

America Defines Latinos

THE CLASH OF NARRATIVES BEGINS

Proclamation abolishing racial categories and slavery among Mexicans . . . They will not be called Indian, mulatto, or any racial category, but rather all, in common, Americans.

—JOSÉ MARÍA MORELOS,

November 17, 1810

ON THE THIRD DAY OF THE 1849 California Constitutional Convention, one of the delegates from Los Angeles, José Antonio Carrillo, rose to address the assembly, speaking through an interpreter, as he was not yet proficient in English. Carrillo had heard a fellow delegate say that the constitution being developed for the new state of California was not going to be for Latinos—the “native Californians,” or Californios—but only for the “American” population. He begged leave to say that he considered himself “as much an American citizen” as the delegate who had made that remark. William M. Gwin of San Francisco patronizingly replied that the constitution was being made for the Atlantic Americans because they constituted the majority of the population, but that its purpose was also to “protect” the Latino minority. At this, Kimball H. Dimmick, an Atlantic American delegate representing San José, informed the convention that his own Latino constituents also considered themselves just as American as the rest of the population in the soon-to-be state. “They all demanded their title of ‘Americans’. They would not consent to be placed in the minority. They considered themselves to be in the class ‘Americans’ and had the right to belong to the majority. . . . The Constitution had to be made for their benefit, just as it was for that of the native Americans [i.e., Atlantic Americans].”¹

When Miguel Hidalgo, Simón Bolívar, José de San Martín, and others roused the populations of Central and South America to fight for independence from Spain in the early nineteenth century, “America” was largely a geographical expression, for the modern nation-states of Mexico, Venezuela,

Argentina, and the rest did not yet exist. These revolutionary leaders could not generate patriotism by invoking an imagined community with flags, national anthems, and other standard symbols of national unity.² Yet many, if not most, of the leaders and the people did share a mental model of a territorial idea that could rally soldiers, craftsmen, merchants, slaves, and farmers: *América*.

In a speech in 1814, Simón Bolívar used that mental model to inspire the troops of one of his commanders, Rafael Urdaneta: “Para nosotros, la Patria es América” (For us, the homeland is America).³ A writer from Buenos Aires, José Antonio Miralla, who lived in Lima and Havana during Central and South America’s wars for independence, declared, “Es uno el corazón americano” (The American heart is one). Vicente Rocafuerte, an independence activist from Guayaquil, Ecuador, whose dreams of liberty took him to Lima, Havana, and Mexico City, later remembered that in his youth, he had considered “*toda la América*” (all America) under colonial Spanish rule to have been “*la patria de mi nacimiento*” (the homeland of my birth).⁴ Seeking to ignite the fires of independence, Mexican priest Miguel Hidalgo in 1810 made his famous proclamation addressed to “*la nación americana*” (the American nation), with the invocation, “Rise up, O noble spirits of Americans! . . . for the day of glory and public happiness has arrived.”⁵

In their respective struggles for independence from a European colonial power, both Mexico and the United States declared to the world their intention to create an independent republic based on notions of equality. Each subsequently fought a war against its colonial power, then formalized its own governing principles and structure. After Mexican independence, Alta California was part of the new Republic of Mexico, whose first constitution was written for “*la América Mexicana*” (Mexican America);⁶ and a generation of leaders grew up shaped by these ideals of Mexican independence. Yet some forty years after Hidalgo called on the “noble spirits of Americans” to fight for self-governance, the subsequent generation of Californios found itself confronting a competing vision of America from the United States of America, after the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (1848) ceded nearly half of Mexico’s territory, including Alta California, to the US at the end of the Mexican-American War.

José Antonio Carrillo was joined at the 1849 California Constitutional Convention by other Latinos who had been active participants in government when Alta California was still part of Mexico, such as Pablo de la Guerra, Mariano Vallejo, Antonio María Pico, José María Covarrubias, and

Manuel Domínguez. Their vision of California's future as part of the United States was based on their understanding of Mexico's constitution and government, and their vision of "America" presumed the values of self-government with freedom and equality for all.⁷

On the other hand, many of the Atlantic American delegates to the California Constitutional Convention probably were surprised by Latinos calling themselves "Americans" simply because they believed in ideals of equality, freedom, and democracy. The early leaders of the United States independence movement felt they had developed a plan for self-governance and political equality that would serve as a model for the rest of the world.⁸ But between the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and California's Constitutional Convention in 1849, the definition of "American" had largely changed in the US, from the universalist idea of individual liberty and freely chosen self-governance to a nativist definition that limited "American" to members of a self-perceived national ethnic group: white, preferably Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and English-speaking. Kaufman has detailed the stages in this shift. The French and Indian War (1754–1763) highlighted differences between the white, British-origin, English-speaking Protestant population and perceived "others"—Catholic, Francophone, and of French origin; or Native American, either Catholic or pagan; or black, African-origin slaves—even before the American Revolution was fought, for self-governance ostensibly based on universalist ideas such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Yet contemporary and subsequent Whig historians asserted that these "universal" values had been born deep in the German forests and taken to England by the Anglo-Saxons. With the "desire for freedom in their veins," the Anglo-Saxons' English descendants had brought these values to North America's shores. Many early American statesmen, including Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Adams, and George Washington, subscribed to this ahistorical notion of the Anglo-Saxon origins of republican values. For instance, Thomas Jefferson wrote to John Adams in 1776 that the "political principles and form of government" guiding the new republic were derived from "the Saxon chiefs." A nativist narrative in which the American government was the product of a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant people, "descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion," competed with the universalist narrative that American governmental values and institutions were open to peoples of any language, origin, or religion.⁹ This nativist definition of America was strengthened by the "Black Legend" of Spain. Dating from the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation, the

Black Legend depicted the Catholic Spanish to British Protestants as “unusually brutal and avaricious barbarians of a mixed race, a combination of African and European . . . who then went on to mix with the Native Americans and other non-European peoples in the New World.” By contrast, English Protestants liked to see themselves as a “civilized and uncontaminated race” descended from the Anglo-Saxons, an inaccurate but nonetheless firmly held concept of identity they bequeathed to their white, Protestant descendants in North America.¹⁰

As ideas about race, ethnicity, and government began to coalesce in the US between 1776 and 1849, whites increasingly considered nonwhites incapable of self-government; they believed it was their duty to impose their model of government and society upon nonwhites for the ultimate “benefit” of those lesser races. Horsman sees in the US expansion into Texas an example of how the definition of “American,” already shifted from a universalist one based on lofty ideals to a nativist one based on Anglo-Saxonism, was used to further Manifest Destiny over nonwhite ethnic groups who happened to live in the way of US territorial expansion—lofty rhetoric about freedom and democracy to the contrary.¹¹ Kaufman posits that by 1849, citizens of the United States had learned a dual definition of who was American. On the one hand, in the universalist narrative, an American was any inhabitant of the western hemisphere who believed in freedom, equality, individual liberty, democratic self-government, and similar values. On the other hand, in the nativist narrative, an American was a white, English-speaking Protestant descended from Anglo-Saxon ancestors either literally or fictively, via cultural assimilation.¹²

Carrillo and the other Latinos participating in California’s Constitutional Convention in 1849, however, believed that the universalist ideals they shared, of equality, freedom, and self-government, made them as American as the Atlantic Americans, whose rhetoric, at least, indicated that they shared similar ideals. These Latinos’ adherence to the universalist values of Mexican independence made them advocates for the abolition of slavery and for racial equality in voting.¹³ Considering their own cultural heritage just as valid as the Atlantic American tradition, they also supported the publication of all public documents and announcements in Spanish as well as English, and the continuation of Iberian and Mexican legal traditions protecting married women’s property rights.¹⁴ From their universalist point of view, inclusion of these policies in California’s new constitution would spread the blessings of freedom, equality, and democracy to even more people: African Americans

also would be endowed with life, liberty, and the ability to pursue happiness; adult male African Americans, Native Americans, and their descendants would be able to vote; traditional property rights would be secured; and Spanish-speaking citizens would be informed of new laws, so as to respect and comply with them.

But the prevailing Atlantic American, nativist view on these policy issues was nearly the opposite of the Californios' universalist vision. It considered slavery a valid legal institution (whether one personally condoned it or not), limited the vote to adult white males, and believed all US citizens should speak English. Thanks to this nativist narrative, by the mid-nineteenth century African Americans, Native Americans, and their descendants in the US had been formally excluded from enjoying the same political and social rights as white persons, and the enslavement of nonwhite human beings was constitutionally permitted. Although not yet enforced by legislation, the idea of publishing official communications in any language but English mocked the goal of the cultural assimilation of nonwhites to an "Anglo-Saxon" model.

For six weeks, the issues of slavery, racial restrictions on suffrage, the right of married women to own property independently of their husbands, and the use of the Spanish language were debated at the convention, with the nativist narrative clearly driving many Atlantic American delegates' positions on these issues. But by the end of the convention, the universalist vision of "American California," championed by the Latino delegates and a significant portion of the Atlantic American ones, largely prevailed on these policy issues. The 1849 Constitution of the State of California abolished slavery, (theoretically) opened suffrage to nonwhites, guaranteed legal protection for married women's property rights, and stipulated that all legal documents be published "*en inglés y en español*" (in English and in Spanish).¹⁵

A CONTINUING CLASH OF NARRATIVES

Ever since the conclusion of the California Constitutional Convention in 1849, Latinos in California, and in the rest of the US, have experienced periodic clashes between these opposing views of their place in American society. Latinos have very much adhered to the universalist outlook, and this view consistently has driven their ideas of the American Dream. Data presented in this book will demonstrate that, in terms of adherence to the universalist values that hold US society together, Latinos have been, and are, entirely

American. Moreover, they have shown themselves to be at times even more American than any other group in the US, in terms of traditional individualist values and behaviors, such as workforce participation, family formation, and independence from public assistance. Despite these facts, Latinos have over and over again run up against the competing nativist narrative, which insists on defining “American” in terms of membership in a single ethnic group—white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and English-speaking—and therefore argues that Latinos have not been, are not, and never can be truly American.

The Nativist Narrative in California

California was admitted to the United States with a state constitution based largely on the universalists’ concept of American identity. The abolition of slavery in California, however—a universalist ideal with a precedent in the Mexican government’s abolition of slavery in 1813—nearly proved to be a deal breaker. California’s admission as a free state upset the carefully crafted balance between free and slave states established by the Missouri Compromise; and the slave states, perceiving their political power as endangered, threatened to leave the Union. Civil war loomed in 1850, and for a good part of that year the federal government virtually ceased to function, as members of the US Congress deadlocked over how to respond to California’s proposed admission as a free state. After nine months of acrimonious debate, Stephen Douglas and his congressional allies managed to negotiate a series of compromise bills, known in their totality as the Compromise of 1850. This compromise essentially saved the United States for another decade, but the price required for California’s admission as a free state was high. Slavery would not be banned in any other territory taken from Mexico, but instead would be decided in the future by a territory’s voters, in a process dubbed “popular sovereignty”; and the Fugitive Slave Act greatly strengthened the hand of slave owners, who now could legally pursue their escaped “property” into any state, free or slave.¹⁶

After California gained admission in 1850, nativist arguments about citizenship and identity commanded further public attention in California, strengthened in part by the Black Legend, in a narrative of Anglo-Saxon superiority over the mixed-race Catholic Latino. A common image in English-language papers during the Gold Rush portrayed Catholic, Spanish-speaking, mixed-race Latinos as having been culturally and economically

inert, or “asleep,” in California “before this Anglo-Saxon race broke upon them, and woke them from their lazy slumbers.”¹⁷ Latinos were aware that US nativists saw English-speaking, white, Protestant “Anglo-Saxons” as racially superior. A Latino newspaper in San Francisco chided its English-language counterparts for constantly printing stories about “*la superioridad de la raza sajona*” (the superiority of the Saxon race), with its self-proclaimed ableness, moral perfection, and generosity, compared to the allegedly backward, vice-ridden Latinos, incompetent to govern themselves.¹⁸ Most filibustering expeditions into Mexico in the same period were overtly predicated on such Anglo-Saxonism. A pro-filibuster editorial in the English-language Stockton *Weekly Democrat* was excerpted, in Spanish translation, by Francisco P. Ramírez, editor of Los Angeles’s *El Clamor Público*, to show his readers the filibusters’ nativist braggadocio: “The Anglo-Saxon race will take away from it the richest portion of our continent, and will make Mexico into what Nature intended it should be, whilst its wretched inhabitants will be obliged to flee to the tropics; or we will make them our slaves, as their color well justifies it.”¹⁹ In another anti-filibuster editorial, Ramírez said scornfully that “the Anglo-Saxons, in their origins, were robbers and pirates,” adding that this “piratic instinct” was still alive in their own day and age.²⁰ Meanwhile, legislators guided by the Anglo-Saxonist narrative taking root in the state lost little time in attempting to move California away from its original universalist principles.

Slavery. Although California had been admitted as a free state, the Fugitive Slave Act, negotiated as part of the Compromise of 1850, emboldened some Southern slave owners to bring their slaves to California. At least one slave owner, Thomas Jefferson Green, was elected a member of the state legislature shortly after he brought fifteen slaves from Texas to the Yuba River in California. By 1852, sympathies for slave ownership facilitated passage of the 1852 California Fugitive Slave Act, which aimed to restrict the antislavery scope of the California Constitution and to commit state resources to hunting down fugitive slaves. This act was renewed in 1853 and 1854.²¹

Race. It was proposed at the constitutional convention to limit the vote to adult white males, but Latinos strongly objected to being excluded from voting in a state in which even those among them who had “received from Nature a very dark skin” had voted and held public office. Pablo de la Guerra y Noriega of Santa Barbara assured his fellow delegates that, under Mexican

law, no racial group had been excluded from voting. The point sparked a bitter debate, during which the Anglo-Saxonists, to their dismay, found they could not define with legal precision what the word “white” meant, even though thirty other state constitutions contained such wording. They nevertheless tried to insist that courts of law understood who was “white” and who not. De la Guerra, not convinced that the new US courts should be allowed to define whiteness for voting purposes, proposed an amendment that kept the door open just a crack for at least some nonwhites in the future. This specified that nothing in the new constitution would prohibit that the legislature “might concede the right of suffrage to Indians or to the descendants of Indians,” to be approved by a two-thirds vote.²²

Language. Although California had been admitted to the United States as an officially bilingual state, the nativists resisted this constitutional provision. As early as 1850, a writer in San Francisco, clearly influenced by Anglo-Saxonism, argued that “for the sake of our nationality and brotherhood,” society should have “unanimity of language” and should “encourage the general and universal extension, throughout California, of our mother tongue, the good, old, strong, nervous, poetical, heroic Anglo-Saxon.”²³ In 1854, Governor John Bigler, in his annual message to the state legislature, suggested revising the state constitution so that, among other things, “it may not be absolutely necessary that all laws be published in Spanish”; at that time, however, no such revision was made.²⁴ In 1858, Ramírez reprinted a letter to the editor of San Francisco’s *El Éco del Pacífico* complaining that recent official translations were of such poor quality as to be worthless to Spanish speakers in understanding new laws.²⁵ Despite such protests, the bilingual provision of the 1849 constitution continued to be a legal mandate—albeit sometimes honored more in the breach than in the observance—throughout the first generation of California’s statehood.

The Know-Nothing Party, 1850s

In 1854, the Know-Nothing Party swept out of New York, providing a political party for dedicated nativists in the United States, as its platform was strongly anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic. The Know-Nothings established themselves in California in 1855, threatening to upset the existing Whig and Democratic Parties. For the first time, California’s Latinos faced a concerted political battle driven by the nativist narrative and directed at them.

Francisco P. Ramírez, the eighteen-year-old California-born Latino editor of Los Angeles's *El Clamor Público*, emerged as one of the state's first public defenders of the universalist narrative against this nativist narrative, on behalf of his fellow Latinos.²⁶ Publishing his translation of the Know-Nothing Party's national platform in 1855, Ramírez informed his readers that the Know-Nothings planned to restrict immigration, to ban Catholics from holding political office, and to ensure that "only Americans will govern America!" In addition, their platform supported a state's right to determine the legality of slavery within its borders, without interference from the federal government.²⁷ Ramírez ran articles against the Know-Nothings almost every week that year, using sarcastic humor to educate his readers about the dangers this nativist party posed. He mocked the fact that the Know-Nothings called themselves "Native Americans" when, in fact, their ancestors had immigrated to America from Europe. He pointed out that they sought to take the vote away from anyone who had the "misfortune" to profess the Catholic religion.²⁸ When a Know-Nothing leader named Rayer declared, in typically nativist fashion, "Brethren, let us have American liberty and American religion," Ramírez observed with mock surprise that no one had ever before suspected that "Jesus Christ was a native [i.e., Anglo-Saxon] American." He then mused that the Christian faith therefore could not be the "American religion" Mr. Rayer and the Know-Nothings wished for, as it "is incompatible with their character."²⁹

On the day before the 1855 elections, however, Ramírez turned entirely serious, contrasting the universalist narrative he personally held, as a Latino who was a citizen of the United States, with the nativist, Anglo-Saxonist narrative of the Know-Nothings. While the constitution of the United States and its laws extended rights and privileges to all citizens naturalized under its principles and institutions, the Know-Nothing Party wanted to restrict these rights, under the nativist doctrine that those rights were reserved only for white, English-speaking, Protestant adult males born in the US.³⁰ The Know-Nothing Party swept the California elections that year, electing their slate of state officers and winning a majority in both the state Assembly and the Senate.³¹ The following year, they turned their eyes to the national elections. Antonio María Pico, who had been a delegate to the 1849 California Constitutional Convention when he was mayor of San José, served as Santa Clara County's delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1856. In a letter to voters back home, he warned that the Know-Nothing, "wrapping up together self-centered notions of nativism and

opposition to Catholicism, sets himself against the interests of the individuals who have adopted the United States of America as their homeland.”³²

Yet just as rapidly it rose, the Know-Nothing Party fell in California. Resentment against immigrants and Catholics temporarily united many mutually antagonistic factions in California, particularly the anti-Nebraska Democrats, the pro-Nebraska Chivalry Democrats, and the rapidly disappearing Whigs. Yet once the Know-Nothings were in power, latent sectional disputes ripped the different factions of the party apart so thoroughly that they could not use their fragile majority to elect a Know-Nothing senator to represent the state in Washington. In a matter of weeks, the Know-Nothings “divided into groups of selfish politicians,” lost their mandate in California, and by the end of 1856 were virtually extinct.³³

Temporarily relieved of the need to fight the nativist narrative, Ramírez concentrated his efforts instead on building up the universalist narrative to which Latinos subscribed. In the summer of 1859, he began publishing some articles in his Spanish-language newspaper in English, to encourage the “young and rising generation” to become bilingual, urging them to read “the Spanish in their mother tongue, then . . . read the English side by side.” A major goal of this bilingualism was to enable California’s Latinos to learn the universalist constitutional precepts of the United States, the laws by which the country was governed, by which “life, liberty and property are held sacred and secure.”³⁴

Reginaldo F. del Valle was one of the young Latinos born after California became a state. He was raised in the very fashion Ramírez later suggested, as a bilingual, bicultural loyal American citizen. Born in 1854, in a house facing the plaza in Los Angeles, Del Valle, like Ramírez, was actually trilingual, in Spanish, English, and French. Educated at St. Vincent’s Academy in Los Angeles (later Loyola Marymount University), then at Santa Clara College (later Santa Clara University), he read law with the firm of Winans and Belknap in San Francisco and was admitted to the state bar in 1877. He then returned to Los Angeles and entered politics. He also subscribed to the universalist narrative that Ramírez championed, and would battle three waves of nativist politics during his eighty-four years of life.

Civil War and Reconstruction

By the close of the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln held out a universalist vision for America in which slavery would be abolished, racial equality

would confer citizenship and voting rights irrespective of race (for men, at least), and government would be “of the people, by the people, for the people.” The Confederates, on the other hand, firmly espoused the nativist narrative throughout, fighting to maintain race-based slavery and white supremacy. The majority of Latinos in California supported Lincoln’s universalist ideals; those who were citizens voted for Lincoln, and even some who weren’t nevertheless joined the Union’s military. Major José Ramón Pico helped recruit four units of the Spanish-speaking Native California Cavalry, who manned forts in the Arizona Territory and tracked down English-speaking Confederate bandits and sympathizers in different parts of California.

In 1862, Emperor Napoleon III sought to take advantage of the American Civil War to halt US expansion and in its place expand French influence into Mexico by overthrowing democratically elected President Juárez and installing a monarch. Napoleon also made friendly overtures to the rebelling slave states. But his grand design met its first setback in the unexpected victory of the Mexican army over the French at the first battle of Puebla, on May 5, 1862. Latinos in California celebrated this triumph for freedom and democracy with a new American holiday, the Cinco de Mayo, thereby also constructing a new public memory enshrining Latino devotion to universalist values in the US and throughout the Americas. During the Civil War and after, Latinos in many California cities marched, sang, made speeches, and conducted public ceremonies every May 5, reminding the world where they stood on the issues of both wars. They opposed slavery and supported freedom; they opposed white supremacy and supported racial equality; they opposed elite rule and supported an ethnically inclusive democracy. With the surrender of the Confederate army and the passing of constitutional amendments that abolished slavery throughout the country, declared racial equality in citizenship, and protected racial equality in voting, it appeared that Lincoln’s universalist vision had triumphed in America.³⁵

But this universalist victory was short-lived, even in California. “White men must rule America!” screamed an advertisement in the English-language *Union Democrat*, published in Sonora, California, in 1869, claiming that the country “demands the restoration of the White Republic.”³⁶ The *Union Democrat* shared with many of its readers, and with many Atlantic Americans in California, a strong belief in “the distinctions of race fashioned by the hand of the Creator,” and the consequent duty of white men to avoid amalgamation with the “inferior races” by not “forcing different species of men . . . to enjoy impartial freedom.” To demonstrate that “mongrelism” would lead to the

downfall of society, the paper pointed to the fate of Mexico, a “Mongrel Republic” where the extension of basic civil rights to “mixed breed, Indians and Negroes in common citizenship” allegedly had led to the country committing “social suicide.”³⁷ Unsurprisingly, the *Union Democrat* also thundered against the Fifteenth Amendment as an attempt to “give the inferior races new rights,” arguing that its passage would lead to a “mongrelization” of the US.³⁸ The *Amador Dispatch* also opposed racial equality in voting rights, urging that “white men who are trying to preserve this government for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever” oppose this legacy of the late President Lincoln.³⁹ In this renewed nativist atmosphere, Pablo de la Guerra—the delegate who at the 1849 constitutional convention had informed nativist delegates that no race had been excluded from voting under Mexican law, and who had served as acting lieutenant governor of California in 1861–1862 and was now a district court judge in Southern California—was sued in 1870 for attempting to “exercise the rights of a White citizen” in spite of his Native American ancestry. Although de la Guerra succeeded in winning his own case, the California Supreme Court nevertheless used the lawsuit to assert its prerogative of determining which persons of Native American origin would or would not be allowed to vote.⁴⁰

Spanish-language newspapers in California protested against this resurgence of nativist sentiment. Reponding to a report on an incident of cattle rustling that appeared in an unnamed English-language newspaper in Los Angeles, which had “supposed” that the rustlers were Mexicans, a Spanish-language paper in the same city, *La Crónica*, replied sarcastically, referencing known local outlaws, “It’s obvious that only Mexicans steal—and here are the Gassens, the Katzes, and others as proof.”⁴¹ Spanish-language newspapers kept their readers up to date on instances of racial discrimination, for example publicizing the fact that even though Latinos made up nearly one-third of the voters in Santa Barbara County and over a quarter of those in Los Angeles County in 1873, both the Republican and Democratic Parties failed to nominate a single Latino candidate that year.⁴²

The threats of police abuse and mob lynching hung over Latino communities. In Fairfield, Pancho Valencia, sentenced to death, had been granted a new trial by the State Supreme Court, but the Solano County sheriff ignored the appeal process and hanged him anyway. The editor of Los Angeles’s *La Crónica* publicly opined that the sheriff should be tried for murder.⁴³ After a “shamefully drunk” mob burned five prisoners alive in the Bakersfield jail, the editor of *La Crónica* sarcastically suggested that state legislators be asked

to carry a bill authorizing the lynching of all thieves, with the proviso “that such an edifying act should be committed by drunk American citizens, and that the victims be of the Latino race.”⁴⁴

One assurance Latinos had, however, that they were still part of a universalist American society in California was the constitutional right to have laws, regulations, reports, and other official materials from state, county, and city authorities printed in the Spanish language. But by the 1870s, even this was under threat. There was no oversight of the quality of these official translations into Spanish; on one occasion, the editor of *La Crónica* complained that the Spanish translation of a new city ordinance in Los Angeles was so poor it seemed to be written “in a new language, in an unknown tongue which—by right of invention—belongs to the Council’s translator,” and questioned its validity if no one could understand it.⁴⁵ In 1874, the mayor of Los Angeles, citing a need to cut costs, refused to authorize payment to *La Crónica* for printing a list in Spanish of persons who owed back taxes, even though the city council had unanimously approved the expenditure.⁴⁶ Later that same year, the governor declared that he had decided to save the state money by ceasing publication of Spanish translations. *La Crónica* objected that some older Latino citizens, including persons who had helped write the 1849 state constitution, did not speak or read English—through no fault of their own, as the state had not provided schools with any bilingual staff. Ignoring or abolishing the Spanish-language provision of the state constitution, therefore, was fundamentally unjust.⁴⁷ A Latino state legislator in Colorado and a Spanish-language newspaper in New Mexico publicly applauded *La Crónica’s* efforts to uphold the bilingual provisions of California’s constitution.⁴⁸

Denis Kearny and the Workingmen’s Party

This renewed nativist narrative, made more strident in reaction to the legal racial equality federally mandated under Reconstruction, fed the establishment of the Workingmen’s Party, a new political action group formed in 1878 by Denis Kearney. A demagogue, he rose to power during one of California’s periodic economic depressions, initially by denouncing capitalism and railroad monopolies. He subsequently fueled nativists’ resentments by attacking the presence of Chinese immigrants in California, making famous the phrase “The Chinese must go!” He touted the unrealistic dream that if California were rid of the Chinese, all white men in the state would have work. Kearney

rabble-raised on this nativist theme, demanding that California write a new constitution to alleviate the problems the average working man faced. As had the earlier Know-Nothing Party, Kearney's nativist Workingmen's Party swept the state, sidelining the Republican and Democratic candidates, and was able to call a new constitutional convention, to which not one Latino was chosen as a delegate. The resulting 1879 California Constitutional Convention has been called the "runaway convention" because the delegates took up topics far beyond the original issues that had prompted its convening.⁴⁹

Their nativist agenda included Latinos among its targets. The 1849 constitution had provided for the publication of all official communications in English and in Spanish; but from the nativist perspective, Spanish was a foreign language, spoken by a foreign population, and thus ought not to be officially recognized in the state. Old Atlantic American resentments against the recognition of Spanish erupted during the convention, expanding into more general nativist complaints about Latino "foreigners" in California. Wiley James Tinnin—originally from Jackson, in the former Confederate state of Mississippi and now a representative from Weaverville in Modoc County—announced to the convention, "This is an English-speaking Government," and declared himself upset that documents should be published, at government expense, "in Spanish for the benefit of foreigners." Surprised to hear Latinos being called "foreigners," Judge Horace Cowan Rolfe of San Bernardino County asked Tinnin, "Do you call the native population of this state foreigners?" Rolfe was an acquaintance of the Rubidoux family, descendants of a Frenchman who had married a Latina woman from New Mexico and become a naturalized citizen of Mexico in the 1830s. Rubidoux's children and grandchildren still lived in Southern California, were fluent in Spanish, and openly celebrated Mexican Independence Day. Tinnin, however, avoided the real point of the question and, in typically nativist fashion, declared, "They had ample time to learn the language."⁵⁰ The nativist narrative prevailed and was enshrined in the 1879 constitution. Article IV, Section 24, read, "All laws of the State of California, and all official writings and the executive, legislative and judicial proceedings shall be conducted, preserved and published in no other than the English language."⁵¹

After returning to his native Los Angeles in 1877, Reginaldo del Valle opened a law office, and in 1879 he ran successfully for the state Assembly. In January 1880, he was sworn in as its only Latino member. He was perfectly fluent in English, but apparently spoke with a slight accent, as a later *Los Angeles Times* article noted that he pronounced English "with just a suave

hint of Castilian [Spanish].”⁵² The turmoil stirred up by the Workingmen’s Party, with its radical demands for economic and racial reform in California, and by the raucous 1879 constitutional convention, had left the 1880 state legislature the enormous task of redesigning all the state’s governing and administrative structures to comply with the new constitution, within just ninety days. One of these tasks, of course, was to remove the bilingual provisions that had been in place for over thirty years. A portion of this task fell to Del Valle, who promptly used his parliamentary skills to contest this removal of Spanish from its status as an official state language.

When a legislator is opposed to a bill, there are many ways to express it. For example, if a bill requires funding for its enforcement, the dissatisfied legislator can reduce the accompanying budget request so drastically as to make its enforcement impossible to carry out. Assembly Bill 184 was introduced to “provide for the keeping of accounts in the English language.” Del Valle, the only Latino in the chamber, was the only assemblyman to express opposition to the bill. He was just beginning his political career, and in general, first-time legislators are reluctant to annoy other members by opposing popular bills, but Del Valle made one of his first motions on the floor of the Assembly an oppositional one, in effect announcing his anti-nativist stance. AB 184, however, had no budget that he could attack; in fact, Tinnin had argued during the constitutional convention that eliminating the printing of Spanish-language translations would save the state money. Yet many bills have an enacting clause, to provide direction as to how a law is to be carried out. Del Valle chose to oppose AB 184 by moving to strike out the enacting clause, which would have essentially rendered the bill ineffective. His motion was voted down, and the bill was passed—California moved to the linguistically nativist position of mandating English only—but Del Valle had made the first of many public statements that he would oppose Anglo-Saxonist nativism whenever he could.⁵³

The American Protective Association, 1890s

After the furor of the Workingmen’s Party died down, immigration from Europe continued to flow into the United States during the 1880s and 1890s. Now, however, the immigrants came increasingly from non-Anglo-Saxon regions, largely from southern and eastern Europe: Italy, Greece, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Balkans, Poland, and Russia. In California, immigration from Mexico also began to surge, supplying labor to build the state’s rapidly expanding railroads and agricultural sector. Many of these new

immigrants, both Mexican and European, were Catholic, and the US Catholic church at this time was vigorously establishing parishes and building parochial schools to meet the needs of its expanding membership.⁵⁴

Henry F. Bowers was a Baltimore native who had lived through the Know-Nothing movement and American Civil War. In the post-Reconstruction era, he took nativism to a new level. Not only did he believe that men of pure Anglo-Saxon stock were solely responsible for founding the United States government, but he was further convinced that the Catholic Church was masterminding a plot to overthrow the Anglo-Saxon-authored US government and impose a Catholic regime, which would take orders from Rome. In 1887, Bowers formed a secret, anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant group called the American Protective Association (APA).⁵⁵ By 1894, APA membership had grown to over half a million persons, and APA candidates were running for office.⁵⁶ Antonio J. Flores, editor of Los Angeles's *Las Dos Repúblicas*, one of the Spanish-language newspapers published in California during the 1890s, penned a strongly worded editorial on "*esa execrable sociedad*" (that execrable society), the APA. If, by misfortune, it should happen to win the upcoming elections, he warned, Latinos would become pariahs in their own land, treated worse than the Chinese had been treated a generation earlier.⁵⁷

Hoping to motivate Latino voters to turn out to vote against the APA, Flores also sought an interview with Reginaldo del Valle. Since his brush with the nativist Workingmen's Party in 1880, Del Valle had been reelected to the state Assembly, and then elected to the state Senate, where he served as president pro tem of the upper house. By 1894, he had become something of an elder statesman and was also a member of many Latino organizations, by whom he was often invited as a speaker at Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day celebrations. Understanding the threat of another nativist movement, Del Valle warned Flores's Spanish-speaking readers that the APA was a secret society whose members had taken an oath to keep Catholics from political office. An APA member would only vote for Protestants, swore to do everything in his power to ensure that Catholics were not employed in any government position, and promised personally never to hire a Catholic for any job, if a Protestant could be found instead. Del Valle then listed historical Catholic contributions to the United States, including the European discovery of the Americas by "*un católico ayudado por los Reyes Católicos*" (a Catholic helped by the Catholic Monarchs), and Catholic France's aid to the fledgling United States during the American Revolution. He pointed out that a number of Union generals in the American Civil War had been Catholics, along with

a great many of their soldiers, whose defense of the United States was a more than sufficient answer to APA claims of a Catholic plot against the US. Del Valle ended the interview by urging “*los de la raza latina y los que creen fielmente en las libertades de esta gran República*” (those of the Latin race and those who faithfully believe in the freedoms of this great Republic) to defend the constitution by voting for non-APA candidates.⁵⁸

The APA fell apart by the late 1890s. At its height of success, it was rent by an internecine struggle for leadership. Bowers was deposed, and an “opportunistic Michigan publicist” led it through a “brief, flamboyant career of hysteria and political manipulation,” after which it collapsed in 1896, deserted by its followers.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, its decline did not signal the end of nativist political thinking in either California or the nation as a whole.

Ku Klux Klan Revival and Jim Crow Laws in California in the 1920s

The Mexican Revolution erupted in 1910, and nearly a million Mexicans fled their homeland during the next twenty years. About half of them came to California, creating a Latino population explosion that coincided with a period of renewed nativism. During World War I, however, the induction of men into the US Army created employment opportunities for the refugees, and for a short time the new immigrants flourished. Then the Ku Klux Klan, revived in the early twentieth century, made its appearance in California, where its opposition to nonwhites included not just African Americans but also multiracial Latinos. Klan chapters formed in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, Santa Barbara, San Diego, the Imperial Valley, and the San Joaquin Valley, especially in Tulare, Fresno, Kings, and Kern Counties.⁶⁰ Jim Crow-style segregation, strengthened by the Supreme Court’s decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, also arrived in California around this time. The nativists’ desire to live separately from “inferior races” led to segregation in schools, housing, and public facilities.⁶¹ As Latinos constituted the largest nonwhite ethnic group in the state, they became a particular target of segregation and hate crimes. Upon the return of soldiers to civilian life after World War I, and given the nativist tendencies of the time, many Mexican immigrants lost their jobs. Juan de Heras, editor of Los Angeles’s Spanish-language newspaper *El Heraldo de México*, described Mexican immigrant families reduced to living in open fields, suffering during the winter without fuel or warm clothing. Their search for gainful employment frequently met with, “¡No hay trabajo!” (There’s no work!).⁶²

Seeing the need to address the immigrant community's needs, De Heras founded the Liga Protectora Mexicana (Mexican Protective League) in 1918, on the general model of the *mutualista* movement, to provide food, shelter, and emergency relief for those Latinos who had nowhere else to turn. The Liga was membership based, with dues of fifty cents a month. In addition to trying to provide basic necessities of life, the Liga offered to represent workers in cases of employer-employee conflict and to press for compensation for workplace accidents resulting in injury. As the Liga's financial resources were not extensive, it committed itself to special philanthropic fund-raising efforts when legal or medical situations exhausted available funds.⁶³ The Liga also concerned itself with resisting violations of Latinos' civil rights. One of its earliest efforts was the attempt to obtain a commutation of the death sentence passed on Ladislao Guerra in 1918. The Liga hired bilingual attorney Antonio Orfila, a contemporary of Del Valle and, like him, a second-generation Latino born in California during the Gold Rush–Civil War era. Orfila called on the governor and contacted the Mexican ambassador in Washington, DC, to try to get the White House to weigh in on the case.⁶⁴ As legal costs mounted, the Liga mounted a fund-raising effort, and contributions came in from a number of communities in California—including Los Angeles, Bakersfield, Paso Robles, San Diego, and Santa Paula—as well as from Texas, Arizona, Kansas, and even Baja California.⁶⁵ After several weeks' effort, the Liga was able to convince California's governor to commute Guerra's death sentence to life imprisonment.⁶⁶

The Liga also began to offer cultural and educational activities. A reading room was established at its Los Angeles headquarters, and English-language classes were part of its programs.⁶⁷ One evening of fund-raising, for instance, included an appearance by a local musical group, the Banda Mexicana Islas Hermanos, which played classical pieces by Von Suppé, Donizetti, Sarasate, and Saint-Saëns, as well as a stirring rendition of the “Himno Nacional Mexicano” (Mexican national anthem). The evening included speeches and ended with a dance.⁶⁸

The needs of unemployed Mexican immigrants were so great, however, that the Liga Protectora Mexicana exhausted its funds within a few years, and by 1921 accepted the assistance of Conrado Gaxiola, the Mexican consul in Los Angeles, and of a sister organization from Arizona, the Liga Protectora Latina. This enabled it to create a more robust response to community needs, the Comité Mexicano de Auxilios (Mexican Aid Committee), which eventually opened a soup kitchen to feed needy immigrants.⁶⁹ The Liga Protectora Latina

had been founded in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1914, and chapters quickly spread.⁷⁰ More importantly, the Liga Protectora Latina had more experience at raising and managing funds, and had a membership familiar with *mutualista*-type organizations. In 1921, de Heras merged the Liga Protectora Mexicana into the Liga Protectora Latina, as Chapter 30 of the latter organization.⁷¹

Reginaldo del Valle seems to have been involved in the activities of the Liga Protectora Latina, most likely as a fiscal contributor and possibly also as a legal advisor. In 1925, the president of the Liga, Julio Zegner Uriburu, bestowed upon him the Medalla al Merito (Medal of Merit), to recognize his efforts “*en bien de la Raza*” (for the welfare of the [Latino] race). Since 1880, Del Valle had been doing his best to defend Latinos from nativist attacks, and his activities thus embodied the Liga’s motto, *Protección—Igualdad—Justicia* (Protection—Equality—Justice).⁷² But Del Valle’s efforts against nativist attacks were not yet over.

Taking a more universalist approach to protecting their civil rights, Latinos in Texas formed the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), setting forth to claim their constitutional rights by virtue of being loyal, law-abiding US citizens who sincerely believed in the principles of the United States Constitution. Their 1927 bylaws recorded their vow to educate their children about the “duties and rights, language and customs” of this country. Once its membership staked out its universalist position as citizens, LULAC stood on these rights to fight nativist efforts to “create racial prejudices against our people.” As American citizens, LULAC members promised to combat the “infamous stigmas being imposed upon them,” all the while vowing to be “proud and respectful” of their Mexican “racial origin.”⁷³ Inspired by this example, Daniel Dominguez became the secretary of the San Gabriel Spanish American League, with the goal of organizing a group similar to LULAC in California. By 1934, the California group had drafted bylaws that paralleled LULAC’s. The San Gabriel group, comprised of US citizens, claimed the universalist “inalienable rights of all citizens, as set forth in the Constitution of the United States.” They undertook to educate their community about “equality, justice, tolerance and American patriotism,” supported by a vigorous voter-education campaign, so that via the ballot box they would attain “recognition of said rights by all men.” By asserting their rights as US citizens, members of the San Gabriel Spanish American League vowed to combat the discrimination inherent in the “granting of special privileges,” by which they most likely meant restrictive covenants and the segregated schools, swimming pools, and restaurants that had become

common in California by the 1930s. Dominguez sent a draft of these bylaws to Reginaldo del Valle in 1936, asking him to make a financial donation to the San Gabriel group.⁷⁴ Del Valle's response to this request has not survived, but the fact of the request illustrates that throughout his professional life, Del Valle was a leader in battling the nativist narrative in California.

Deporting the "Mexican Problem"

In 1928, California governor C. C. Young directed the state departments of Industrial Relations, Agriculture, and Welfare to find a solution to what he termed "the Mexican Problem" plaguing the state.⁷⁵ Employees of these departments, assisted by "Americanization teachers," conducted surveys and collected data on the perceived problem.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, the US census declared that Mexicans were a nonwhite race completely different from whites, and were to be enumerated along with other nonwhite races in the 1930 census: Negroes, Indians, Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and the newest racial group, "Mexican."⁷⁷ Governor Young's Mexican Fact-Finding Committee followed the lead of the US census and "racially segregated" state and country records so as to discover clues about the "intelligence of the group" they called "Mexican."⁷⁸ Two years later, the committee's tautological report on "the problem of Mexican immigration into California" concluded that the problem, in essence, lay in the immigration of Mexicans into California. Governor Young reported to the state in 1930 that the Mexican Problem required a "solution" at the national level.⁷⁹

By the time the report was released, the Great Depression was forcing millions out of work, which created serious strains on state and local welfare departments. Consequently, the nativist "solution" to the Mexican Problem called for deporting the "problem" population back to Mexico, which would open up jobs for "real Americans" and thereby reduce welfare costs. As a result, during the 1930s over 1 million legal US residents and American citizens of Mexican descent were forcibly removed from their homes and transported to Mexico. The trauma of this abrupt uprooting and expulsion from the only country they had ever known scarred a generation of Latinos so deeply that, sixty years later, many US citizens came forward in 2003 to testify at the California State Senate Hearings on Unconstitutional Deportation and Coerced Immigration. Sometimes in tears, they shared their stories of how they, US citizens, were deported, and their lives broken, in order to solve Governor Young's "Mexican Problem."⁸⁰ For a decade and more, a generation

of Latinos—whom I call the deportation era generation—grew up learning to hide their Mexican roots, so as not to stand out and be liable to sudden deportation.

Nativism Permeates Research on Latinos

A flood of new immigrants from southern Europe from 1880 to 1910 had to be assimilated into American life, a goal Theodore Roosevelt described in 1915 in terms redolent of nativism: “There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism. . . . There is no such thing as a hyphenated American who is a good American. The only man who is a good American is the man who is an American and nothing else.”⁸¹ Roosevelt had written a multivolume series, *The Winning of the West*, which laid out an Anglo-Saxonist historical narrative of a small group of English-speaking settlers arriving on the Atlantic shore and expanding their territory to the Pacific Ocean. This narrative depicted them boldly picking up their rifles, traveling in successive waves to the farthest, wildest edge of the American wilderness, and taking the land from malevolent Indians, treacherous and corrupt Spaniards, and ignorant, indolent French. In common with many of his Atlantic American contemporaries, Roosevelt worried that the plunging birth rate of the “White American race stock” might result in “race suicide,” unless the non-Nordic immigrants arriving were to completely assimilate into and join the core national ethnic group, laying aside all prior allegiances, languages, and cultures.⁸² Roosevelt’s historical account implied that if immigrants rejected nonwhite, Catholic, Latinate cultures—such as the ones from which many of them came—they might be admitted to membership in the privileged white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, English-speaking core national group.

Based on similar cultural assumptions, social researchers in the 1920s developed a theoretical model of the “assimilating immigrant” and created scales—for example, “Do they speak English Very Well, Well, Not Well, or Not At All?”—to calculate the degree to which immigrants, and their children and grandchildren, “unlearn their inferior cultural traits” in order to be fully accepted in American society.⁸³ Park and Burgess, two of the major theorists of the “assimilating immigrant” model, marveled at the speed and ease with which the children of Poles, Lithuanians, and Norwegians assimilated into American society, so thoroughly that soon they could not be distinguished from Americans “born of native parents.” They assumed that this unidirectional, linear assimilation would be the future of all immigrants in

America, resulting in a melting pot that would tolerate “every sort of normal human difference,” except, of course, differences of culture, color, and race.⁸⁴ When applied to Latinos, the assimilating immigrant model presumes that they, despite having had a settled presence in what is now the United States since 1526, are somehow intransigently foreign and un-American because they do not exhibit “sufficiently” the cultural traits of the core national ethnic group as defined by nativists. As long ago as the California Constitutional Convention in 1849, José Antonio Carrillo contested this narrow definition of “American,” championing instead a universalist definition based on adherence to core values derived from the Latino-Catholic experience of Western society and generally shared by English-speaking Protestants. Ignorant of such historical contestations of the definition of “American,” most researchers in the twenty-first century unthinkingly continue to measure Latino acculturation and assimilation by nativist standards of language and culture, in the mistaken belief that Latinos are largely “foreign immigrants.” In fact, for over 160 years, the majority of Latinos in California have been born in the state, and hence are not immigrants (see chapter 7 for demographic details).

By the 1970s and 1980s, however, the new nativism appeared to expand its definition of “American” from merely being a white, Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking Protestant to holding individualist mores such as the work ethic, independence from welfare, family values, and good health behaviors—all of which, not coincidentally, were represented as characteristic of white, Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking, Protestant culture. By these standards, a “true American” was one who worked hard, did not use welfare, formed families, and exhibited good health behavior and outcomes. For the period covered by this book, 1940 to 2015, data from the US census and other sources make clear that Latinos have shown by their high labor force participation, low welfare use, strong families, strong entrepreneurial activity, and superior health behaviors and outcomes that they consistently exhibit these individualist values and behaviors; indeed, so much so that Latinos now are reinforcing these basic building blocks of society throughout the US as a whole. Despite this, researchers unwittingly perpetuate nativism in nearly all research conducted on Latinos, through their unexamined use of assimilation and acculturation scales based on nativist assumptions about language and culture. Debates about the “American-ness” of Latinos, begun over 160 years ago, continue to drive elections, policy, and research on Latinos in the twenty-first century.

Nativism's Survivors

In the late 1990s, the United Way of Greater Los Angeles wanted to issue a research-based Latino Report Card to highlight progress that Latinos in the region were making and to identify roadblocks to greater progress, to which the United Way could then turn its philanthropic focus. As an initial step in that project, during the summer of 1998, the Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture (CESLAC) at UCLA convened a number of middle-aged Latinos in an effort to understand how nativist rhetoric had affected them during their lives. Born in the 1940s and 1950s, these participants had grown up in a world far different from the one they lived in by the late 1990s. They were old enough to remember a much more overtly segregated, exclusionary society. Still expressing hurt and pain forty years later, they described growing up in situations in which Latino claims to American identity were not validated by the rest of society. As one participant expressed it, "Back then [1950s] . . . who cares? You're just a Mexican, you're a 'beaner,' you know, you're a 'greaser.'" ⁸⁵

During the postwar period, these older participants remembered, the Spanish language was largely suppressed, especially in the public sphere. There was no Spanish television, very little radio, only one newspaper, and certainly no billboards or bus placards in Spanish. "It's real easy to live here now and speak Spanish. It wasn't when my mother was growing up, in the fifties and the sixties. I don't think it was." ⁸⁶ While Spanish was merely absent from most aspects of public life, it was actively rooted out in the schools these participants had attended. Many older respondents remembered being punished if they spoke Spanish at school, which was a disincentive to developing fluency in that language. "In high school . . . you wanted not to speak Spanish, and [teachers would] punish us. . . . I didn't want to hang around anybody that spoke Spanish." ⁸⁷ The longer they stayed in school, the more the idea that Spanish was somehow bad worked into the images these respondents had of their families, their culture, and themselves; and those images were themselves largely negative. Anglo-Saxonist rhetoric had wormed its way into their personal lives, into their own feelings about self and family. If Spanish was bad, those who spoke it must be bad, and the culture they came from, by association, must also be bad. "[My] own language, in a way, for me, was invalidated. We were punished if we spoke Spanish. So, as a kid, your values, all of a sudden is [*sic*], 'What I have known—my parents, my grandmother, all these people that I've loved—were speaking wrong.'" ⁸⁸

In the days before the emergence of Chicano studies on college campuses, a passive ignorance of Latino culture and history reinforced this active invalidation. The California school curriculum of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s tended to present a triumphant Anglo-Saxonist expansionist version of state history, with almost no mention of Latinos in California or of relations with Mexico in US history. As a result, many older Latinos grew up knowing very little, if anything, about Latino or Latin American culture with which to balance nativist claims. “My great-grandma was born in Mexico, but I don’t know anything about it.”⁸⁹ As a result, these older Latinos grew up with a void in their identity. For some, particularly those who did not go to college and therefore missed out on the heyday of the Chicano movement, that void continued up to the day of their participation in the focus group. “Supposedly I’m Mexican, but I don’t know the background. I don’t know anything about the Aztecs or anything, so I don’t have anything to say ‘This is me.’ I don’t know who I am, as far as culture.”⁹⁰ At its most virulent, this constant downgrading of things Latino led some to actively deny their Latino families and friends. “Yeah, I mean, I knew I was Mexican; but then I had my mother tell me, here, because of her experiences, that ‘People ask you, you tell them you are white. You’re tall; you can pass for white. You’re light-skinned. Don’t say you are Mexican.’”⁹¹

For nearly a century prior to 1965, the nativist narrative defined Latinos as the opposite of the WASP population: mixed-race, Catholic, Spanish speakers—and hence not American. This nativist narrative powered a political impetus to limit the languages Latinos could speak, the schools they could attend, the houses they could buy, the public facilities they could use. All these restrictions were imposed externally, by a society that defined anyone who was not white—and hence, by nativist definition, not able to be a “real American”—as thereby inferior to those who were. One focus group participant remembered how these externally imposed definitions had become internalized in her own family, to the extent that they had determined which boys she could date. “All my life my mother has told me, ‘If somebody asks what you are, you tell them you’re white. . . . Don’t tell anyone you’re a Mexican. Don’t like Mexican boys, because you’re never gonna get ahead. Like a white boy.’ Okay? I’ve had that drilled in me.”⁹² This struggle between Latinos holding to a universalist vision of America and those persons espousing a nativist vision would continue into the twenty-first century.