

キャリー・デュバル

人種差別と疎外の諸相

—アメリカ社会におけるごまかし—

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Aspects of Racism and Alienation:

The Chicano in American Society

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I . Introduction

One aspect of life in the United States that many foreigners seem to be confused about is the problem associated with racism. Although Japan can hardly be singled out for being more confused than other countries, the statements attributed to former prime minister Nakasone and other goverment ministers a few years ago suggesting a correlation between race and the performance on intelligence tests, indicates a need of further discussion about the development of and affect that cultural bias and racism has on the society of the United States.

The purpose of this paper is not to definitively outline the various problems of racism in the United States; rather, it is only to present the

situation as it pertains to Mexican Americans or Chicanos. By focusing on the problems of the Chicanos, however, it is hoped that one may be able to identify certain truths about racism or cultural bias and how they can affect one's desire to study and one's self-esteem.

II. Historical Background

The area which presently makes up the United States has been the scene of a great struggle among several cultures. The original Indian culture gave way to the European culture represented by the English on the East Coast and the Spanish on the Gulf of Mexico and the West Coast. Although this may ignore the influence that the French and Dutch had on North America, one has to admit that it was the English who really dominated the area which constitutes the present day United States east of the Mississippi, just as the Spanish, and later, the Mexicans dominated the Gulf area, the Southwest and California.

Unfortunately, the numerous differences between these two cultures seem to run the entire gamut of social custom; language, religion, law, and political concepts and structures. In a way, we may look at the history of the United States as the struggle for supremacy between an essentially English culture, the Native American culture and the Spanish or Mexican culture. Native American culture suffered an almost complete defeat, but the 'conquest', or should I say, the assimilation of the Mexican has never been completed and continues to be a source of estrangement as Mexican-Americans still wait to have both their culture and themselves accepted by the dominant Anglo-American culture.

A long history of rivalry between Spain and England and the lengthy

period of anti-catholic protestantism in England perhaps made inevitable the cultural conflict between the societies that they created. Unfortunately for descendants of the Spanish and Mexican colonists, the Anglos have not only been victorious in their battle with Spain, but have been able to carry prejudices into their history books, as victors have usually done. Unable to change the historical fact that it was the Spanish who had funded the discovery of the New World as well as the exploration and subsequent conquests of Magellan, Balboa, Cortez, and Coronado, it would appear the Anglos systematically began a romantic glorification of their lives and deeds.

This romanticization was so successful that even today if the word 'conquistador' is mentioned almost everyone would visualize a handsome, dark-eyed man with a goatee decked out in a shiny suit of armor, courageously leading his troops into battle against the Aztecs, Incas or other Native Americans. This image, one may say, can hardly be faulted in terms of racism (except towards Native Americans), or of being considered derogatory to the Spanish people. The problem is that it does not provide an accurate picture of the Spanish experience in New Spain. Perhaps it is not so harmful for what is portrayed as for what is not portrayed.

It appears that by lifting the conquistadors out from the pages of history and glorifying them, the Anglos were actually separating them from the prosaic life of the Mexican peons left behind to do the hard work of conquering the country, viz. the everyday tasks of breaking in the land with the plow, and taking care of the livestock. In neglecting to recount the story of the masses of Mexican settlers and landowners who actually

occupied the region of the Southwest, history writers were, in effect, alienating them from their rightful place alongside the conquistadors and perhaps more importantly, the English settlers.

Also, Spain itself has not received due recognition for contributing to the Anglo-colonist victory over the British. Although the French help and names like Lafayette are well-documented, Carey McWilliams in *North From Mexico* points out that few Americans realize "…… Spain also aided the colonies, that Spanish ports were open for the sale of prize-ships captured by American men-of-war, or that the Spanish governor of Louisiana furnished supplies of crucial importance to the American forces."¹

However, one might also note that this oversight in the reporting of history could not really have any adverse effect on the culture or society of the United States. One might even argue that a nation's history should only include those events which are of greatest importance to the development of the society and the country. This argument is problematic in that it fails to understand the nature of history, at least as I perceive it, and the impact that it may have on the individual citizen's view of themselves, viz. their society.

If we perceive of history as selected truth or a selection of truths, then it can not be conceived of as something which really relates all of the 'facts' that happened in the course of the development of a country. History is, however, perceived of by many to contain the whole truth; therefore, it must try to include as many facts and truths pertaining to a given period or situation as time and space permits, for it is from the study of history that a nation's population creates its heroes and acquires

a self-image. I perceive there is a need to be honest in pointing out the different races or nationalities of the people because it will contribute to building a mutually sound, healthy image among the many peoples who have made the United States great.

Perhaps the story of Crispus Attucks can be used to illustrate this point. When we first study the Revolutionary War in the United States, we learn the name of Crispus Attucks as being one of the first men to die from hostile action initiated by British soldiers, a historical fact. But it was also true that he was a Black, a fact that I did not learn until several years later. Why was his racial origin kept secret? Did the historians wish me to assume that he was one of the Anglo-colonists rather than one of the race they were later to consider only 'three-fifths' human for purposes of voting when the constitution was drawn up? Perhaps they did not want one to contemplate the issue of slavery by telling one that the first person to die for the freedom of the colonists was a member of a group of Americans who were not to receive even their statutory freedom for more than eighty years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The fact that Crispus was a Black certainly may have affected how one viewed the slowness to recognize them as men. How would it have affected one's opinion of the Virginian 'democratic' heroes such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson? If we had known him to have been a Black, would we have not discussed their lack of sensitivity toward slaves instead of looking only at the qualities that made them great? I am not sure what would have been the result of this kind of education, but I think that one would have had a more complete picture of the kind of men Americans were and therefore a better understanding of the

incongruities between the ideals and reality that the leaders had to live with.

Although I would seem to have digressed from the topic of Chicano or Mexican-American alienation in the United States, I think that a similar exclusion of facts pertaining to the help the Spanish extended to the colonist could also altered one's perception of the subsequent interaction of Anglo-Americans and the heirs of the Spanish legacy as the Anglo-colonists expanded westwardly. Furthermore, I perceive that selective omission of certain historical facts and a failure to acknowledge the prosaic accomplishments of Spanish and Mexican settlers of the Southwest and California, has caused Chicanos to form an incomplete image of themselves and the role their ancestors played in taming the wilderness. Indeed, it has tended to promote the erroneous image that they, as Chicanos, are 'alien' and not an integrated part of the society, culture and history of the United States.

I perceive that the people of the United States would develop a different self-image, if in the course of their studies it was taught that the Spanish were the first to bring hoes, spades, the grinding stone, lamp, plow, file and pliers to America. One would also learn that it was the Spanish who brought their knowledge of irrigation to the rugged semi-arid Southwest which resembled their own Iberian Peninsula. Moreover, they introduced sugar cane to Louisiana, alfalfa to New Mexico, 'Sonora wheat' to Colorado, raisin culture to California, and even a cotton seed which was brought from Mexico and was adopted by many plantation owners throughout the Deep South.

The mission system in California was also helpful in implementing and

experimenting with crops such as pears, peaches, apples, almonds, plums, quinces, oranges, lemons, citrons, limes, dates, cherries, walnuts, grapes, figs, olives and so forth. The Spanish also introduced European livestock such as cattle, horses, pigs, goats, barn-yard fowl, and even cats.

One may ask what is so important about these everyday accomplishments? Their importance lies in the fact that to be the first to do something entails certain difficulties in adjusting to the conditions of the new environment, some kind of courage or quality of ingenuity. The difficulties that faced the Spanish and Mexicans has not been given much space in the history books. This would not perhaps be so bad if the history books did not emphasize the struggle of the Anglos against the Native Americans and the terrible forests of the Northeast. I myself have retained a very strong image of a pioneer leading his oxen-wagon through the Cumberland Gap, and later struggling to clear the forest to plant corn or wheat or perhaps cotton. However, the man and woman performing these mundane tasks have English features, never Spanish ones.

Now, should a complete history of the United States exclude the image of one hard working struggling farmer while carefully building an image of another? I do not think so because by not including all example of American pioneers one is really promoting specific images and forcing those students not of Anglo-Saxon extraction or other included groups to try to identify with these heroic figures who look so alien to them. At the same time the Anglo student gets the impression that it was only his ancestor's blood that was split in the conquest of the frontier, whereas other Americans did not have to endure the same kinds of trials. It seems that everyone loses a true sense of history and perhaps as a result becomes

a bit alienated from it and each other.

III. Sources of Friction

Perhaps one of the main causes of friction between the Anglo-colonist and the Spanish was rooted in their different manner of dealing with the Native Americans. The Spanish settlers seemed to be predominantly soldiers (initially at least) and administrators who used the Native Americans to do most of the physical work. The absence of woman of Spanish blood and lack of prejudice toward dark skin perhaps made the Spanish develop a more liberal attitude toward the Native American woman. The Spanish seemed more interested in whether or not they were converted to Christianity so that they could be married properly in a church. This intermingling of Native Americans and Spanish created the Mexican who played a large role in the so-called Spanish conquest and settlement of the Southwest United States.

On the other hand, the British settlements were characterized by more segregation. Although Christians, the British settlers seemed unwilling to accept Native Americans as men and were more interested in removing them than baptizing them. Also, since there were more women among the settlers, the need for cohabiting or intermarriage with the Native Americans was less, and both practices were looked down on by the British. As a result the British blood was never 'diluted' by what they perceived to be the lower, wilder species. Instead, they were able to push the Eastern Native Americans westward and exterminated or decimated those tribes which were unable to escape. The Anglos never seemed to develop a sense of respect toward the Native Americans other than that

which the fear of an uprising might produce.

It seems that the Anglo determination to remain apart or, in a sense, alienated from The Native Americans caused them to from a strong racist bias against the Mexicans whom they considered more Native American than pure Spanish-blooded civilized European people like themselves. Perhaps because of this racist attitude the Anglos proceeded to recognize only the glorious accomplishments of the 'Spaniards' and seldom, if at all, of Mexican contributions to American culture and society.

The Anglo historians and novelists love to describe the beautiful life of the California, as a life which "was incomparably easy and indolent", where the young people could enjoy a life of unrivaled enjoyment racing their horses over the green-rolling hills and mustard fields of southern California; dancing the contradanzas and jotás to the click of casanets."² Unfortunately, this romantic version of hacienda life seems to have never existed, but it is still the one that has helped to create the image of the Spanish American rancher arrayed in a decorative suit and mounted on a white horse that still persists today.

Once again, one might ask what is harmful about the presentation of this romantic history and once again the answer seems to be found in the images it creates in the minds of the people reading it. Generally, the history and the literature concerning the puritan fathers are quite flattering with little if any comment about their cruel dealing with the Native Americans who had helped them through their first winter. They are always depicted as honest and hard working, always struggling against the Native Americans. The leisure life of the Spanish 'don' seems

so completely divorced from the toil and hard work that the Puritans are famous for, that it encourages the idea that the Spanish and Mexicans had it easier than their Anglo counterparts; that they did not have to dirty their hands with hard work while trying to squeeze a living out of a New England farm.

Furthermore, this romantic image effectively separates Spanish history from the Mexicans who are recognized as only distant relatives to the 'Spanish' colonists when in actuality they were contemporaries. For example, we have the fiction of the 'Spanish' settlement of Los Angeles by "Pablo Rodrigues who was an Indian; Jose Variegas, first alcalde of the pueblo, also an Indian; Jose Moreno a mulatto; Felix Villavicencio, a Spaniard married to an Indian; Jose de Lara, also married to an Indian; Antonio Mesa, who was a negro; Basilio Rosas, an Indian married to a mulatto; Alejandro Rosas, an Indian married to an Indian; Antonio Navarro, a mestizo with a mulatto wife; and Manuel Camero, a mulatto."³

One might ask, "What does race have to do with what the men did?" and of course what they did was important, but so was what they were. If one does not report history correctly, i.e. in complete detail, than one is creating a lie and that lie will create an erroneous image of history. To state that they were Spaniards is to exclude the Native Americans and Blacks from the history of the times. Thus, in effect, the Native American, Mexicans and Blacks are alienated from their rightful place in that history and gives to their descendants nothing to feel part of in the course of the history of Los Angeles specifically and of United States history in general. On the other hand, if one were to present the historical

facts in more detail one might effectively "....give back to the Indio-Hispanic citizen the heritage of racial pride of which we have robbed them and to teach Anglo-Americans to respect and honor this heritage."⁴

Further evidence that the Mexican-Americans have been alienated can be seen in fact that the Mexican-american seems. "....to disassociate himself from anything that carries a Mexican implication"⁵ and must put up the pretense of being 'Spanish' or 'Spanish-American'. Consequently, Mexican songs become 'Spanish songs' or at best 'Spanish-American songs'. Even the old Mexican settlements which were heavily influenced by Native American architecture, became 'Spanish ruins' when they were recognized as worthy of rebuilding and preservation. Perhaps the government or preservation society could not have pried money from Anglos unless the ruins were thus labeled.

Perhaps when the Anglos formed an image of Mexicans is not as important as what constitutes that image, but even the early Anglo settlers in Texas considered them to be ".... lazy, shiftless, jealous, cowardly, bigoted, superstitious, backward and immoral" and the Anglos were in turn thought to be "....arrogant, overbearing, aggressive, conniving, rude, unreliable and dishonest."⁶ Certainly, these opposing views did not bode well for the mutual acceptance and promotion of each others culture and customs.

After the Mexican War, Anglos began to settle in Texas and the other former Mexican territories in much greater numbers than before the war. They brought with them their Anglo concepts of government and their own legal system, both of which they manipulated to take land away from

the Mexican owners and to obtain control of land that had been previously held as common land of the individual pueblo or of the individual families. To do this they would buy a small tract from a member of a family and then claim unlimited grazing rights on the land held in common. Another means of acquiring land was to buy land at tax sales. Once the ownership passed to Anglos they were able to pressure the legislature to reduce their taxes. Of course, the Mexicans could go to court, but their inability to comprehend English and the Anglo legal system made their cases weak and difficult to argue before an Anglo judge. Even if the Mexicans were to win, the lawyer's fees would force them to sell their anyway.

Typical of the problems incurred by the imposition of the Anglo idea of property is the 'Salt War'. The Mexicans had discovered a salt mine near El Paso in 1862, and there developed a communal right for all citizens of El Paso to dig for salt. However, when an Anglo had nefariously obtained control of it he quickly started to run it as a private monopoly. This logical, profit making, puritan action incensed local Mexicans who seized city hall, " . . . killed three Anglos and committed property damage that ran into thousands of dollars."⁷ This was followed by the killing and lynching of several Mexicans.

The Roman Catholic religion has also suffered from the proximity of the largely protestant Anglos who seem to have looked down on it and the Mexican folk elements that were often found blended into its customs in the Southwest. This prejudice has been the cause of many Mexicans joining protestant churches in the hope, perhaps, of being better accepted. The pressure at times seems to have even made the church careful about placing Mexican priest in charge of Mexican parishes.

Also the Anglo-Americans were often shocked by what they perceived to be the loose morals exhibited by the Mexican who wore more revealing clothes and who evidently had practiced more family intermarriage in their small villages than the Anglo were accustomed to. These customs were attributed to a generally more relaxed church or perhaps even their Native American blood, but seldom were these customs perceived as having been dictated by the climate, economics or even availability of stores. This difference seemed to create in the Anglos the image of Mexican women as "immodest" who "drank, gambled and smoked cigarettes" and Mexican men as "poor, petty thieving, gambling, and bull baiting."⁸

This lack of understanding of the traditional Mexican customs by the Anglos made them view the Mexican as unworthy of being counted as humans, even for a notch on the gun of the infamous King Fisher who really only reflected the values of his society. The idea that the Mexican was to be kept suppressed by the threat of death and beatings has continued even to today.

This Anglo sense of moral superiority can also be seen in the case of the forty blond babies that were brought from New York for adoption by Mexican parishioners of the Catholic church in Clifton Arizona. When the forty babies arrived and were given to their new parents, the Anglos could not tolerate the thought that fair-skinned children would be raised by the dark skinned Mexicans whom they deemed immoral; so they formed a mob and kidnaped the children from their foster homes and gave them to whites to be raised in homes that were perhaps not Catholic. This illegal action was later upheld by the Supreme Court. The extreme

reaction of the Anglos to the thought of blonds being brought up by Mexicans might distract one from noticing a possible strong sense of alienation indicated among the Mexicans who requested only blond children. Did the Mexican value whites so highly that they were preferable to other children just as deserving of love and a happy home? Or did they feel that they could raise their own sense of self-worth by possessing blond children?

Thus, it is apparent that the conflict of the nineteenth century was to leave a strong, mutual feeling of distrust and animosity between Chicano and Anglos. It also had created a sense of alienation among Chicanos which they were to bring with them into the twentieth century.

IV . Post World War Two and Chicano

War can often have a unifying effect on society allowing each subgroup to forget their differences and join hands in order to defeat a common foe and show loyalty to their country World War Two seems to have had the same effect on the Mexican-American community in the United States. However, the Mexican-American found that although his blood flowed in a disproportionate quantity to his Anglo-American counterparts, he could still be excluded from much of the fruit of 'the land of plenty'. This disparity was so great that a thorough discussion is necessary for one to understand their failure to be socially accepted and achieve economic integration following the war.

The Mexican-Americans had played a major role from the very beginning of World War Two. It has been estimated that they made up twenty-five per cent of the personnel on the infamous Bataan 'Death March'. This was rather disproportionate in relation to what the 2.6

million Mexican-Americans represented in terms of the total population of the United States at that time. The reason for this disparity was that Spanish speaking Mexican-Americans were deemed useful in communicating with the Filipinos, and thus were sought out for duty in the Philippines. Perhaps the fact that so many of their friends and neighbors had already died or been captured, helped create the enthusiastic support for the war in the Chicano or Mexican-American community.

Of course, some of the Mexican-Americans perhaps thought that by showing enthusiasm and 'guts' they could prove themselves 'real Americans' and be more readily accepted by the Anglo-Americans who dominated their homeland. The most influential factor, however, in encouraging their support was perhaps the inert sense of belonging to the land that their forefathers had helped to civilize and had themselves fought for. In this sense they may have felt a sense of patriotism to the country that overshadowed their frustration with their lack of social acceptance and economic integration. Whatever the cause, it is a fact that Mexican-Americans earned more medals of honor than any other ethnic or racial group, testifying to their loyalty and valor.

However, this monument was not achieved cheaply. It was paid for by their large number of casualties, viz. in terms of the population. Even congressman Jerry Voorhis acknowledged that "from one forth to one third of those names [on the casualty lists] are names such as Gonzales or Sanchez, names indicating that the very life-blood of our citizens of Latin-American descent . . . is being poured out to win . . . " and thought it important that all these citizens should " . . . have the fullest and finest

opportunity to which this country is capable of giving him to advance to such positions of influence and eminence as their own personal capacities make possible.”⁹

Unfortunately, the situation in the United states was not conducive to the kind of freedom and cooperation that Congressman Voorhis considered a just reward for the Chicanos. Even as their brothers were bleeding and dying, the Chicanos left behind were subjected to numerous indignities and the continuing bigotry of the Anglos. What did a Congressional Medal of Honor mean, if the recipient could be denied service in restaurants and hotels because of his race? One can easily imagine how recipients like Macario Garcia and Mendoza Lopes felt when they were refused service because they were Mexican-Americans.

Needless to say, the returning GI's could not accept this kind of treatment after having seen their friends, both Anglos and Chicanos, bleed and die together in the war. They held a stronger sense of themselves, and a new sense of pride which would not let them accept this mistreatment without a fight.

Unfortunately, the majority of Anglos did not seem to be willing to grant the Chicanos the human dignity that they themselves so closely cherished, even after they had proven their loyalty and courage (if proof is ever necessary to recognize another's inalienable right to human dignity). Instead, they continued to look down on and object to the presence of 'alien' Chicanos. Although there did seem to be some individuals who were moved by their mutual wartime experience i.e. the Anglo who came to Garcia's aid in the argument with the manager of the cafe and the opinion of Voorhis, the 'real world' was different. It was the

'real world' which arrested Gracia on the charge of aggravated assault and it was the 'real world' which allowed the killing of Pfc. Daniel Elizalde to go unprosecuted. Also, in 1947 another decorated Chicano veteran, Charles White, was killed while trying to get served in a night club in La Junta, Colorado. His death, too, was never punished in any way. Charles White died displaying the same courage that had earned him a Silver Star fighting the 'racist' Nazis and Japanese, only now he, Gracia and Lopes were victims of the same kind of racism, and they would not accept it without a fight.

During the war the 'Zoot Suit Riots' had occurred, which illustrates further the prejudice of the public officials, the media and the general public towards the Mexican-American, especially in Los Angeles. These riots, which lasted for approximately a week in June, 1943, were apparently started from an isolated attack by Chicano youths on a group of sailors while they were walking through a Mexican-American area. The actions and sobriety of the sailors never seems to have been questioned. The police could not find anyone to arrest, but the newspapers appeared to have indited the entire Mexican-American community, and especially youths who the papers termed 'Zoot-Suiters'. Little did it matter that the Zoot-Suit was just a popular fashion among the barrio youths, and delineated no club per se, and one might even fine 'cool' Anglo-American youths wearing them; the papers seemed to equate 'Zoot-Suiter' with Chicano gangs.

Once the attackers of the sailors had been identified as 'Zoot-Suiters', it was open season on anyone seen wearing that fashion. Urged on by the press, the servicemen beat and/or disrobed every 'Zoot-Suiter' who they

happened to see on the streets, in theaters, or in bars, and the age of their 'prey' seemed to make no difference. The police reportedly just stood by and watched, or if they felt compelled to arrest anyone they arrested the victims of the sailors vengeance(racism), reportedly making 600 arrests of Chicano youths. The military authorities finally put an end to what they considered mob action by their men.¹⁰

In the aftermath of the riots, the Governor of California authorized a committee to conduct an investigate. The committee's report recommended punishment for all persons responsible for the riots both civilian and military. Also, and more importantly, it recommended that newspapers be more careful in the use of the names and pictures of juveniles in their articles, and that better educated and trained police be enlisted to work with the Chicano youths. Unfortunately, these modest recommendations never received the full support of the Anglo community and there were no new laws made to implement them. On the other hand, the riots did seem to unify the Mexican-Americans throughout the United States and even drew protests from Mexico which demanded protection for its citizens and compensation for any damages to them or their property.

If one accepts the riots as symptomatic of a prevalent problem of cultural exclusion or alienation of the Chicanos from the mainstream of life, not just in California, but throughout the United States, then one can understand the frustration of returning veterans like Garcia, Lopez and White. What had they suffered and fought for if not the right to live in peace, justice and equality of opportunity? What was wrong with the Anglo dominated government that it could not understand that the basic

constitutional rights did not extend to Mexican-Americans? Did Anglos really believe that their Indian ancestry made them something less than human, with "an utter disregard for life"?¹¹ This blatant racist opinion seems to have existed although not always voiced by many Anglo-americans.

The returning veterans discovered that the prevailing prejudice of the whites kept them from renting or owning houses in certain areas of many cities of the United States. Furthermore, they could not use many hotels or restaurants, as Garcia and White had learned. Even some churches and cemeteries excluded them. Their very lives were often considered less valuable than a white's as the Daniel Elizalde and Antonio Rangel cases help to demonstrate. In order to fight this exclusion the veterans organized politically active groups, e.g. the GI Forum, Community Service Organization(CSO), Asociation Nacional Mexico-Americana(ANMA), or joined older groups like the League of United Latin American Citizens(LULAC). Also, some leaders, viz. Henry B. Gonzales and Edward Roybal, organized their own grassroots networks to establish political power for themselves and the Chicano community.

However, several factors tended to void or impede the efforts of these groups. One was the increase number of whites who were moving into the traditional mexican-American areas of the Southwest and California to participate in the new industries establishing themselves there. This increase in white population took away much of the Chicano political clout which they had just begun to use. Also, the 'machine' politicians of the Southwest and Texas had ways to 'correct' or influence election results which went against them, e.g. the elimination of the

primary in El Paso after Telles (a Chicano) was elected, and the alleged fifty guns placed at the polls by the Kildays in San Antonio. These factors somewhat dampened the political aspiration of many Chicanos and alienated much of the Chicano community from the politics of their communities because of a sense of futility.

The lack of political power showed itself in the slowness of some cities to enact decent housing and building standards, and the construction of public housing. The passage of this kind of legislation required the consent of an 'establishment' which was perhaps more concerned with protecting the profits of the Chicano's landlords. For example, figures for south El Paso where most residents were Chicano presents a rather black picture of life since only 5 per cent of the homes had showers, 3 per cent had tubs and there were 71 people per toilet. This area held only 19.07 per cent of the population but was the scene of 88.2 per cent of Juvenile crime and 51 per cent of the adult crime. This situation would continue with little change to the 1960's despite the work of men like Telles.¹²

Another major problem for the Chicanos was the 'red-baiting' of the McCarthy period which saw many of the union organizers, including many Mexican-Americans and Mexican nationals labeled as 'red' whether or not they were. The principle law affecting the Chicanos during this period was the McCarren-Walter Act(1950,52) which codified grounds for the exclusion or expulsion of aliens, and stipulated the condition under which a naturalized citizen could be stripped of his citizenship. It also granted the Immigration and Naturalization Service(INS) the right to interrogate suspected aliens and to search vehicles and private property within 25 miles of the border.

At first glance this law might not seem so draconian, but when one reads that Senator McCarren really sought "To forestall the impending breakdown in American culture" and his fear that "If we scrap the national origin formula we will, in the course of a generation or so, change the ethnic and cultural composition of this nation"¹³, one may see that its real purpose was to perpetuate the dominance of Anglo-American culture in the United States. In practice the law could certainly have caused trouble for any Mexican-American citizen in the southwest who would have had to constantly prove their citizenship, and tolerate indiscriminate searches. How much of this really occurred, I do not really know, but it was probably more than any Anglo-American would allow to happen to himself without calling it government harassment. Even President Truman had seen that McCarren-Walter would have the effect of creating two classes of citizens, born and naturalized, and vetoed it; unfortunately, it was passed over his veto.

It does seem apparent that McCarren-Walter did have a strong effect on several minorities in the United States, e.g. Chinese, Japanese, but it really seemed to hit the Chicano community the hardest. The naturalized citizen and the legal aliens were very vulnerable to the charge of communist affiliation which was difficult to defend as many groups active in barrios could easily be made to look communist to an Anglo controlled court. Also, many Chicanos were charged with breaking minor immigration rules or civil laws e.g. the fistfight of Humberto Silex, Maria Cruz's lost registration card. The fact that many of those charged or family members had been active in unions seemed to be more than coincidental. The cases of Jose Noriega and Agapito Gomez provide

further evidence that the INS seemed to be looking for ways of discouraging unions and 'pacifying' the Chicanos. The situation for the illegal aliens was, of course, worse for he/she often became little more than a slave or peon to the agricultural concerns which could turn them in to the INS if they caused any problems or supported union organizers.

Another problem for the Chicano union organization was the 'bracero program' which had been help over from World War Two. The original program was necessitated by the labor shortage in the United States and wartime needs for agricultural products. The United States persuaded a rather reluctant Mexico to finally agree to supply the laborers if the workers could be "assured of free transportation to and from their homes; that they were to be provided substance en route; that they were not to be used to displace other workers or to reduce wage rates; and that certain minimum guarantees, governing wages and working conditions would have to be observed."¹⁴ The program even included inspections by Mexican consuls and labor officials. Of course, sometimes the agreement was not followed to the letter (especially after the U.S. administration of it fell under the War Food Administration). Yet it did help the morale of Chicanos and Mexican nationals if nothing else, as it gave the Mexican government a means of protesting discriminatory treatment of people of Mexican decent in the United States.

However, the United States was not about to let matters stand once Mexico's cooperation in the war was unnecessary. After the war, the United States returned to its familiar position of arrogance in relationship to Mexico's demands for recruitment and pay when its representative stated "They [the Mexican government] want to set the

wages. We [the U.S.] are going to set them.”¹⁵ Unfortunately, Mexico was in a weak position as the United States could, and apparently did, ‘open’ the border at will and get all the cheap illegal workers the growers could use. Although the bracero system continued until 1964 it became dominated by the growers. One can imagine the problems this caused for the legal aliens and Mexican-Americans in building a strong union and raising their standard of living.

Just how difficult it was to organize a union under these conditions can be seen by the case of the Di Giorgio Fruit Corporation. Local 218 of the National Farm Labor Union(NFLU) wanted to be recognized as the sole representative of the workers, seniority rights, a grievance procedure and a raise in pay. Di Giorgio had the total support of the community, the police helped his own men to attack picketers and hired illegal workers so that his crop could be harvested. He even called for support from Washington to investigate the strike and finally was able to whitewash his company with a report attesting to the lack of any real grievance, which was published in the Congressional Record. It was the end for Local 218.

However, Chicanos did continue to support and organize unions, although they were often refused admission on the grounds that they were strike breakers or cheap workers. It seems that the unions mistook the victims for perpetrators of their common predicament. True, the Chicano was paid less than his white counterpart, but it was not of his own desire and he would often fight for equal pay for equal work like Ramon Martinez and lose. Actually, it must have seemed to the Chicanos as if those unions which refused Chicano membership, were working with

management to keep their wages down and keep them in the barrios or the fields.

The life of the urban Chicano community was also changing, as cities like Los Angeles grew rapidly and became centers of new industries, such as communications, aeronautics, and electronics. With the new growth, the cities needed to redesign themselves and the government promoted urban renewal programs around the country. Unfortunately, the programs were often very politically motivated, with the local governments choosing which areas to renew or where to build a road. Of course, the city fathers would choose the areas where they were having problems, i.e. high crime areas, slums, areas that had little if any political power, and for this reason it has often been called urban removal (of blacks, Chicanos, etc). Somehow the projects always missed the lands of the powerful, e.g. the Sears store and Los Angeles Times properties.

Greed also played a large role in the urban renewal projects as developers and city officials seemed to work close together in many areas targeted for renewal within the city, keeping the property value down by denying building permits and ignoring building safety regulations, in particular the Bunker Hill section of Los Angeles. The transgressions of public trust forced some men to resign from their positions on the various urban renewal committees like De Witt McCann, because they did not "want to be responsible for taking one man's private property through the use of eminent domain and giving it over to another private individual for his private gain."¹⁶

However, urban renewal continued to uproot people in cities across the country throughout the 1950's and early 60's displacing millions of people,

and deprived them of "sound affordable housing without adequate replacement."¹⁷ Unfortunately, the renewal projects often resulted in further overcrowding of the remaining housing, taxed the city services, and pretty much finished the 'socialist' idea of public housing.

Another very important factor that faced the Mexican-American community after World War Two was the lack of education facilities. Education was becoming extremely important for employment in the high technology industries which were establishing themselves in the southwest. In New Mexico for instance in 1950, only 46.2 per cent of the teachers in the Mexican-American counties' schools had B.A.degrees, against 82.2 per cent in the predominantly Anglo counties' schools, and the illiteracy rate for Mexicans was 16.6, against 3.1 for Anglos. The dropout rate was also higher as the median age for Mexicans was 6.1 years old contrasting to 11.8 for the Anglos.¹⁸

Clearly, there were few equal education opportunities regarding the Chicanos. The buildings were old, poorly equipped, and poorly staffed. The returning G.I's had to do something to change this iniquity or there could be no escape from poverty for Chicanos. The first crack in the wall of exclusion appears have been the Mendez v. Westminster School District(1947), which declared segregation of Mexican children, whether because of language or race, unconstitutional. This was followed by the Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School decision which ruled Mexican children had been denied their rights under the Fourteenth Amendment. These decisions must have been very encouraging to the Chicano community and the activist groups which financed the court cases.

However, education was not the only area in which the Chicano

community was willing to stand up for their rights. Organizations like CSO, G.I. Forum, ANMA, and American Civil Liberties Union prosecuted cases of police brutality, e.g. the Agustino Salcido, Ernest L. Garcia and David Hidalgo cases. Also, they pursued constitutional rights issues, like the Peter Hernandez case which precipitated the Supreme Court declaration that Mexicans, although white had been treated as "a class apart and that out of 6,000 citizens considered for jury duty a Mexican had never been selected".¹⁹ Therefore they had been unconstitutionally discriminated against for jury duty and Hernandez was ordered retried. These cases indicate the Chicanos had a clear sense of awareness of their rights and how to redress infringements upon them.

The post-war period was one of frustration for the Chicano community. It was still separated from the mainstream of American life both culturally and economically. But it was a separation that was imposed by an unfeeling society that thought Mexican-Americans stupid but refused to educate them well; called them lazy, but refused to hire them; was shocked by their living standard, but discourage improvements. Fortunately, many returning Chicano G.I.s had enough courage to organize opposition to the injustices that they saw in the United States, and although they never won total acceptance and often seemed to lose ground, they did fight to make the United States recognize their rights.

Epilogue

I think one can recognize that the problem of racism and/or cultural bigotry is a complex problem which has deep roots in the history of the United States. Although much progress has been made in the field of race

relations with the passing of the Equal Rights Bill and other laws to encourage the hiring of minorities and eliminating de facto segregation in housing, there is still a lot more that needs to be done. The United States must strive harder in the field of elementary education in order to ensure that every child regardless of racial background will receive a sound education which will prepare him or her to be an active participant in society. Until that time, the measuring of all students in the United States according to culturally biased standard tests will produce results which may appear to support observations like Mr. Nakasone's I believe, however, that the evidence proves that it is prejudice itself and the resulting inequality of opportunity that has created the discrepancy in the test results.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Carey McWilliams, *North From Mexico* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p.20

² Ibid. p.35

³ Ibid. p.36

⁴ Ibid. p.47

⁵ Ibid. p.43

⁶ Ibid. p.99

⁷ Ibid. p.111

⁸ Ibid. p.131

⁹ Ibid. p.260

¹⁰ Ibid., pp.245-251.

¹¹ Ibid., p.232

¹² Rodolfo Acuna, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York:

Harper & Row, 1988), p.281.

¹³ Ibid., p.269

¹⁴ McWilliams, p.266.

¹⁵ Acuna, p.265.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.297.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.298.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.280.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.292.