated case in history, and that is why it is often neglected or forgotten. Even in histories of Mexican Americans, the case is often skipped; the first desegregation case many books mention is *Mendez v. Westminster* (1947). The case was similar in that parents claimed that the school district discriminated illegally against Mexican children by separating them in different facilities. The final decision in that case was that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" (Haro, 16). However isolated the Lemon Grove case may have been, one significant outcome was that it helped stop the Bliss Bill. A California assemblyman named George R. Bliss introduced this bill on January 19, 1931. Since Mexicans have indigenous as well as Spanish blood, the bill would have classified Mexican people as Indians. This, in turn, would have allowed Mexicans to be segregated. The Lemon Grove Incident, and the parents who instigated it, helped stop that bill and helped keep Mexicans from becoming segregated.

During the Lemon Grove Incident, Mexican parents had the odds stacked against them, but they managed to win the first desegregation court case in the United States. In *Roberto Alvarez v. Board of Trustees of the Lemon Grove School District*, Mexican parents fought for equal educational opportunity, and their dedication and persistence led them to a victory. From the anti-Mexican sentiment to the hazing in schools, life for the children of Lemon Grove was difficult, but in the end, their victory was important. Maybe the judge saw that segregation was wrong, or maybe he opposed segregation only because Mexicans were labeled as Caucasians. Whatever the case, the Lemon Grove Incident proves that with will power, equality can be achieved.

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## **Nuestro Mundo Community School: Un modelo ideal para la educación bilingüe en Madison**

**Tricia Price**

### **Introducción**

El tema de la educación bilingüe es bastante controversial en los Estados Unidos; aunque los lingüistas y los educadores pudieran ponerse completamente de acuerdo sobre una manera perfecta de enseñarla, sería bastante difícil convencerles a todos los políticos y los administradores de educación que deberían apoyarla. Hay muchas creencias falsas que afectan la percepción del tema; por ejemplo, mucha gente cree que el propósito de la enseñanza bilingüe es sólo fomentar la lengua nativa de los estudiantes, y que nunca llegan a hablar inglés. También los prejuicios afectan la discusión, como el prejuicio en contra de los inmigrantes ilegales; hay personas que no quieren ningún programa que les pueda ayudar a quedarse en este país. Desgraciadamente, todos los trabajos de investigación en el mundo no pueden cambiar las ideas de algunas personas, pero el propósito de este trabajo es ver cómo juzgan los expertos si los programas bilingües son buenos o no, y aplicar los criterios que usan a una escuela propuesta para Madison, Wisconsin.

### **Marco teórico/Revisión de la literatura**

Se ha escrito bastante sobre este tema, pero según Brisk (1998), por el ambiente político en este país en cuanto a lenguas extranjeras e inmigrantes, la mayoría de lo que se ha escrito se enfoca en cuál lengua se debe usar para enseñar. Ella critica la búsqueda del modelo perfecto cuando no incluye un énfasis en la calidad educativa del programa, sea del modelo que sea (p. 160). Sin embargo, es obvio por los ejemplos que usa en todo el libro que ella está de acuerdo con los modelos que integran a los estudiantes anglohablantes con los que hablan otras lenguas, y que tienen como meta el bilingüismo y biculturalismo en vez de reemplazar una lengua con otra. Sólo hay dos modelos que realizan estas metas: la educación bilingüe dual, y la inmersión bilingüe dual. La primera empieza con los dos grupos segregados, pero cada grupo va tomando más clases en su segunda lengua hasta que las clases se enseñen 50% en inglés y 50% en la otra lengua, y los grupos estén integrados todo el tiempo. La inmersión bilingüe dual también requiere hablantes nativos y no nativos del inglés, pero los dos grupos están juntos desde el principio, y las clases se enseñan casi completamente en la otra lengua. Poco a poco se enseña más en inglés hasta llegar a un 50% de cada lengua (pp. 16-17).

Para Brisk, los criterios para juzgar si un programa bilingüe tiene éxito se dividen en tres niveles: características de la escuela, del programa de estudios, y de la instrucción. Resumiendo mucho lo que ella dice, la escuela debe tener expectativas altas del programa, facilitar la realización de ellas, e incluir el programa como parte íntegra de la escuela (p. 67). El programa de estudios debe ser de alta calidad y fomentar el bilingüismo y biculturalismo en los estudiantes (pp. 103-104). La instrucción bilingüe debe incluir todas las características de la buena instrucción en inglés, pero además del



contenido académico, debe tener metas de lengua y cultura, y para eso es esencial que se involucren los padres y la comunidad (pp. 129-130).

Baker (2001) también destaca que no hay una respuesta fácil a la pregunta de cuál modelo es mejor, que cualquiera puede servir si está bien diseñado e implementado (p. 255). Da ejemplos de varias investigaciones sobre la eficacia de la educación bilingüe en general además de las que se enfocan en modelos específicos. Una investigación que parece clave es la de Lucas et al. (1990) que encontró ocho características importantes para el éxito de estudiantes que hablan lenguas minoritarias: valoración de su lengua y cultura, expectativas altas, líderes en la escuela que den prioridad a la educación de estos estudiantes, entrenamiento de los profesores para enseñar mejor a estos estudiantes, muchas clases que ellos pueden escoger, consejeros para ayudarles, participación de sus padres, y un compromiso de parte de los profesores y líderes de la escuela para darles a estos estudiantes poder en la sociedad a través de la educación (p. 264).

Cualquier programa puede tener estas características, pero los modelos duales tienen la mayoría de ellas intrínsecamente. Baker describe una investigación de la educación bilingüe dual que prueba su eficacia bastante bien: Thomas y Collier (1995, 1997) hicieron un estudio de unos 700,000 estudiantes que hablaban lenguas minoritarias, y encontraron que los que estaban en un programa dual aprendieron el inglés mejor que los que estaban en programas bilingües transicionales o programas de inglés como segunda lengua (ESL) (Baker, 2001, pp. 259-261). Baker incluye algunas críticas que se han hecho a Thomas y Collier, pero también menciona que hay otros beneficios de programas duales bien implementados; por ejemplo, pueden fomentar tolerancia entre grupos étnicos, porque los estudiantes que no hablan la lengua que se está usando tienen que buscar ayuda de los que sí la hablan (p. 217). Este es un efecto que no pueden tener los modelos segregados como la educación bilingüe transicional o el ESL, los cuales muchas veces fomentan los estereotipos negativos de los estudiantes latinos por aislarlos de los otros estudiantes (p. 198). Baker concluye que hay una contradicción en los Estados Unidos en cuanto a la educación bilingüe, porque la política no se basa en las investigaciones sobre el valor educativo sino en prejuicios, como dice Zentella (1997): "Blaming linguistic and cultural diversity is a smokescreen for the fact that the USA has not resolved fundamental inequalities. The root of the problem lies in an inability to accept an expanded definition of what it is to be a US American today" (citada en Baker, 2001, p. 265). Esta es una frustración compartida por muchos investigadores.

Ovando, Collier y Combs (2003) son explícitos en apoyar el modelo de inmersión dual, porque es el mejor de los programas que ven la enseñanza bilingüe como enriquecimiento en vez de remediación (actitud que debemos adoptar, según ellos); específicamente, destacan el modelo 90-10, en el cual se enseña sólo 10% del tiempo en inglés al principio (p. 72). Para juzgar si un programa tiene éxito, usan los criterios propuestos por Lindholm, que son mayormente iguales que los de Brisk, pero especifican que son necesarios por lo menos cuatro años de educación bilingüe y alfabetización en las dos lenguas. También insisten en la separación de las dos lenguas para la instrucción, sobre la cual Brisk es más flexible (Brisk, 1998; Ovando, Collier y Combs, 2003).



Krashen (1996), conforme con su apoyo a la teoría "whole language" de alfabetización, argumenta que uno de los requisitos esenciales de un programa bilingüe eficaz es un ambiente con muchos textos ("print-rich environment") (p. 65). Además, cree importante que los estudiantes reciban instrucción que puedan comprender en inglés ("comprehensible input"), que sigan aprendiendo contenido académico en su primera lengua, que aprendan a leer y escribir en su primera lengua (porque así la habilidad se trasfiere a la segunda lengua), y que sigan desarrollando el conocimiento de su primera lengua (para aprovechar las ventajas económicas y cognitivas de ser bilingües) (pp. 4-5). Sugiere que las familias inmigrantes de alto status socioeconómico proveen todo esto a sus hijos a través de libros, tutores, etcétera, pero que un buen programa de educación bilingüe puede proveer la misma ayuda a las niñas y los niños no tan ricos (pp. 38-39).

De los artículos que se han publicado sobre el tema, se pueden formar varias categorías: los que describen programas bilingües que han tenido éxito, los que se enfocan en el aspecto político de la educación bilingüe, y los que realmente intentan llegar a criterios objetivos para juzgar si un programa podría servir de modelo para otros. Blankenship (2002), Gebhard (2003), y Smith et al. (2002) caen en la primera categoría, y aunque no es su propósito proponer características específicas que otras escuelas podrían imitar, vale la pena destacar que todos los programas ejemplares que describen son programas duales. En la segunda categoría caen Miller y Tanners (1995), quienes discuten la situación en New York City para mostrar la necesidad que tiene de educación bilingüe de alta calidad. También está Glenn (2002), pero es un artículo poco científico; compara los programas de los Estados Unidos con los de Europa, dando por sentado que los de Europa son perfectos, sin siquiera mencionar sus resultados. Sin embargo, hasta Glenn admite que de los programas bilingües americanos, los duales son los mejores, por no segregar a los estudiantes.

En la tercera categoría están Montecel y Cortez (2002), quienes estudiaron diez programas reconocidos como eficaces por las calificaciones de sus estudiantes en exámenes estandarizados, para ver qué características tienen en común. Encontraron 25 criterios, una lista parecida a la de Brisk (1998) que también se divide en nivel de escuela y nivel de clase. Para Rolón (2003) hay sólo cuatro características esenciales: involucrar a los padres, seguir mejorando el conocimiento de los profesores, tener altas expectativas de los estudiantes, y fomentar el bilingüismo en cada campo académico.

### **Datos**

Nuestro Mundo Community School (NMCS) es una escuela bilingüe propuesta por un grupo de padres, profesores, y miembros de la comunidad de Madison, Wisconsin. Si se aprueba, seguirá el modelo de inmersión dual. Otras escuelas en Madison tienen programas bilingües, pero todos son transicionales. NMCS va a empezar sólo con clases de kindergarten y primer grado, y cada año agregará un grado hasta llegar al quinto (NMCS Project Executive Committee, 2003b).

Normalmente los programas de inmersión dual español-inglés, por definición, requieren una población de 50% estudiantes hispanohablantes y 50% anglohablantes. Sin



embargo, cuando los organizadores de NMCS hicieron encuestas para ver el interés en la comunidad, encontraron que muchos de sus estudiantes potenciales ya son bilingües, bien por tener un padre que habla español y otro que habla inglés, o bien porque los niños anglohablantes ya han aprendido algo de español en otros programas. Entonces, NMCS busca un 33% de cada grupo: monolingües en español, monolingües en inglés, y bilingües. Esto es una ventaja para un programa bilingüe, porque los estudiantes bilingües pueden ayudar a los monolingües mientras aprendan la otra lengua. La dificultad es definir quiénes son bilingües, y los organizadores necesitan decidir qué nivel de bilingüismo tiene que tener el estudiante y cómo determinarlo (Grau, 2003).

En cuanto a la enseñanza, su modelo básico es el que se llama 90-10: en kindergarten, las clases se enseñan 90% en español y 10% en inglés. Cada año se reduce el tiempo que se enseña en español y se aumenta la enseñanza en inglés hasta llegar a un nivel de 50% de cada lengua en el cuarto grado. Se separa a los niños sólo para una clase de alfabetización, la cual cada quien toma en su lengua primaria, y sólo sigue hasta el segundo grado; después todo estudiante aprende a escribir y leer tanto en español como en inglés (NMCSP EC, 2003b).

NMCS va a ser fuertemente vinculada a la comunidad; como escuela Charter, tiene una junta de directores y varios comités con otras funciones que incluyen padres y otros miembros de la comunidad. También una de sus metas principales es tener un centro comunitario dentro de la escuela:

The school is a community advocacy center, which collaborates with local organizations to provide community services, such as health education classes, family enrichment activities, and adult education programs. The ongoing commitment to the community will include the addition of relevant services based on the assessment of future needs (NMCSP EC, 2003b).

Además, esperan tener vínculos con la Universidad de Wisconsin-Madison en la forma de estudiantes universitarios bilingües que les ayuden como una forma de servicio comunitario, y piensan pedir ayuda de la Facultad de Educación de la Universidad para evaluar el progreso de su escuela y ver cómo se puede mejorar (Grau, 2003).

La creencia detrás de todos los planes para NMCS es que los niños necesitan aprender a ser bilingües y biculturales, y que las dos lenguas y las dos culturas se deben valorar igualmente. Ahora en Madison, el 60% de los hispanohablantes que toman clases de inglés como segunda lengua (ESL) dejan la escuela antes de graduarse, y los organizadores de NMCS obviamente creen que ese número es una cuestión de injusticia social que refleja la inadecuación de las clases, no de los estudiantes (NMCSP EC, 2003b). Bryan Grau, profesor y padre bilingüe, y uno de los organizadores principales, explicó:

I've had parents tell me, you know, I want bilingual education and there's no options here, so I might go to Chicago or Milwaukee or something. That's the middle-class parents, you know, the working class parents are just stuck with what the district gives them. The district, you know, they



aren't making it for Spanish-speaking kids. They tried to re-organize their ESL programs, and what they've done is . . . segregated Spanish speakers into transitional programs, so their answer is segregation, and then the elimination of Spanish (Grau, 2003).

En cuanto a los criterios para la evaluación, los organizadores de NMCS reconocen que no sólo se debe juzgar el éxito de una escuela por los exámenes estandarizados de los estudiantes, pero saben que hoy día hay mucha presión política de lograr buenas notas en estos exámenes. Entonces, van a juzgar su éxito mayormente por los exámenes, pero también tienen metas de igualar o superar las tasas de asistencia y movilidad de estudiantes en el distrito escolar, porque los miembros del Board of Education se preocupan de que los estudiantes latinos no se queden en Madison para terminar los seis años en la escuela. También van a desarrollar sus propios exámenes en español, porque la ley exige a los estudiantes que están aprendiendo inglés los primeros dos años, pero los de NMCS quieren poder probar que éstos también están aprendiendo mucho. Como escuela Charter, tendrá un contrato de cinco años, y después el Board of Education decidirá renovar el contrato o no, dependiendo de los resultados que produce la escuela (Grau, 2003).

### **Metodología**

Analiqué el ejemplo local de Nuestro Mundo Community School, una nueva escuela bilingüe propuesta al Board of Education aquí en Madison como una escuela Charter. Si se aprueba, abrirá en septiembre del 2004. Para recibir la aprobación del Board, el comité que promueve la escuela tuvo que escribir una propuesta que describe toda su filosofía y la manera en la cual va a implementar el programa de la escuela. Analiqué esta propuesta y el sitio web de la escuela para comparar sus planes con los modelos descritos en la literatura. Además, entrevisté a Bryan Grau, uno de los organizadores principales de la escuela, para clarificar lo que leí y averiguar información específicamente útil a mi enfoque.

### **Análisis y discusión**

Como casi todas las investigaciones apoyan el uso de la inmersión bilingüe dual, o directamente o indirectamente por apoyar características que son esenciales a este modelo, parece que NMCS ha escogido el modelo más adecuado. Sólo por leer su propuesta se nota que los organizadores han leído y aplicado los resultados de las investigaciones (NMCSP EC, 2003b).

Además, NMCS cumple todos los criterios de Brisk: a nivel de escuela, tiene altas expectativas y planes para realizarlas. Por ser una escuela completamente bilingüe, en vez de un programa dentro de otra escuela, obviamente el bilingüismo va a ser parte íntegra de la escuela, y no hay la preocupación de que otros profesores o directores de la escuela no apoyen el programa. A nivel de programa de estudios, parece ser de alta calidad, como piensan cumplir todas las metas del distrito y del estado además de lograr el bilingüismo y biculturalismo en los estudiantes, y las investigaciones han mostrado que un programa



de inmersión dual puede lograr eso. A nivel de instrucción, depende mucho de encontrar profesores buenos, pero sí tiene metas de lengua y cultura juntas con sus metas de contenido académico, y sí están comprometidos en involucrar a las familias y la comunidad en la escuela (Brisk, 1998; NMCSP EC, 2003b).

Aplicando los criterios de Lucas et al. (1990) para asegurar el éxito de los estudiantes que hablan lenguas minoritarias, encontramos otra vez que, por el mero hecho de ser una escuela Charter completamente bilingüe con un programa de inmersión dual, NMCS llena la mayoría de los requisitos, como valoración de la lengua y cultura minoritaria, expectativas altas, una buena variedad de clases, líderes que dan prioridad a la educación de los estudiantes minoritarios, y profesores que ven la educación de estos niños como un compromiso para darles poder en la sociedad. NMCS ya se ha comprometido a tener consejeros bilingües e involucrar a los padres, y piensan seguir el entrenamiento de los profesores a través de ayuda de la universidad, así que cumplen todos los criterios (Lucas et al., 1990, resumido en Baker, 2001; NMCSP EC, 2003b).

Los criterios de Lindholm (1990) que no están en Brisk (1998) son pocos, pero NMCS los cumple también, por su enfoque en la alfabetización usando las dos lenguas y por proveer más de cuatro años de educación bilingüe. El único criterio que quizás no cumpla es la separación de las dos lenguas para la instrucción, porque antes se pensaba que la separación era necesaria para evitar que los profesores repitieran todo en las dos lenguas, pero hoy en día algunos expertos creen que los niños deben poder escoger la lengua que quieran para expresarse mejor, con tal de que los profesores no mezclen las dos lenguas (Lindholm, 1990, resumido en Ovando et al., 2003; Brisk, 1998). Sobre la mezcla de lenguas, Grau explicó que la escuela va a usar, "sort of like a multi-racial approach to language, that you know, this is one way to say it, these are other ways to say the same thing, and they're all acceptable ways." Así que NMCS no llena un requisito de Lindholm, pero es un requisito ya cuestionado.

Algunos de los criterios de Krashen (1996) se dan por sentados en un programa de inmersión dual, como la alfabetización en la lengua nativa, el desarrollo de las dos lenguas, y el aprendizaje de contenido académico en la primera lengua. Además, su criterio de "comprehensible input" en inglés es mucho más fácil en un programa así, porque hay estudiantes nativos de inglés que pueden ayudarles a sus compañeros con cualquier cosa que no entiendan. Entonces, el único requisito no obvio es el "print-rich environment," para que los estudiantes puedan aprender a leer leyendo. Se supone que habrá una biblioteca o por lo menos un sistema de proveer libros a todas las clases, pero no se menciona en la Propuesta.

Los cuatro criterios de Rolón (2003) son bastante simples de juzgar, y NMCS ya tiene planes para involucrar a los padres, para fomentar el bilingüismo en cada campo académico, y para ayudar a los profesores a seguir desarrollándose como profesionales. El criterio de tener altas expectativas es un poco más difícil de planificar de antemano, pero está como indicación el hecho de que NMCS piensa desarrollar sus propios exámenes en español para ver si los estudiantes están aprendiendo aun antes de que lo puedan probar en inglés.



Entre los 25 criterios de Montecel y Cortez (2002), casi todos ya se han discutido. Una excepción es que el programa debe tener una visión y metas, las cuales ya están establecidas para NMCS, para que los líderes de la escuela en el futuro siempre puedan tener en cuenta los propósitos principales. El único criterio realmente en duda para NMCS son los enlaces entre la escuela y los líderes del distrito escolar; Montecel y Cortez encontraron que los programas que tienen éxito siempre son apoyados a nivel de distrito, aunque no explican por qué es necesario. Grau dice que hay algunos miembros del Board of Education que apoyan NMCS, pero el Superintendente no la apoya sólo porque es una escuela Charter, y él no quiere más escuelas de este tipo en Madison. Al fin y al cabo, el apoyo del Board sí es esencial para empezar el programa, porque tienen que aprobar un presupuesto, y eso es lo que Grau todavía ve como difícil: "So I'd say money, I'd say it comes down to are they willing to work something out, and if they're just going to look at our proposal and say yes or no, I think it's going to be hard to pass" (Grau, entrevista personal, 2003).

### Conclusiones

Claro está que es mucho más fácil planificar el modelo perfecto que implementarlo, así que habrá que seguir este estudio con otro después de que las ideas se hayan puestas en práctica. Sin embargo, NMCS parece tener un grupo organizador bastante dedicado a la idea de tener una escuela bilingüe de alta calidad, y han investigado bien para ver qué versión sería óptima para los niños y las niñas de esta comunidad (la investigación que su propuesta cita más es la de Thomas y Collier [1997], quienes investigaron 700,000 estudiantes en programas diferentes). Tal vez es importante señalar que la mayoría de los organizadores de NMCS son padres de los estudiantes potenciales, así que se puede suponer que quieren lo mejor para sus hijos e hijas, y van a vigilar la implementación tanto como han vigilado la planificación. Además, han hecho una encuesta en la comunidad de familias interesadas en tener a sus hijos e hijas en la escuela, y han encontrado más interés que lo suficiente, tanto de hispanohablantes como de anglohablantes (NMCSP EC, 2003b).

Lo asombroso, entonces, es que una escuela con un programa de educación bilingüe bastante bien diseñado, en una comunidad que se cree muy liberal y tolerante, con mucho interés en tener este tipo de escuela, y en una época de globalización en la cual se reconoce la importancia de hablar más de una lengua, todavía tiene dudosa probabilidad de recibir los fondos necesarios. Lo irónico es que un programa bilingüe dual realmente no cuesta más que una escuela monolingüe si las clases tienen el mismo tamaño, porque no necesita más profesores o empleados, sólo requiere que los que hay sean bilingües.

La mayoría de los investigadores se quejan de esta aparente ruptura entre lo que prueban las investigaciones y lo que se implementa en la sociedad, y casi siempre la creen producto del prejuicio o de la política estadounidense. La declaración más fuerte viene de Spener (1988):

If U.S. society needs to recruit and prepare new candidates for a growing number of low-status, poorly compensated slots in the opportunity



structure, transitional bilingual education programs for non-English-speaking immigrants may be construed by the majority as part of a "reasonable" set of educational policies for the nation. . . . Educational policy can serve to reinforce caste distinctions in the society by providing, more or less intentionally, non-White people with an inferior education. In doing so, the educational system plays a role in creating a pool of adults who are "qualified" to be economically exploited, unemployed, or underemployed (citado en Ovando et al., 2003, p. 78).

Sea a propósito o no, esto es el efecto de la educación bilingüe mediocre, que tiene como meta enseñar el inglés tan rápido sea posible a cualquier costo, en vez de tener la meta de producir estudiantes completamente bilingües y preparados para ir a la universidad y después participar en la economía global.

### Apostilla

En enero del 2004, el Board of Education aprobó la fundación de Nuestro Mundo con un voto unánime, a pesar de no tener el apoyo del Superintendente. Sin embargo, cambiaron los planes para la escuela de una manera que posiblemente tendrá un impacto en la eficacia. En vez de estar en su propio edificio, la escuela va a empezar en un par de salones de otra escuela, y por eso su relación con el resto de la escuela será clave. Saldrá bien si los líderes de esa escuela respetan la misión de NMCS y trabajan para hacerlo una parte íntegra de la escuela. El otro cambio que puede impactar la escuela es que el Board determinó que NMCS no puede fijar porcentajes de estudiantes que hablan cada lengua, porque un abogado por el distrito avisó que sería ilegal según las leyes de discriminación de Wisconsin. Esto parece un poco raro, porque ya hay muchas escuelas duales en varias partes del país que buscan un balance de lenguas, sin problemas legales. Entonces, Nuestro Mundo tendrá que hacer una lotería al azar para la matriculación, y es posible que casi todos los estudiantes que se matriculan hablen una lengua y casi ninguno la otra, y así el programa no podría seguir el modelo de inmersión dual, porque la mezcla de lenguas es clave en este modelo. Hay esperanza todavía, porque Nuestro Mundo se va a ubicar en Glendale Elementary, una escuela con una población hispanohablante de 21%, así que es posible que obtenga un buen balance de estudiantes (Sensenbrenner 2004). De todos modos, los fundadores de NMCS están investigando todavía para ver cómo las otras escuelas duales obtienen una buena mezcla de estudiantes para aprovechar el conocimiento previo tanto del inglés como del español.

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## Beauty and the Self-Representation of Latinas in the Twentieth Century

Margot Stone Miller

For most people, the first impression they receive of someone is that person's physical appearance. Such integral parts of our society today, there are many factors that contribute to representation and self-representation. Throughout history, one aspect of appearance that society holds in high regard is beauty. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, beauty and other forms of self-representation were racialized and valued hierarchically by those with power. As members of a minority group, Latinas were subjected to the representations that "others" with power chose to employ with reference to them. In this paper I will look at how these images were reinforced in the media. I will also look at the changes that transpired in mass media over time to allow Latinas to have more control over their own image.

Beginning with early images of Latinas in film, I will touch on the types of roles that three specific Latina actresses played most commonly. These examples of beauty and image in film show that there was a typology of Latinas on the silver screen. Historians often study Latinas in various industries, especially the garment and canning industry; I will look at the rise of the beauty industry within the Latina community. Through involvement in the beauty industry, Latinas gained more control over their image as it was presented to the masses. As Latinas increased their visibility in the beauty industry, they began to customize sales and services to their own ethnic needs. Ultimately, through the magazine *Latina*, women used the media in a positive way to promote their own Latina self-representation.

Trapped by the perceptions of early Anglo settlers from the East, Mexicanas faced the stereotypes that predominated in nineteenth-century America. Because of the disproportionate male-to-female ratio in the West, relationships between Anglo men and Latina women (in what is now the Southwest) were very common. Swept away by their deviation from the "norm," Anglo settlers viewed these women of the West as striking and exotic. According to one early settler, "[There was] something inviting and seductive about them. They were attractive, handsomely framed, and had beautiful eyes."<sup>1</sup> Upon initial contact with Anglos in the mid-nineteenth century, Latinas were placed in gendered roles that capitalized on such superficial first impressions. Those at the top of the hierarchy, in this case the Anglo settlers, racially categorized this group of females as seductive, establishing a stereotype that later the film industry would employ when casting Latinas in film.

In the middle of the twentieth century, there were several media stars representing the Latina community, including Carmen Miranda, an entertainer from Brazil; Delores Del Río, a Mexican actress; and finally Lupe Vélez, another actress, who, among her other roles, starred in what is often called the "Mexican Spitfire" series. These are three of the most popular examples of actresses who were bound by gendered roles of sexuality

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<sup>1</sup> Arnaldo de León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 40.



or lightheartedness. Each of these three women played different roles in their films, but were ultimately typecast into a certain type of character that they could not escape. In film as elsewhere, Latinas were bound by ideas of beauty and sensuality.

The film industry chose to use these actresses solely for their superficial female form. The characters these women played often lacked more than one dimension, and their roles in films served mainly aesthetic purposes. According to film historian Carlos E. Cortés, Carmen Miranda, for example, was "prohibited from more than scratching the surface of her characters"; "she became a prisoner of screen superficiality."<sup>2</sup> Actress Delores Del Río left Hollywood, in part due to her dissatisfaction over being stereotyped into specific roles that capitalized only on her sensuality. Cortés argues of these actresses, "They were Latinas. Their strengths, if they had any, were decidedly female. They had reached the limit of the era's Latina film image."<sup>3</sup> These are three examples of women who surrendered to media ideas of how the masses should see them.

With these images of sexy young Latina actresses on the big screen, Latinas saw their own image presented through the eyes of a social hierarchy. Overwhelmed by images of the "sexy Latina," women had a hard time developing their own standards for beauty. In trying to meet the hierarchical standards of beauty, many women turned to cosmetics. Many women noted, in a survey conducted by Aída Hurtado, that they were "highly dependent on [artificial accoutrements] like cosmetics" in order to reach the subjective standard of beauty reinforced in the mass media. For example, a young Latina, Cynthia Duarte stated, "My beauty for me depends on make-up...I really need those things to feel beautiful. Without those things, I would walk with my head down. So that's why I think whether I'm beautiful or not is a hard question for me to answer."<sup>4</sup>

Hurtado also found in her research that many young Latinas used "white standards" of beauty as the benchmark in their perception of themselves, judging and gauging themselves against the standards of society. Hurtado states, "They explicitly pointed to images of white women as influencing their assessments of how much they should weigh and believed that that standard was applied to all women regardless of race and ethnicity."<sup>5</sup> By doing this women judged themselves against generic standards that are not customized to individual ethnic needs.

Over time, the relationship between women and beauty evolved enough for women to take an active role in creating beauty. The appearance of beauty parlors among the Latina population, for example, offered Latinas the opportunity to participate in the formation of the physical appearance and image of Latinas portrayed to others. Some women also preferred the occupation of a beautician to the physically taxing work in factories or fields. One woman related, "I always wanted to be a beauty operator. I loved

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<sup>2</sup> Carlos E. Cortés, "Chicanas in Film: History of an Image," in *Latin Looks: Images of Latinas and Latinos in the U.S. Media*, ed. Clara E. Rodríguez (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997), 130.

<sup>3</sup> Cortés, *Chicanas in Film*, 131.

<sup>4</sup> Aída Hurtado, *Voicing Chicana Feminisms: Young Women Speak Out on Sexuality and Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 196.

<sup>5</sup> Hurtado, *Voicing Chicana Feminisms*, 180.



make-up; I loved to dress up and fix up. I used to set my sister's hair. So I had that in the back of my mind for a long time, and my mom pushed the fact she wanted me to have a profession—seeing that I wasn't thinking of getting married.”<sup>6</sup> This Latina strives to be a participant in the beauty industry, valuing image and wanting to help in the process of creating a service with an understanding specific to the beauty needs of Mexicanas.

While the presence of Latinas in the beauty industry increased significantly in the twentieth century, not all Latinas felt supported in the workplace. In Oregon, Wisconsin, Dana Torres attained her dream of receiving the training to become an esthetician. While practicing at a salon in Wisconsin, she experienced what she saw as discrimination. Torres described making sincere efforts to relate to co-workers, even going as far as to school a co-worker on esthetics. Torres states, “I was hoping that by doing this, the people I worked with would no longer be indifferent to me. (By this time I was treated very indifferently for my views professionally and personally. I was very isolated. Ignored unless someone wanted a treatment).”<sup>7</sup> Ultimately Torres left this salon to pursue a position that allowed her more experience in her field of specialty, esthetics.

Another example of a Latina who has participated in the beauty industry is Silvia Tamayo, a Mexicana featured in the November 2002 issue of *Latina*, who made her fortune selling make-up for Avon. Avon executives gave her a Woman of Enterprise Award; she had recruited nearly 900 women to sell Avon products. Tamayo serves as an inspiration to many Latinas because of her drive and motivation. She also is taking an active role in the beauty industry, participating in cosmetics, an industry synonymous with the enhancement of physical appearance. Because Tamayo is in control of the image she presents to her customers, she serves as a model of how Latinas have increased their control in the presentation of the Latina image through the beauty industry.

The most important progression in Latina control over self-representation in the mass media is evident in the publication of *Latina*. This magazine is the leading example today of the progress Latina women have made in reclaiming power and control over the image that is portrayed in the media. Through the publication of this magazine, issues that matter to Latinas are addressed. As one can see through a select sample of article titles from this magazine, a positive image of Latinas is portrayed, encouraging women to take control of their own image and no longer succumb to an image imposed on them by hierarchical standards: “Curves and curls: Classic Latina Beauty and Style Just for You” (November 2003), “Hot Fiesta Fashions for Every Figura” (December 2002), and “Work it Chica! Smart Styles for el Trabajo (and your figura)” (August 2002). These articles use ethnic standards of beauty and address Latinas' own concerns. This magazine, as an example of mass media, does not hinder or limit the image of Latinas. Instead the magazine customizes articles about beauty and fashion, and prints advertisements to meet the needs of Latinas today. Paying attention to characteristics of image specific to Latinas (as seen in the article about Latina curves and curls), *Latina* represents ethnic minority women's response to racialization.

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<sup>6</sup> Vicki L. Ruíz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 56.

<sup>7</sup> Dana Torres, personal communication with author (interview and letter), September 2003.

Through *Latina* magazine, Latinas better control the image presented by the media to the masses. With increased visibility in the beauty industry, this magazine offers attention customized to the ethnic needs of Latinas and thus contributes to an enhancement of self-representation among Latinas in the media. Moving away from images common in early twentieth-century films, which capitalized on the sensuality of Latinas, the rise of the beauty industry among Latinas helps to explode Hollywood's typology of the Latina image.

By examining how images of Latinas were reinforced in the mass media and the changes that transpired over time, one is able to see the evolution of the image of the Latina. The racialization promoted by a hierarchical racial order gave Latinas little control over their own self-representation. Beauty, an important aspect of physical appearance in American society, is one factor of self-representation. Through Latina involvement in the beauty industry, Latinas have reclaimed control of their own self-representation.



## Wrong Number: Musings Upon Reading *The House on Mango Street*

Natalia Orosco

As I read *The House on Mango Street* for the second time, it was inevitable that I would come across my favorite short story, "Geraldo No Last Name."<sup>1</sup> This story is one I often heard after church, as the weekly gossip spread through the pews. It was too true, or, as the popular saying goes, "it hit really close to home." As I read Sandra Cisneros's words, I found myself lost in thought; the words on the page disappeared and I was creating my own story. I have seen those shameful faces—heck, I have even danced a *ranchera* with them. It's weird; it is like everyone knows and doesn't want to say anything—about "them" of course.

They don't speak much English, and my broken Spanish doesn't make it easy to communicate. But we dance. They are the good dancers. They know when you want to be turned, where to put their hands—and they rarely step on your feet. It is all good fun until the dance ends and they want your phone number. What? I can't dance over the phone. What will we talk about? I know my mother will look at me funny when she answers the phone. Because, with my luck, she will answer the phone when he calls. All these thoughts race through my head and I smile. I smile because I am 15½ years old and somebody wants my phone number. So I give him the wrong number—672 - - 1 - - 5 - - 4 - - 3, yeah—as I wait hoping that he doesn't ask me to repeat it.

I leave with my *chicas* and we go to George Webb's. I can go there after the dance, because no matter how late I come home there are three older brothers who will be coming in later. We laugh, but barely eat because we don't want to get fat—plus it is late. And everyone knows that if you eat a heavy meal at night, you will have nightmares. Things went on this way for what seemed like forever. I didn't mind; I don't think any of us did.

Then one day, when I stopped by the grocery store, *El Rey*, there he was. I remember him because he was the first one—the first one I gave the wrong number to. I froze because I remembered him and didn't know if he remembered me. Then something happened. I thought of him being a little boy, with his hopes and dreams wrapped in a blankey. I imagined him going to school as a young boy. Being young and hopeful—and then the cold harsh reality hit. He left his blankey and came here. To this place. Went to a dance. Danced with a girl. His hopes once again restored. As he imagined being with this girl. Loving her, making a home away from home. The nice warm thoughts that run through his head allow him to build courage. Courage to ask for her phone number. And she gives it to him. Just like that, without a thought.

I don't dance with "them" anymore.

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<sup>1</sup> Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*, 2d rev. ed. (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1988).

## Maquiladoras

### Kristian Zaspel

The Maquiladora region of northern Mexico, which straddles the U.S. and Mexican borders, can be thought of as a cross-border region for many reasons. Although different types of cross-border relationships exist today, the relationship between the U.S. and the Maquiladora region serves as a space for the flow of cheap labor, goods, raw inputs, and capital. Despite key location factors for both countries, the border is also used to exploit wage differentials and access cheap labor (Anderson and O'Dowd). For Mexico, the cross-border relationship serves as a source of material inputs and a foreign market that takes advantage of the new international division of labor that resides in the export complexes located just south of the border. Although the relationship of the benefits exchanged is not an equal one, both countries still continue to reap the rewards of the economic and labor disparities on either side of the border.

The industrial complexes located south of the border serve a critical role for the U.S. Due to deindustrialization, the U.S. was forced to find new ways of cutting production costs in order to compete with foreign companies. The Maquiladora region along the border played an integral role as a new source of cheap labor. The majority of production done in the Maquiladora region for the U.S. market is in electrical parts and accessories, as well as the fabrication and assembly of transportation equipment (MacLachlan and Aguilar). Many of these Maquiladoras are also owned by companies with U.S. headquarters. This allows the executives and managerial personnel of the headquarters to live in close proximity to their investments and enjoy the benefits of living in the U.S., while reaping the rewards of the wage imbalances in bordering Mexico.

For Mexico, the relationship of the cross-border region with the U.S. serves as a foreign market with a demand for goods produced in the Maquiladora region, as well as a relatively tax-free source of raw materials and goods: "Maquiladoras could temporarily import raw materials, capital equipment, and replacement parts free of duty, provided they were re-exported" (MacLachlan and Aguilar).

Although this relationship was most beneficial for the U.S., it was also important for Mexico, because there really was no local demand for these kinds of services. The demand the U.S. market provided proved to be an important source of jobs and capital exchange in Mexico. When compared to average factory wages in the U.S., wages in Mexico are much lower. However, when compared to interior non-U.S.-owned Maquiladoras, the wages are just above average (MacLachlan and Aguilar).

The Maquiladora region can also be thought of as a cross-border region in the sense that, due to an illegal and willing labor force, the border manages to be porous during times of need. Although the border is policed to prevent these kinds of



interactions, thousands of immigrants manage to "slip through the cracks" and fill labor-intensive, low-paying jobs across the U.S. The immigrants who succeed in crossing the border are forced to take these types of jobs due to social and legal factors that plague many illegal immigrants. Many of these people do not have a good education, do not speak English, and do not have green cards, so they have very few other opportunities. These workers provide economic imbalances in the U.S. that make it possible to have such large polarizations in economic scales.

Another way the Maquiladora region acts as a cross-border region is through the workforces that travel between the borders. The proximity of the Maquiladora complexes to the American headquarters that own them make it convenient for the managers, engineers who prefer to live in the U.S. (MacLachlan and Aguilar). The close proximity is also ideal for direct shipping of goods into the U.S. market, and direct shipping of raw materials and supplies back into the Maquiladoras. This is especially important for the Mexican economy because the re-exported goods they produce from U.S. raw materials are relatively duty-free, thereby shielding Mexico from the realities of world prices and quality standards (MacLachlan and Aguilar).

The relationships that take place in the Maquiladora region between the U.S. and Mexico further exemplify how a cross-border region interacts. Both countries' economies become dependent on the services that each nation provides, making the relationships that much more important. Although exchanged benefits are not completely equal in size or magnitude, the roles played by each nation are still important factors that have contributed to the present status of the Mexican and American economies.

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## Review

*Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence.*  
By Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

There are many different types of jobs available in the United States. However, take away necessities such as legal documentation (a visa or green card) or a family support system and replace them with obstacles such as language barriers, lack of work experience, and racial discrimination, and the "land of opportunity" becomes increasingly limited. *Doméstica* by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, is based on research into domestic employment, specifically in Los Angeles, California. The author divides her book into three different parts: "The Job Today," "Finding Hard Work Isn't Easy," and "Inside the Job." She further subdivides each part into chapters, and then, through text, data, and personal narrative, she supports the central theme of each individual part. Throughout the book the author establishes a context from which to introduce her advocacy for increased domestic worker rights.

An exasperatingly thorough piece of scholarship on domestic workers, the book strengthens its argument through personal narrative after personal narrative. But ultimately, Hondagneu-Sotelo is redundant. Furthermore, while she makes a strong argument for the importance of domestic worker rights and criticizes the lack of enforcement to date, she fails to offer a concrete strategy and solution to this problem. This book successfully promotes awareness of domestic employee rights, but it does little else.

Hondagneu-Sotelo focuses on three different classifications of the domestic worker: the live-in nanny/housekeeper, the live-out nanny/housekeeper, and the housecleaner. General observations can be made about each type of domestic worker based on Hondagneu-Sotelo's findings. The live-in nanny/housekeeper tends to be a recent immigrant with no place to live; she speaks little English; and she is the least expensive to hire. She also might not have much previous experience with children. Most domestic workers are Latina, and if a nanny is not Latina, the employer expects less accountability for housecleaning. The live-in nanny/housekeeper tends to be of newer immigrant status; she is less well paid; and she has less contact with people outside the home of the employer. The live-out nanny/housekeeper tends to be more confrontational with the employer, has a better salary, has more experience with childcare, and is much more social than the live-in nanny. This type of domestic worker remains fairly close to the family (because she works with the children), but has more space due to the separate living arrangements. The last, and most independent, domestic worker is the housecleaner. Because of the nature of this job, there is little family involvement and a much more "professional" relationship between the employee and employer. The housecleaner is often very independent and may have little to no contact with her employer.



In the first part of the book, titled "The Job Today," the author includes two chapters, "New World Domestic Order" and "Maid in L.A." In "New World Domestic Order," the author looks at the history and demographics of domestic labor. "Maid in L.A." brings to light the demographic target for each category of domestic worker and what kind of living conditions or relationship with the employer each can expect. In this section, the author establishes the historical context for these workers and their jobs.

The second part, titled "Finding Hard Work Isn't Easy," includes three chapters: "It's Not What You Know," "Formalizing the Informal: Domestic Employment Agencies," and "Blowups and Other Unhappy Endings." In this section, the author introduces the different ways one finds domestic work, as employee and employer. The first chapter examines the networks among employers and employees. "In the survey of 153 Latina domestic workers, 88 percent reported finding their current jobs through personal contacts with friends, family members, or other employer" (61). This shows the importance of these networks to both employees and employers. The second chapter looks closely at the role of the domestic employment agency as a liaison between the employer and employee. And the last chapter focuses on the unpleasant topic of "Blowups and Other Unhappy Endings." In this chapter, personal testimonies describe the emotional stress and trauma that comes with having to leave a job with such personal involvement.

The last part of this book, "Inside the Job," includes three chapters, "Tell Me What to Do, But Don't Tell Me How," "Go Away...But Stay Close Enough," and "Cleaning Up a Dirty Business." This part looks more closely at the dynamic of the employee/employer relationship. In "Tell Me What to Do," the author observes the expectations of the employer and employee regarding the work that needs to be done and how it gets done. In the second chapter, the focus is on the personal relationship between employer and employee and the expectations each brings to that relationship. The author points out the "dramatic mismatch in what employers and employees desire from their relationship" (193). On one hand, the employers, "for their part...would prefer to have more distant, impersonal relationships with their paid domestic workers, not because they wish to rationalize labor practices but because personalism obligates them to care about their employees" (208). In direct contrast, the employee, in most cases, aches "for some personal recognition" (193). Similarly, Mary Romero, in *Life as the Maid's Daughter: An Exploration of the Everyday Boundaries of Race, Class, and Gender*, shows the employee's struggle to figure out her place within the family dynamic. In the case presented by Romero, the maid has an interesting situation with the family for whom she works, in the sense that they helped raise her daughter, taking care of her educational needs. This twist to the employer/employee relationship further confuses the role of the employee in the household, adding yet another example to those discussed in *Doméstica*.

A final chapter, "Cleaning Up a Dirty Business," presents the author's formal statement about domestic labor. Hondagneu-Sotelo writes, "because domestic employment in the United States will continue (absent a major restructuring of our society) to be not only one of the best sources of employment for many Latina and Caribbean immigrant women but also a necessity for many of the families who employ

them, I advocate the upgrading, not the abolition, of the occupation" (210). The author makes a valid if obvious argument. The real challenge lies in the enforcement of upgrading. Hondagneu-Sotelo also discusses organizations such as the Domestic Workers Association that have helped workers push for severance pay and back wages. The author does a thorough job of promoting an already existing organization; however, she fails to bring truly unique insight to this situation.

Any person in Los Angeles who has been an employer of a domestic worker, who is thinking of becoming an employer of a domestic worker, or who has been a domestic worker should read this book. Through the accumulation of personal narrative, one is exposed to the widest assortment of testimonies possible. From exposure to these testimonies, which range from those of workers at domestic employment agencies to those of employers of all three categories of domestic workers to those of the workers themselves, the reader is provided with ample narratives from which to draw his or her own conclusion. But while the author does a superb job of supplying the reader with such narratives, she forgets that it is quality and not quantity that speaks the loudest. The author tends to repeat many of the same points in different sections of this book. For example, employers in general want to feel dominant in their relationships with domestic workers: "Employers may also prefer to hire Latina nannies ...because they view them as more submissive than whites" (56). Later in the book the author reemphasizes the same point with similar testimony: "American nannies are generally not expected to do housecleaning work, Latinas regularly are" (148). The use of both examples could be seen as supporting a general argument, but can also be seen as redundant.

A professor of sociology at a reputable university (University of Southern California), the author clearly has done a thorough job researching this subject and publicizing her findings. If her main ambition was to increase awareness of domestic labor, then she has been successful. Through her extensive research and fieldwork, Hondagneu-Sotelo has made a significant contribution to the study of domestic labor.

**Margot Stone Miller**



## *Contributors*

### **Lisa Rappaport Hendrickson**

Lisa Rappaport Hendrickson lives in Madison, Wisconsin, with her partner, Troy. She is originally from San Diego, California. In 2001, Lisa earned her B.A. from the University of California, San Diego. After she receives her M.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2004, Lisa will continue to pursue her interests in the visual representation of hybrid ethnicity. In addition to her background in the arts of Africa and Latin America, she is also trained in critical theory and visual culture.

### **Margot Stone Miller**

Margot Stone Miller is from a small town in northern Wisconsin (Wausau). She is a graduating senior from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, class of 2004. A Spanish major, with a Certificate in Chicano Studies, Margot enjoys reading, writing, travel, and time with family and friends. Her plans for the future are up in the air, and she is open to any suggestions!

### **Gerardo "Lalo" Mancilla**

I am a first-generation college student from the Southside of Chicago. I grew up in a working-class, single-parent household with two brothers. Despite our social and economic struggles, I have been able to navigate the system and pursue my education with the unconditional support and love of my mother. My cousins and brothers (now three) serve as inspiration and are my motivation to continue with my education. Also, with the help and support of friends, mentors, teachers, and peers, my college life has been a bit easier. I would like to say "Thank You" to everyone for your constant support and encouragement. Currently, I have a double major in Elementary Education (with a focus on Middle Childhood to Early Adolescence) and Communication Arts (with a focus on Film, TV, and Radio). I am also a Chicano Studies Certificate candidate. Both through teaching and mass communication, I believe that lives can be touched, motivated, influenced, changed, and helped. My life motto is "never forget where you came from and who helped you get there." My interest in the Lemon Grove Incident came from discussing the Brown v. Board of Education decision. It was interesting to see how Mexican school segregation was treated differently than other types of segregation and the how the effects on students were similar. However, it is amazing that this case took place in the 1930s, and "separate but equal" institutions were not found "inherently unequal" until 1954 with the Brown decision.

### **Natalie Orosco**

Natalie Orosco is a sophomore majoring in Rehabilitation Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is a Precollege Enrichment Opportunity Program for Learning Excellence (PEOPLE) Scholar and participated in the 2004 Undergraduate Research Student Symposium at UW-Madison, where she presented the results of her "Day Treatment, Residential and Juvenile Correctional Schools Project." Her study focuses on young students with emotional and behavioral disorders and learning disabilities who are educated in day-treatment and residential schools and in juvenile-correction facilities. She comes from Milwaukee and enjoys creative writing—

something she had forgotten until she took a class with Birgit Brander Rasmussen in Chicana and Chicano Literature at UW-Madison.

**Tricia Price**

Tricia Price is finishing her master's degree in Spanish literature and linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She earned a B.S. in Spanish education from the University of Missouri-Columbia. She has served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Dominican Republic and taught Foreign Language Experience classes to sixth graders. And she has worked in a variety of capacities for the Chicana/o Studies Program and its faculty.

**Lilliana Patricia Saldaña**

Lilliana Patricia Saldaña is from San Antonio, Texas. After completing her undergraduate degrees in English and International Relations at Boston University, she returned to San Antonio and worked at a grassroots-oriented dual-language school. During this time, she pursued a master's degree in Bicultural-Bilingual Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio, where she focused on critical pedagogy, bilingual education, and teacher beliefs and practices. She is currently a second-year doctoral student in Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In addition to engaging in scholarly research in Chicana/o Studies, Lilliana is also focusing on applied and action-oriented research with Latina/o schools, families, and communities.

**Kristian Zaspel**

My name is Kristian Zaspel, and I was raised in San Diego, California (Chula Vista, to be precise, but no one knows where that is). I moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, when I was 17, and came to Madison shortly thereafter. I will be graduating in May with a bachelor's degree in Human Geography and a Certificate in Chicano/a Studies. I will be moving back to San Diego in July 2004, where I hope to work and relax with my friends before going back to school at UCLA to pursue my masters in Urban Planning (hopefully). Then I will rebuild Aztlán.