

THE “FUTURE IMMENSE”:
RACE AND IMMIGRATION IN THE MULTIRACIAL U.S.-MEXICO BORDERLANDS,
1880-1936

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ABSTRACT

THE “FUTURE IMMENSE”: RACE AND IMMIGRATION IN THE MULTIRACIAL U.S.-MEXICO BORDERLANDS, 1880-1936

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This study examines the multiple meanings of citizenship and belonging that emerged in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands from 1880 to 1936. The project focuses on El Paso, Texas, the region’s leading hub of economic activity and immigration during this period. Locating El Paso at the crossroads of multiple boundaries – among them the U.S.-Mexico border as well as the limits of Jim Crow, which ended where El Paso met the New Mexico Territory line – I trace the movements of Mexican, Chinese, and African-American men and women to the El Paso-Juárez region. This project presents a new study of the multiracial intersections of the borderlands, as diverse people crossed various borders in search of economic opportunities and freedom from popular and institutionalized racism.

The project’s purpose is twofold. First, I examine the developments in immigration law and policy that transformed both the United States and Mexico during these years. Analyzing the emergence of racially restrictive immigration policies in Mexico as well as the United States, the project addresses a variety of legal, social, political, and economic changes affecting migration on both sides of the border as well as across it, including the shift from Reconstruction to Jim Crow in the United States, the modernization programs of President Porfirio Díaz and revolution in Mexico, anti-Chinese exclusion campaigns on both sides of the border, and a global economic depression. Second, I show how racialized people used national borders to renegotiate

questions about their capacity for “belonging” in the United States and/or Mexico, thereby forcing redefinitions of citizenship and national identity. I argue that although the border harbored multiple perils, it also offered great promise: through it, Mexican, black, and Chinese subjects often challenged the constructions of their non-whiteness and improvised their own democracy. Integrating sources from both regional and national archives in the United States and Mexico, my project demonstrates the unique ways in which marginalized people used their cross-border mobility to blur the lines of state power and identity in the borderlands.

Ultimately, however, the project demonstrates the incremental processes of immigration law-making from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, and highlights the ways in which bi-national immigration laws merged at the border and reshaped multiracial alliances into more discrete, segregated race relations. It presents a legal and social history of how the borderlands underwent a sweeping transformation, whereby the “open borders” of the 1880s hardened into much more racially discriminating boundaries – locally, nationally, and internationally – by the 1930s. In the process, as racial ideologies migrated across national boundaries, it became more difficult for racialized bodies to do the same. And as the United States and Mexico each developed more stringent detention, deportation, and exclusion policies based on race, multiracial relations and people were not only made less visible within the national body politic, but were removed from the boundaries of national identity altogether.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Julian Lim was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area in California. She received her B.A. in English from the University of California at Berkeley in 1998. After working as a paralegal at a San Francisco law firm for two years, Julian entered law school at the University of California at Berkeley and received her J.D. in 2003. She worked as an attorney in Buffalo, New York for one year, but then decided to pursue her combined interests in law, history, and academia by entering the Ph.D. program in the history department at Cornell University in 2004. She received her M.A. in history in 2007. While completing her dissertation, Julian also taught as a visiting assistant professor of law at the Washington University in St. Louis School of Law from 2010-2012.

DEDICATION

To my family, near and far

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My path to this manuscript and its completion has been long and circuitous, but every moment has been wonderful (even if I did not appreciate it as such at the time). I have been fortunate to meet and work with extraordinarily generous and smart people along the way. Words cannot fully express how much I appreciate the help, guidance, and friendship that I have received over the years, but hopefully this will be a good start. And, in time, I hope to return some of the generosity and kindness.

I am extremely grateful, first of all, to have been trained as a historian by Maria Cristina Garcia and Derek Chang. They are incredible mentors, embodying for me an inspiring combination of intellectual rigor, academic passion, and commitment to students. Plus, they are wonderful people, and their humor, support, kindness, and trust in me helped me to get through the more challenging moments. Raymond Craib and Michael Jones Correa also provided essential guidance, criticism, and encouragement throughout the whole process, from the moment I knocked on their doors as a first-year graduate student to the completion of this dissertation. It has been a pleasure to work with these four professors, and I hope the pages of this manuscript positively reflect the deep influence they have had on me. Needless to say, any errors or misinterpretations that remain are my own responsibility.

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I owe a great debt to several institutions and programs that financially supported my education, research, and writing over the past several years. Through fellowships and teaching assistantships, the history department at Cornell University generously funded my education and

training so that I could focus on my coursework and dissertation research. Additional fellowships and research grants from the Graduate School, American Studies Program, and the Latino Studies Program at Cornell made it possible for me to make research trips to Austin, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. The Organization of American Historians also provided crucial support for my dissertation research in El Paso with a Huggins-Quarles Award, and generously subsidized my travel with an OAH-IEHS John Higham Travel Grant so that I could present some of my research and receive invaluable feedback at the 2010 OAH conference. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation allowed me to not only pursue my research in the beautiful setting of the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, but to do so with a community of stimulating scholars by my side. And the Washington University in St. Louis School of Law provided necessary financial support as I worked toward completing my dissertation. My time as a visiting assistant professor there enabled me to bring my interests in law and history together again, and provided an engaging and supportive community that helped me to refine and deepen my own understandings of the history that I present in this manuscript.

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shown genuine interest in my work and provided warm encouragement. I suspect they have wondered what has taken me so long, but hopefully this manuscript will answer some of their questions.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biographical Sketch	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	xi
List of Illustrations	xii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Future Immense	27
Chapter Two: “Of Their Own Color but Not of Their Own Race”	94
Chapter Three: Hunting for Chinamen	139
Chapter Four: Forged in Revolution	182
Chapter Five: “ <i>Razas no gratas</i> ” and the Color Bar at the Border	235
Epilogue	302
Bibliography	307

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 2.1: “It takes the Cake”	103
Figure 2.2: Map of El Paso in 1900	108
Figure 2.3: 1900 El Paso census enumeration by city ward	111
Figure 3.1: Photograph attached to the deportation order of Jew Sing	156
Figure 3.2: “Work Starts on Local Immigration Building”	178
Figure 4.1: “Noted Apache Scouts Will Trail Villa”	193
Figure 4.2: “Captive negro trooper arriving in a blanket, his trousers having disappeared in the Carrizal fight”	197
Figure 4.3: Chinese refugees”	212

INTRODUCTION

*“How unerringly has the finger of destiny pointed toward this place – this “Pass” through the mountains – this great natural highway from North to South, from East to West – this great geographical and commercial center!”*¹

In 1881, the railroad arrived in El Paso, carving a new path of iron and steam into the western Texas and northern Chihuahuan landscape that forever altered the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Previously an unknown frontier town comprised mostly of Mexicans and a few American merchants, overshadowed by the Mexican city of El Paso del Norte immediately across the Río Grande, El Paso suddenly became the region’s economic hub, an international trade depot, and the most important American city along the border. But it also emerged as a new land-locked immigration port that witnessed unprecedented migration. Within ten years the city grew from a mere 736 residents to 10,338, with an estimated 7,846 “Americans,” 2,069 Mexicans, 810 “Colored,” and 344 Chinese by 1889.² A land-locked immigration port, “The Pass” became the transit point for all kinds of people moving between Mexico and the United States, and those seeking a fresh start in the border town.

¹ C. A. Gould & Co., *General Business Directory of the City of El Paso for 1886-87* (Dallas: A. D. Aldridge & Co., 1886), 7

² U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Special Census of the Population of El Paso, Tex., January 15, 1916* (Washington, DC, 1916), 3; Nancy Ellen Farrar, “The History of the Chinese in El Paso, Texas: A Case Study of an Urban Immigrant Group in the American West” (master’s thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 1970), 36. Of course, these numbers (especially the earlier figures) grossly underestimate the Mexican population. Frederick Law Olmsted estimated that as early as 1856, there were approximately 8,500 Mexicans in West Texas (El Paso and Presidio). Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey through Texas: Or, A Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 165.

This project explores questions about citizenship and belonging that such migrants and immigrants raised by their movements to the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border, “the unofficial capital of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands,” from 1880 to 1936.³ Located at the westernmost point of Texas and right on the international line, El Paso lay at the crossroads of multiple boundaries during this period. In addition to the U.S.-Mexico border, El Paso also marked the limits of Jim Crow, which ended where El Paso met New Mexican territory. As massive political, economic, and social transformations swept through both countries straddling the international border, Mexican, Chinese, and African-American men and women were drawn to the El Paso-Juárez border again and again. African Americans sought refuge from Jim Crow at the western frontier, Chinese immigrants pushed inland and away from the coastal anti-“coolie” exclusionist campaigns to an “eastern” frontier,⁴ and dispossessed Mexicans and Indians carved out new existences in the frontier lands where Mexico and the United States came together. This is a history of the multiracial borderlands, and the diverse people who infused the border region with a variety of meanings as they came in search of economic opportunities and freedom from popular and institutionalized racism.

There are two primary pieces to this history. On the one hand, my project examines how these historical actors weathered the transformations affecting both countries during these years: the shift from Reconstruction to Jim Crow in the United States, the modernization programs of President Porfirio Díaz and revolution in Mexico, anti-Chinese exclusion campaigns on both

³ Rachel C. St. John, “Line in the Sand: The Desert Border Between the United States and Mexico, 1848-1934” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2005), 8, fn. 13. Ciudad Juárez, formerly El Paso del Norte, is El Paso’s sister city immediately across the border.

⁴ Arif Dirlik urges the recognition of an “eastern” frontier for Asian Americans to challenge the Eurocentric myth of the western frontier. See Arif Dirlik, “Introduction: Mapping the Chinese Presence on the U.S. Frontier,” in *Chinese on the American Frontier*, ed. Arif Dirlik (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), xvii.

sides of the border, and a global economic depression. As the paths of Mexican, black, and Chinese migrants converged at El Paso, variously racialized and subordinated people took refuge across international and intra-national borders to renegotiate questions about their capacity for “belonging” in the United States and Mexico, thereby forcing redefinitions of citizenship and national identity. At the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border, men and women of diverse ethno-racial backgrounds found more space to pursue economic, political, and social opportunities that were denied them elsewhere on the basis of their non-whiteness. They lived, worked, and played in close quarters, intermarrying and forming new alliances across racial boundaries. They gave new meaning to cross-border mobility, as they blurred the lines of race and identity in the borderlands.

As Mexican, black, and Chinese men and women maneuvered and improvised new multiracial, multinational, and transborder social relations and identities, they lay bare the incoherency of race, nation, and borders. The gathering and mixing of El Paso’s polyglot and non-white residents in the southern portion of the city abutting the river and the Mexican border proved too much for the emerging moral elite. Desirous of ridding the town from its reputation as a lawless “Sin City,” El Paso’s moral reformers pursued agendas that fused moral and racial order, pushing not only gamblers, drunks, “hobos,” and prostitutes across the international border but also interracial families and immigrants. Bringing their city in line with the rest of the nation’s racial movement that not only protected white supremacy but also the segregation of the races – which presupposed the drawing of clear, coherent boundaries between racial groups – El Paso leaders sought to promote the border town as American as any other in the United States.

Immigration law, it turns out, was one of the most effective ways for El Pasoans to re-establish racial order. To minimize undesirable race-mixing, one had to physically minimize

multiracial contact, and the way to do that would be through the vigorous enforcement of immigration law at the border.⁵ The second important piece of this project, then, is the incremental process of immigration law-making and the implementation of immigration law at the border. Immigration policy and law, however, was not a unilateral process; it was neither imposed solely from the north, nor was it absolutely a top-down creation by the state. Rather, the period between 1880 and the 1930s witnessed a dramatic transformation in immigration policy and law from both sides of the border, highlighting the role of bi-national immigration laws in creating and reshaping the multiracial borderlands. As a result of the U.S. Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, Chinese immigrants thus redirected their migrations to Mexico during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, only to face increasing anti-Chinese restrictions and expulsions from Mexico during the 1920s and 1930s. African Americans seeking refuge in Mexico to escape the oppressive legal and extralegal violence of Jim Crow in the United States found themselves similarly barred from crossing the Mexican border, having been designated during the same period as “*razas no gratas*” (“unacceptable races”). Meanwhile, Mexican immigrants who had previously encountered little obstacle in crossing the border ran up against stricter immigration laws that not only policed and restricted their emigration from Mexico and their entry into the United States, but also massive deportation schemes that removed large numbers of Mexican immigrants already in the United States to Mexico. The racially “open borders” of the 1880s thus hardened into much more racially discriminating boundaries – locally, nationally, and internationally – by the 1930s. In the process, as racial ideologies migrated across national boundaries, it also became more difficult for racialized bodies to do the same.

⁵ See Ian F. Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 14-15 (suggesting how immigration and citizenship laws “constrained reproductive choices by excluding people with certain features from this country,” and thereby shaped the racial production of the U.S. population).

At the same time, multiracial relations were erased from the geographical and historical landscape of the borderlands. Highlighting the multiple and repeated ways in which immigrants and officials in both the United States and Mexico converged at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands from 1880 to the 1930s, the project shows how the multiracial borderlands was ultimately reformed by the racial ideologies and immigration policies emanating from both sides of the border. These forces transformed “messy” multiracial alliances and identifications into more discrete, segregated, and orderly racial identities and relations. By the end of the period under study here, the multiracial borderlands became simultaneously multi-raced, through segregationist ideologies, and mono-racial, as each state used the international border to reinforce the construction of a racially coherent and uniform national identity. There would continue to be Mexican, black, and Chinese persons in both the United States and Mexico, but the lines between the groups would be much more clearly drawn. And placed at the peripheries of American and Mexican national identity – the former idealizing an Anglo-Saxon whiteness and the latter romanticizing an indigenous past – they would all in their own way remain people without a nation.

The multiracial borderlands

Since the 1980s, historians such as Richard White and Patricia Limerick have emphasized the centrality of racial diversity to historical claims for Western distinctiveness.⁶ In 1850s California, African American gold-miners worked alongside Chinese, Latin Americans, and Europeans, and even within a small predominantly black community called “Little Negro Hill,”

⁶ Richard White, “Race Relations in the American West,” *American Quarterly* 38:3 (1986), 396; Patricia N. Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1987), 27.

black miners could be found socializing with Chinese, Portuguese, and white miners.⁷ When a few Pima Indians entered Don Sing's grocery store, near Casa Grande in Arizona, and browsed for something sweet to eat, the Chinese American merchant was able to make a suggestion in plain Pima. He had grown up with Pimas and Papagos and could helpfully recommend a strawberry preserve: "Go 'ep sitoli we•nags 'ida" ["This is pretty good. It has syrup on it."].⁸ Mexicans such as Guadalupe Garcia lived near "Chinamen" and "worked for them sometimes in their garden. [Garcia] was at the house of the Chinamen nearly every day," sometimes asking for vegetables.⁹ And in Dallas, 1877, it did not seem so extraordinary that a William Wells would ask his Chinese coworker Chin Chang "to go and see some girls," including the "negro woman" named Annie Shaw, with him.¹⁰ Living, working, and playing side-by-side, such persons could sometimes transform what initially may have been economic relations into other social relations of empathy, compassion, and affection, including marriages and extramarital unions that significantly altered the neat lines thought to be necessary between the races and nationalities. In 1881, when a white widow by the name of Mary Lee and a "Chinaman" named Lee Jim were arrested in Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory for their interracial union, reports of

⁷ Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 85.

⁸ Quoted in Lawrence Michael Fong, "Sojourners and Settlers: The Chinese Experience in Arizona," *Journal of Arizona History* 21:3 (Autumn 1980), 236.

⁹ *Hung Ah Hang v. State of Texas*, 18 Tex. Ct. App. 675, 1885 Tex. Crim. App. LEXIS 154 (1885).

¹⁰ *William Wells v. State of Texas*, 4 Texas Ct. App. 20, 1878 Tex. Crim. App. LEXIS 83 (1878). That is, of course, until Wells and Shaw tried to rob Chin Chang.

their case became a “*cause célèbre*” and generated sufficient public outrage and criticism to repeal Wyoming’s antimiscegenation law.¹¹

In other words, as white Americans worked their way across the western and southwestern frontier, they were by no means the first to step onto those lands. Not only were Native Americans and some Mexicans already there, increasing numbers of Chinese and African Americans had joined the rush of white pioneers into the territories. Well into the nineteenth century, then, the southwestern borderlands remained a space where no one group could assert any native claim to “belonging” – except perhaps Native Americans and Mexicans, and their claims would be drastically rewritten.

Despite compelling evidence of multiracial coexistence and communities, the multiracial past has been lost from our national memory. More generally, racial minorities in the United States, for the most part, remain invisible in the dominant narratives of the nation’s history. At best, when Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans are incorporated into U.S. history, their histories are frequently defined by the themes of racial conflict, exclusion, and segregation – their subordination closing another seemingly-inevitable chapter in the epic story of the “manifest destiny” of whiteness. No doubt shaped by the racial legacies of Jim Crow and Chinese Exclusion, these dominant histories draw upon the abundant nineteenth-century legal and extralegal narratives that portrayed non-white groups as different, distinct, and isolatable. In courts and written case law, judges, lawyers, and litigants encountered and made law together by relying on and articulating perceived racial differences between the parties involved. In pioneer tales and frontier folklore, encounters with non-white people

¹¹ “Notes of Cases,” *Criminal Law Magazine* 3 (January 1882), 93-94; *Criminal Law Magazine* 3 (May 1882), 561.

repeatedly recreated narratives of difference, exoticism, and conflict. Multiracial coexistence, of course, did not necessitate multiracial equality.

But the fragility of multiracial relations need not necessitate the historical framing of race solely in terms of cultural isolation, political separatism, and social segregation either. Even within ghettos, barrios, reservations, and Chinatowns, people of diverse ethnoracial backgrounds forged dynamic relations – both cooperative and contentious – that warrant serious investigation. The evidence of dynamic multiracial relations that I have found thus complicates previous studies that structured interracial relations into binary oppositions, frequently framed by the dominant black/white paradigm of U.S. history, and emphasizing (usually) white men on top and one single other non-white group at the bottom. As a general matter, then, the history presented here expands upon and contributes to a growing body of multiracial scholarship that highlights the complicated, constructed, and at times fluid nature of race relations and identities in the United States.¹²

In a more particular way, it takes our conventional understandings of the border and immigration, which are normally focused on matters of Mexican immigrants, and broadens the scope of inquiry to ask how the historical narrative changes when we also address the Chinese

¹² See, e.g., Karen Isaksen Leonard, *Making Ethnic Choices: California's Punjabi Mexican Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000); Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Allison Varzally, *Making a Non-White America: Californians Coloring Outside Ethnic Lines, 1925-1955* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

and African Americans who joined the movement to settle the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.¹³

Historians such as Evelyn Hu-DeHart and, more recently, Robert Chao Romero, Grace Peña Delgado, and Julia Schiavone Camacho have delved into the social history of the Chinese in Mexico and the borderlands, while other historians such as James Leiker, Gerald Horne, and Karl Jacoby have written about African Americans in the borderlands.¹⁴ But few have ventured to bring all the various groups together into one narrative analysis. My project shows how the different historical currents from the West and the South resonated with those of the borderlands,

¹³ For seminal works on Mexican immigration and its consequences for Mexican American identity formation, see e.g., Mario T. García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Oscar J. Martínez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975); George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); David G. Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

¹⁴ Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Immigrants to a Developing Society: The Chinese in Northern Mexico, 1875-1932," *Journal of Arizona History* 21(Autumn 1980), 275-312; Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Racism and Anti-Chinese Persecution in Sonora, Mexico, 1876-1932," *Amerasia Journal* 9:2 (1982), 1-28; Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "The Chinese of Baja California Norte, 1910-1934," *Proceedings of the Pacific Coast Council on Latin American Studies* 12 (1985-1986), 9-30; Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Coolies, Shopkeepers, Pioneers: The Chinese of Mexico and Peru (1849-1930)," *Amerasia Journal* 15:2 (1989), 91-116; Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Huagong and Huashang: The Chinese as Laborers and Merchants in Latin America and the Caribbean," *Amerasia Journal* 28:2 (2002), 64-90; Robert Chao Romero, *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010); Grace Peña Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Julia Maria Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans: Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); James N. Leiker, *Racial Borders: Black Soldiers Along the Rio Grande* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2002); Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Karl Jacoby, "Between North and South: The Alternative Borderlands of William H. Ellis and the African American Colony of 1895," in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, ed. Samuel Truett and Elliott Young (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 209-39.

and provides a synthetic analysis that combines the historical queries of African American, Asian American, and Latino studies.¹⁵

The goal, all the while, is not simply to document that black and Chinese pioneers were “there” too, but rather to illuminate the tensions, contingencies, and complexity at play in borderland communities and in the identities of people living between nations. Though historians of immigration in the United States have well-established the intersections of race and immigration law in defining citizenship and belonging, the emphasis thus far has been on how immigration law racialized specific groups in specific ways. In other words, U.S. immigration law has racially constructed Asian Americans as “perpetual foreigners.” Mexican Americans, at the same time, have been similarly marginalized as “wetbacks” and “illegal aliens.” Because of their seemingly automatic status as citizens, on the other hand, African Americans are rarely associated with immigrant status. In all cases, however, none had claims to full citizenship and belonging in the American body politic.

The multiracial perspective applied in my project goes a few more steps further in articulating the intersection of race and immigration law in the borderlands. It is not simply that immigration law racialized different groups in different ways, relying on a supposedly scientific and exact taxonomy of human groups populating the world. Rather, the history presented in the chapters that follow attempts to lay out a slightly more nuanced point – that is, that immigration law demanded total differentiation to begin with, and thereby helped to make multiracial relations as a social phenomenon itself problematic and dangerous to the nation and national identity.

¹⁵ Works that address African Americans in the borderlands include Leiker, *Racial Borders*; Horne, *Black and Brown*. For a brief survey of historical scholarship on black persons in Mexico, see Ben Vinson III, “Afro-Mexican History: Trends and Directions in Scholarship,” *History Compass* 3 (September 2005) LA 156, 1-14.

Transnational perspectives and the “state”

At the same time, by paying attention to the varied experiences of Mexican, Chinese, and black immigrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, my project also emphasizes how race and multiracial history was shaped by actions of the states on both sides of the border. Borderlands history has come a long way since Herbert Eugene Bolton’s romantic tale of the Spanish American frontier, challenged significantly by Chicana/o scholars emphasizing ethnic Mexicans’ experiences of conquest and struggle on both sides of the border. In addition, Americanists and Mexicanists alike have re-envisioned a more hemispheric history of the borderlands that does not stop at the geopolitical border.¹⁶ El Paso is not simply where “the South” meets “the West,” but also where the United States meets Mexico, and where U.S. immigration law met Mexican immigration law.

The transnational imperative to go beyond the nation has also been well-reflected in studies of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Whether one subscribes to Gloria Anzaldúa’s plural, mixed borderlands personality or Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron’s more rigidly fixed systematic “borderlands into *bordered* lands” approach, the U.S.-Mexico borderlands clearly raise central questions about not only contact and conflict, or resistance and accommodation, but

¹⁶ Herbert Eugene Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921); Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano’s Struggle Toward Liberation* (San Francisco: Canfield Press, 1972); Mario Barrera, *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979); Mario T. García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987); David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico*, 1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982); Benjamin Heber Johnson, *Revolution in Texas: How a Forgotten Rebellion and its Bloody Suppression Turned Mexicans into Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Miguel Tinker Salas, *In the Shadow of the Eagles: Sonora and the Transformation of the Border during the Porfiriato* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Paul J. Vanderwood, *Juan Soldado: Rapist, Murderer, Martyr, Saint* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

also hybridities and boundaries, empires and nations.¹⁷ As Samuel Truett and Elliott Young explain, “Ever since the border was mapped in 1854, the borderlands have supported a complex web of historical relationships that transcended – even as they emerged in tandem with – the U.S. and Mexican nations.” But, as they also explain, historiographical boundaries have proven quite resilient, and there remained a “tendency to harness borderlands history to the centralizing logic of the nation.”¹⁸ Thus, until more recently, borderlands history was characterized by different area studies that not only chronologically divided the borderlands into a Spanish past or a modern Chicano period, but also territorially divided the borderlands between the U.S. Southwest and the Mexican North. With the recent transborder histories recovered and explored by historians such as Young, Benjamin Johnson, and Andrés Reséndez, borderlands history has experienced a rebalancing of its local, national, and international bearings.¹⁹

Taking their cues, my project reconsiders the standard periodization of American history, suggesting that for the borderlands, at least, the 1880s economic and political policies of the Porfiriato mattered just as much as those of the Gilded Age, and that the Mexican Revolution that spilled into El Paso in the 1910s was more defining for some than the war erupting in Europe. It is not surprising that the center of Chinese population in Texas moved from Robertson County in formerly-slaveholding eastern Texas in the 1870s to El Paso in the 1880s,

¹⁷ Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987); Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History,” *American Historical Review* 104:3 (June 1999), 814-41.

¹⁸ Samuel Truett and Elliott Young, “Making Transnational History: Nations, Regions, and Borderlands,” in Truett and Young, *Continental Crossroads*, 2.

¹⁹ Elliott Young, *Catarino Garza’s Revolution on the Texas-Mexico Border* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Johnson, *Revolution in Texas*; Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier*. See also Samuel Truett, *Fugitive Landscapes: The Forgotten History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

and then on to San Antonio where Chinese refugees of the Mexican Revolution settled after 1917. The transborder, bi-national interdependency of border towns was clear to all Texas residents and visitors, and what was said about Brownsville and Matamoros could be said more generally about the borderlands: “The intercourse between ‘The Twin Cities of the Border’ is so constant and familiar, that it is difficult to realize they are dependencies of separate republics.”²⁰

In taking a transnational framework to the study of immigration at the border, this project also follows in the scholarly footsteps of scholars writing in the area of Chinese-Mexican scholarship. A few lone scholars such as Hu-DeHart and Leo Jacques pioneered Chinese-Mexican scholarship during the 1970s and 1980s, but only in more recent years has a new generation of historians emerged to bridge the gap between Asian-American history and that of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.²¹ The transnational framework exemplified by much of this new

²⁰ W. H. Chatfield, *The Twin Cities, Brownsville, Texas, Matamoros, Mexico, of the Border and the Country of the Lower Rio Grande* (1893), 33.

²¹ Leo M. Jacques, “Have Quick More Money Than Mandarins: The Chinese in Sonora,” *Journal of Arizona History* 17 (1976), 201-18; Leo M. Jacques, “Chinese Merchants in Sonora, 1900 - 1931,” in *Asiatic Migrations in Latin America*, ed. Luz M. Martínez Montiel (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1981), 13-20; Hu-DeHart, “Immigrants to a Developing Society,” 49-85; Hu-DeHart, “Racism and Anti-Chinese Persecution in Sonora,” 1-28; Hu-DeHart, “The Chinese of Baja California Norte,” 9-30; Hu-DeHart, “Coolies, Shopkeepers, Pioneers,” 91-116; Hu-DeHart, “*Huagong and Huashang*,” 64-90. Recently published book-length treatments on the Chinese in Mexico and the borderlands include Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*; Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*; Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*. Shorter treatments include Erika Lee, “Enforcing the Borders: Chinese Exclusion along the U.S. Borders with Canada and Mexico, 1882-1924,” *Journal of American History* 89 (2002), 54-86; Erika Lee, “Orientalisms in the Americas: A Hemispheric Approach to Asian American History,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 8:3 (2005), 235-56; Gerardo Rénique, “Anti-Chinese Racism, Nationalism and State Formation in Post-Revolutionary Mexico, 1920s-1930s,” *Political Power and Social Theory* 14 (2000), 91-140; Gerardo Rénique, “Race, Region, and Nation: Sonora’s Anti-Chinese Racism and Mexico’s Postrevolutionary Nationalism, 1920s-1930s,” in *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*, ed. Nancy P. Appelbaum et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 211-36; Robert Chao Romero, “Flies, Chickens, Cochis, and Chinese: Chinese Immigration to Northern Mexico, 1876-1931,” *Proceedings of the Pacific Coast Council on Latin American Studies* 20 (2002-2003), 56-83; Robert Chao Romero, “Transnational Chinese Immigrant Smuggling to the United States via Mexico and Cuba, 1882-

scholarship brings to light not only the multidirectional movement of people, things, and ideas across national borders – thereby also modifying the unidirectional and assimilationist model of immigration studies upon which many previous studies rested – but it also expands our understanding of Chinese immigrants as agents of change, for example, and not simply historical victims of sino-phobic discrimination and violence.

The shift from an American-centered history delimited by the parameters of the nation has thus given way to an increasingly immigrant-centered framework. Building upon Mexican studies of the relationships between the state and civil society, and between official narratives and popular expressions of resistance, such histories centered on the experiences of immigrants at the border help to uncover the “everyday forms of state formation,” as Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent put it, and the everyday ways in which ordinary people negotiated the presence of the “state” – whether Mexican or American – in the borderlands.²² But a focus on immigrant agency also reveals how immigrants – as embodied by Mexicans, Chinese, and African

1916,” *Amerasia Journal* 30:3 (2004/2005), 1-16; Julian Lim, “Chinos and Paisanos: Chinese-Mexican Relations in the Borderlands,” *Pacific Historical Review* 79:1 (2010), 50-85. Spanish-language studies of the Chinese in Mexico include Roberto Ham Chande, “La migración china hacia México a través del Registro Nacional de Extranjeros [Chinese migration to Mexico through the National Register of Foreigners],” in *Destino México: Un estudio de las migraciones asiáticas a México, siglos XIX y XX* [Destination Mexico: A study of Asian migrations to Mexico, 19th and 20th centuries], ed. María Elena Ota Mishima (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1997), 167-88; Rosario Cardiel Marín, “La migración china en el norte de Baja California, 1877-1949 [Chinese migration to the north of Baja California, 1877-1949],” in Ota Mishima, *Destino México*, 189-253; Juan Puig, *Entre el río Perla y el Nazas: La China decimonónica y sus braceros emigrantes, la colonia china de Torreón y la matanza de 1911* [Between the Perla river and the Nazas: Nineteenth-century China and its emigrant laborers, the Chinese colony of Torreón and the massacre of 1911] (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1993); José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo, *El movimiento antichino en México: Problemas del racismo y del nacimiento durante la Revolución Mexicana* [The anti-Chinese movement in Mexico: Problems of racism and its origins during the Mexican Revolution] (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1991).

²² G. M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds., *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

Americans contesting the variegated terrain of racial exclusions – contributed to the construction of those very nation-states themselves.²³ As immigrants negotiated, resisted, and challenged the immigration officials and laws that were placed at the border to restrict their movement, they also brought the attention of the state to the borderlands.

The attention to immigrant agency, therefore, cannot completely overshadow the role of the state. As Ben Johnson and Andrew Graybill remind us, transnational studies need not become “a brief for antinationalist politics or for rejecting historical inquiry centered on the nation-state.”²⁴ Indeed, one cannot fully understand the systematic reasons for the migrations of this diverse population nor the meanings of their migrations without grasping how the United States and Mexico developed their respective race and immigration policies. More importantly, we need to keep in mind that though these policies and laws may have developed independently and even unintentionally, they ultimately came together and worked in tandem to mediate the presence of racialized immigrants at the border, and the transnational construction of race and nation.

²³ See Gary Y. Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), ix (“the core values and ideals of the nation emanate not from the mainstream but from the margins—from among Asian and African Americans, Latinos and American Indians, women, and gays and lesbians. In their struggles for equality, these groups have helped preserve and advance the principles and ideals of democracy and have thereby made America a freer place for all.”).

²⁴ Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill, “Introduction: Borders and Their Historians in North America,” in *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories*, ed. Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 24. See also Truett and Young, “Making Transnational History,” 2 (addressing the need to shed light on “hidden stories” that are obscured by nation-centered frameworks, “while reflecting critically on the process of territorialization that coincided with the rise of nation-states”).

A transborder history of immigration law

To the extent that I address the intersection of American and Mexican histories, the project then also contributes to Mexican studies and the history of “*el Norte*.”²⁵ Though, as many Mexican historians argue, the Mexican Revolution may not have marked an absolute point of rupture between the elite despotism of the Porfirian past and the revolutionary construction of the modern Mexican nation, there was a marked shift in immigration policy and law as Mexico entered its postrevolutionary reconstruction. By the 1920s and 1930s, the ideologies of racial

²⁵ The historical literature on the Mexican north has expanded considerably in the past two decades, and include Daniel Nugent, *Spent Cartridges of Revolution: An Anthropological History of Namiquipa, Chihuahua* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico’s Northern Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995); Cynthia Radding, *Wandering Peoples: Colonialism, Ethnic Spaces, and Ecological Frontiers in Northwestern Mexico, 1700-1850* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Tinker Salas, *In the Shadow of the Eagles*; Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Daniel Nugent, ed., *Rural Revolt in Mexico: U.S. Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Mario Cerutti, *Proprietarios, empresarios, y empresa en el norte de México: Monterrey de 1848 a la globalización* [Owners, entrepreneurs, and companies in northern Mexico: Monterrey from 1848 to globalization] (México, D.F.: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2000); Manuel Ceballos Ramírez, ed., *Encuentro en la frontera: mexicanos y norteamericanos en un espacio común* [Meeting at the border: Mexicans and Americans in a common space] (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México; Tijuana, Baja California: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte; Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas: Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas, 2001); Juan Manuel Romero Gil, *La minería en el noroeste de México: utopía y realidad, 1850-1910* [Mining in northwestern Mexico: utopia and reality, 1850-1910] (Hermosillo, Sonora, México: Universidad de Sonora; México, D.F.: Plaza y Valdés Editores, 2001); Isidro Vizcaya Canales, *Tierra de guerra viva: incursiones de indios y otros conflictos en el noreste de México durante el siglo XIX, 1821-1885* [Land of living war: Indian incursions and other conflicts in northeastern Mexico during the 19th century, 1821-1885] (Monterrey, Nuevo León, México: Academia de Investigaciones, 2001); Young, *Catarino Garza’s Revolution*; John J. Dwyer, *The Agrarian Dispute: The Expropriation of American-Owned Rural Land in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); Oscar Flores Torres and Benjamín Galindo Cárdenas, *Independencia y revolución en el norte de México: 1808-1920* [Independence and revolution in northern Mexico: 1808-1920] (Monterrey: Centro de Estudios Históricos, Universidad de Monterrey; Nuevo León: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, 2010); José Angel Hernández, *Mexican American Colonization During the Nineteenth Century: A History of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). In addition, see supra note 21 for the literature on the Chinese in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

purification through policies of differentiation and segregation had become transnational themselves, extending their reach into Mexico as well as other parts of the world. And just as the United States had turned to immigration law to police those racial borders within the nation, Mexico similarly expanded its powers over the promulgation and administration of immigration laws to craft its own national identity.

This project thus not only presents a multiracial and transnational view of the borderlands, but it also offers a transborder history of immigration law that more systematically integrates the policies and practices of each country. For scholars of immigration in the United States, the history of racial exclusion at our country's borders is well-travelled terrain. Beginning with the Page Act and the Chinese Exclusion laws, and evolving over the course of several decades into the Immigration Act of 1924 and the rise of the Border Patrol, the United States steadily expanded its federal power to regulate immigration based on race, class, and gender.²⁶ By the 1920s, fueled by postwar xenophobia and supported by a vocal eugenics movement, the U.S. government had severely tightened the exclusionary policies of its immigration laws, barring not only Chinese immigration but all Asian immigrants, and rendering the “less than white” immigration of Mexicans and southern and eastern Europeans legally suspect. Through its immigration laws and border surveillance, politicians and immigration officials actively reshaped the nation's racial “destiny,” bringing the laws that regulated race

²⁶ See Lucy E. Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Patrick Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines: Border Enforcement and the Origins of Undocumented Immigration, 1882-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009); Anna Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America: Photography and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

relations at the borders in line with the notions of white supremacy and racial segregation that policed black-white relations within the country.

In contrast to the extensive histories of immigration and immigration law in the United States, the development of Mexico's immigration law and its racial restrictions are less well-known, and are practically ignored by historians working in the United States.²⁷ The recent studies of Chinese immigration to Mexico's northern regions, however, as well as Kelly Lytle Hernández's work on the Border Patrol demonstrate the necessity of incorporating Mexico's immigration policies and laws when thinking about immigrants at the border.²⁸ Indeed, U.S. immigration officials might have never experienced a substantial Chinese "problem" at the border if not for the *Porfiriato*'s active recruitment of Chinese immigration, which brought thousands of Chinese immigrants to America's southern door. And as Lytle-Hernández points

²⁷ Mexican historians working in Spanish, however, have begun to produce more scholarship on Mexican immigration laws in the past two decades. The classic study on immigration and Mexico is Moisés González Navarro, *Los extranjeros en México y los mexicanos en el extranjero, 1821-1970* [Foreigners in Mexico and Mexicans abroad, 1821-1970] (3 vols., México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1993). For scholars working on race and immigration in Mexico, see, e.g., Ota Mishima, *Destino México*; Pablo Yankelevich and Paola Chenillo Alazraki, "La arquitectura de la política de inmigración en México" [The Architecture of Immigration Politics in Mexico], in *Nación y extranjería: la exclusión racial en las políticas migratorias de Argentina, Brasil, Cuba y México* [Nation and alienage: racial exclusion in the migratory policies of Argentina, Brasil, Cuba, and Mexico], ed. Pablo Yankelevich (México, D. F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2009), 187-230; Marta Saade Granados, "Una raza prohibida: afroestadounidenses en México" [A prohibited race: African Americans in Mexico], in Yankelevich, *Nación y extranjería*, 231-76. As a general matter, there has not yet been much historical writing on modern Mexican law from a more socio-legal perspective. Mexican law has traditionally been more limited to matters of colonial institution-building, while writing on post-independence periods have focused more on code and legislative changes. Peter L. Reich, "Recent Research on the Legal History of Modern Mexico," *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 23:1 (2007), 182.

²⁸ Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*; Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*; Hernández, *Migra!* See also Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp and Robert H. McLaughlin, "Immigration and Techniques of Governance in Mexico and the United States: Recalibrating National Narratives through Comparative Immigration Histories," *Law and History Review* 29:2 (2011), 574 (calling for more studies "recalibrating national narratives through comparative immigration histories").

out, as U.S. and Mexican officers collaborated across the border with the mission of migration control, they “linked the distinct territories of U.S. and Mexican police authority. . . . With cross-border collaboration, U.S. and Mexican officers were able to transform the border that marked the limits of their jurisdictions into a bridge that linked rather than divided the two distinct systems of migration control.”²⁹

As the agendas of racial and border control came together at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, then, immigrants found it much harder by the 1930s to use the border and their migrations to their advantage. Instead, the border became a tool for the state. It was by driving Chinese Mexicans across the border that Mexican nativists sought to rid Mexico of the Chinese, while at the same time the United States drove out its Mexican laborers. Meanwhile, Mexico’s bar against African American immigration also protected the interests of the United States, as African Americans had no immediate outlet from the political and economic oppressions of Jim Crow, thus remaining in a constant state of exile within the nation. A multiracial examination of immigration at the U.S.-Mexico border, then, becomes much more than a history about immigration law. Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp and Robert H. McLaughlin reminds us that “[i]mmigration law is not about ‘one thing’ such as the exclusion of foreigners. It concerns many things, such as the simultaneity of excluding some foreigners while incorporating others for various reasons, and doing so with principles and criteria fraught with paradox and conflict.”³⁰ As immigrants found themselves marginalized even further by the racial practices of border control, promises attached to the possibilities of migration gave way to the heartbreak of

²⁹ Hernández, *Migra!*, 128-29.

³⁰ Alfaro-Velcamp and McLaughlin, “Immigration and Techniques of Governance in Mexico and the United States,” 583.

emigration and expatriation.³¹ The practices of immigration law by the state thus placed into exile – both literally and figuratively – many immigrants who, though not technically citizens in the legal sense, may still have infused their surroundings in the borderlands with a profound sense of belonging and home.

Chapters

Conceptualizing the borderlands as the touchstone for a hemispheric history that does not stop at the geopolitical border, I couch my analysis in the chapters that follow simultaneously within American and Mexican histories, and rely on original sources from both countries' archives: legal sources (cases, statutory laws, and civil records), church records, political records, newspapers (local and national; English and Spanish; black and Mexican Chinese presses), booster literature, city directories, census reports, personal/family papers, business records, and consular dispatches.³² Archival practices slow down the research of multiracial histories, since

³¹ See Nancy L. Green, "The Politics of Exit: Reversing the Immigration Paradigm," *Journal of Modern History* 77:2 (2005), 268-69 ("emigration is intimately related to immigration. This is clearly the case for the migrants and for migration understood as a process, but it is also true for the state. . . . [T]oo little attention has been drawn to the way in which policing ingress has often simultaneously meant dealing with someone else's egress."); Nancy L. Green, "Expatriation, Expatriates, and Expats: The American Transformation of a Concept," *American Historical Review* 114:2 (2009), 309 ("For historians, immigration studies need to integrate emigration and expatriation. We can reverse the usual immigration and citizenship questions by reflecting on how the state defines itself not only through whom it incorporates (more or less well) within its boundaries but also with regard to those who cross beyond.").

³² As historian Oscar Martínez acknowledged in his history of Juárez in 1975, "securing primary sources [about Juárez] can be a real problem, since the often haphazard evolution of border towns has precluded the development of a well-planned and orderly system of local record-keeping." Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 4. Fortunately, today a great portion of the Archivo de Ciudad Juárez documents – dating from the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century – are available on microfilm at the University of Texas at El Paso, though twentieth century sources are much less available. *Ibid.*, 203. One of the best sources on Juárez events remain the El Paso newspapers, since they regularly reported Juárez news, and official U.S. documents such as consular despatches.

the archives are rarely organized to capture such mixed practices from the past. Rather, documents relating to racial minorities are predominantly arranged by race, extending the practices of segregation to the practices of document preservation and organization. Evidentiary biases also complicate histories of multiracial relations, since such interactions were seldom directly recorded in the first place. Data on Chinese Americans, for example, is most accessible where “Chineseness” is most visible, i.e., Chinatown. But despite the persistent legacy of segregated ghettos, barrios, and Chinatowns in the archives, people with Spanish surnames lived and worked in El Paso next to those with Anglo and European names, as well as people whose names were marked in city directories as “Chinese” or with a “c” next to it for “colored.”³³

From our position today, there is no way to recapture the experiences of those who fully opted out of familiar identities, whose traces are obscured by intermarriage or an Anglo husband’s name, or who were simply overlooked by confused census takers. But by examining the wide range of sources described above, I highlight patterns of community distribution, marketplace exchanges, leisure/recreational spaces, intimate/family relations, political participation, and migration that informed borderland relations and migration movements. Using the analytical and interpretive skills that I have acquired through my legal and historical trainings, my project combs through a broad array of documents to recapture the lost voices of some of these borderland actors – to show not only what was supposed to happen according to policy-makers “from above” but also what actually happened “on the ground” as these everyday

³³ See, e.g., *El Paso Directory for 1903, Containing a General Directory of the Citizens and Business Firms Alphabetically Arranged, a Classified Business Directory, a Complete Street Guide and Miscellaneous Information of Value to Citizens and Strangers* (Dallas: Worley Press, 1903).

policy-shapers used their mobility and the border to their economic, political, and social advantage.

The first chapter thus begins by tracing the dramatic transformation of the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border region following the arrival of the railroad. The railroad's appearance in 1881 sparked a massive economic and industrial revolution in the borderlands, generating extensive railroad, mining, and smelting industries that physically altered the geological landscape of both the U.S. Southwest and northern Mexico. But it also resulted in a seismic demographic shift, as white, black, Mexican, and Chinese immigrants descended and ascended on the border. This chapter unravels the various legal, economic, political, and social factors that spurred massive migration to the El Paso-Juárez border during the late nineteenth century. In particular, the chapter shows how the region emerged as a historic transit point for Mexican, Chinese, and black men and women looking for alternatives to the restrictive regimes and practices of the Porfiriato, Chinese Exclusion, and Jim Crow. Through their migrations, these historical actors sought to cross new boundaries in a world increasingly defined by a narrowing of economic opportunities, political rights, and social freedoms. Linking the rapid industrialization and development of the borderlands to immigration policies from both sides of the border, the chapter reveals how the internal and international migrations of these marginalized pioneers amounted to an implicit critique of the nation, both U.S. and Mexican.

Chapter two zooms in more closely on the multiracial dynamics that Mexican, African American, and Chinese men and women constructed in El Paso during the 1880s and 1890s, as the burgeoning city's lack of strict color lines provided a space for these pioneers to redefine themselves and their relationships with others "not of their own race." Using the 1893 arrest of several "colored" "miscegenationists" as a touchstone for multiracial relations in El Paso, this

chapter examines the conditions under which a diverse populace came together in the borderlands during the late-nineteenth century. The chapter illuminates the various freedoms that non-white people struggled to realize at the border – particularly in the form of mixed-race relations – and the challenges that they faced in so doing. As moral reformers targeted what they saw as illicit unions between Mexican women and African American men, marginalized multiracial families sought refuge by crossing the border into Mexico. The chapter thus begins to explore the ways in which the history of multiracial realities was erased by means of the border and replaced by ideologies of racial purity and segregation.

Chapter three begins to connect El Paso's race politics to the politics and practices of policing the racial boundaries of the nation itself at the turn of the twentieth century. Tying local practices in El Paso with the broader goals of both the U.S. and Mexico's immigration laws, it examines how an increasingly restrictive shift in immigration policy correlated with increasing racial segregation along the border. As local elites in El Paso began to feel threatened by the secure position of Chinese immigrants in town, they began to call for more vigorous enforcement of the Chinese Exclusion Act. In doing so, elites and the immigrants they sought to regulate brought the power of the U.S. government to the borderlands. More than this, in the process of honing its regulatory scheme through the policing of Chinese immigrants, U.S. immigration officials in El Paso began to draw racial lines that carved the multiracial body of immigrants into more distinct, and thereby more easily regulated, racial groups. While retaining its focus on recapturing the experiences and perspectives of the Chinese immigrants themselves, and the challenges that they posed to what they considered an illegitimate legal regime, the chapter also links the Chinese exclusion cases to the further construction of the state at the border. But as the chapter reveals, the state was not perfectly formed from the beginning. Rather, tracing the

improvisation of law at the border in response to the Chinese immigrants' racially mixed strategies for avoiding capture, the chapter provides a picture of how law developed and responded to the continually changing multiracial face of immigration.

The last two chapters expand the view of immigration law and the multiracial borderlands by progressively widening the geographic scope of inquiry to the border region beyond El Paso and Ciudad Juárez. From the 1910s to the 1930s, both the United States and Mexico took significantly more aggressive positions on matters of immigration at the border, resorting to policies of exclusion, expulsion, and deportation to minimize the multiracial proportions of the body politic and diminish opportunities for racial mixing. As both countries stepped up efforts to circumscribe the presence of Chinese, Mexican, and African American at the border, immigrants increasingly became emigrants in new form, exiled as refugees or deportees or banned altogether from the places that they hoped to call home.

Chapter four thus analyzes the multiracial intersections of Pershing's Expedition into Mexico in 1916-1917, using the military campaign to explore the notions of citizenship and state power that converged in the borderlands as African-American soldiers, Apache Indian military scouts, and Mexican and Chinese refugees all became part of the expedition. Unlike previous histories that focus on military, political, and diplomatic officials, this chapter emphasizes the role of "ordinary" civilian refugees as central actors in the processes of border construction and state formation. Specifically, it continues the previous chapter's discussion by presenting the history of Chinese immigrants in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands during the years of the Mexican Revolution and the U.S.' entry into World War I. As the Chinese in northern Mexico fled to the border, they found themselves at a political and diplomatic impasse – running from revolutionary violence in Mexico and barred from entering U.S. soil because of the exclusion laws. This

chapter unravels the circuits of communication and diplomatic efforts made on behalf of Pershing's Chinese to create a larger story about migration, borderlands relations, and transnational movements in the face of intensely nationalist projects on both sides of the border.

The last chapter closes the dissertation with an examination of the hardening border control policies and the more expansive immigration exclusion programs based on race that developed on both sides of the border during the 1920s and 1930s. As the United States shifted its focus from excluding Chinese immigrants to targeting Mexicans, Mexico enacted its own set of immigration policies to marginalize and bar Chinese and African-American movement to Mexico. As racial ideologies migrated across national boundaries, it became more difficult for racialized bodies to do the same. The dissertation concludes by exploring the ways in which these racially-targeted immigrants protested their marginalization in each nation and how they continued to challenge the power of the state through their mobility.

Ultimately, my project engages with and expands upon studies involving race, immigration, nation-building, and borders, while asking how the borderlands disrupted national narratives of both American and Mexican history. Addressing multiracial experiences in the borderlands, it reconceptualizes a historical narrative that integrates *and* interrogates the national histories of both countries. But in doing these things, it also questions the supposed "openness" of the frontier and the extent to which borders were actually "fixed" with the closing of the frontier and its folding into the nation.³⁴ While nation-states presume clear borders and identities, the border-crossings of people excluded from official history and national identity have challenged such ideals, requiring "the nation" to redraw the border – physically, politically, and culturally – and redefine the body politic. Still today, these processes of reconstituting

³⁴ See Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

borders continue, as current demands to “secure” the U.S.-Mexican border confirm. “The border” remains an historical frontier with many lessons to be mined from it.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FUTURE IMMENSE

In early 1883, *The San Antonio Daily Express* published a series of letters written by special correspondent Hans Mickle. The reporter was exploring parts of the new transcontinental railway that ran across the American Southwest, connecting San Francisco and Los Angeles to New Orleans. As he followed the route that raced westward across Texas from San Antonio, he entertained his readers not only with descriptions of the scenic landscape, but also with anecdotes about surviving a blizzard in a boxcar and what it felt like to share passenger cars “filled with Chinamen, many of whom were going back to San Francisco and China.” Mostly, however, Mickle wrote about El Paso, which according to his report was “the most western point in Texas, and is Texan only in name, as, in almost everything else, it has few Texan characteristics.” While not characteristically Texan, however, El Paso came to represent something even grander for Mickle. For at the “extreme head of an extensive valley,” in a pass flanked by high and rugged mountains, Mickle found himself standing in what he called the “Future Immense.”¹

Any traveler who happened to reach this mountain pass during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth-century would have scoffed at such an immodest moniker. Located on the border

¹ For the quote about sharing a passenger car with “Chinamen,” see Hans Mickle, “From San Antonio to El Paso: Adventures and Incidents of the New Transcontinental Railway,” *San Antonio Daily Express*, January 30, 1883. For the quote about El Paso’s uniquely un-Texan characteristics, see Hans Mickle, “El Paso, The Future Immense: A Pen Picture of the Town -- Its Present and Future Prospects,” *San Antonio Daily Express*, February 4, 1883. In calling El Paso “the Future Immense,” Mickle was echoing the local *El Paso Herald* newspaper, which repeatedly referred to the city as “the future great.” See, e.g., *El Paso Herald*, October 19, 1881, 2; November 9, 1881, 2.

between the United States and Mexico, far from any national center of political power and population, El Paso still remained widely unknown in 1880 except perhaps, in Mickle's words, as "one of the most remote and insignificant frontier hamlets in the United States," with less than 400 people, mostly Mexican, living in scattered houses built of adobe.² The arrival of a Southern Pacific locomotive in 1881, however, placed El Paso on a national gridline of railroad connections, industrial predictions, and boomtown aspirations, and people from San Francisco to New York suddenly knew the city's name. In the span of four years, the El Paso-Juárez border became the center of a dramatic realignment of capital, products, and people that would shape the modernization and social relations of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands well into the next century. While the immediate railroad system placed the El Paso-Juárez border equidistant between San Francisco, St. Louis, New Orleans, and Mexico City, the trains that passed through El Paso and Ciudad Juárez connected into a wider network of multi-national railway transportations, port cities, and oceanic lines that fanned out beyond the North American continent.³ In short, the trainloads of people pouring into El Paso and Juárez would know no geographical boundaries. During the final two decades of the nineteenth century, the sister cities at the Pass became the staging grounds for unprecedented migration across the American Southwest, the Mexican northern frontier, and the international border.

But who came to this desolate and remote borderland town, and why? For many Americans today, the Southwest remains an exotic subregion to the nation, a mythical land of wild Indians, infamous shoot-outs, and lost ghost-towns (in addition to illegal immigrants and

² Mickle, "El Paso, The Future Immense," *San Antonio Daily Express*, February 4, 1883. The U.S. census recorded a population of 736 in 1880, comprised mostly of Mexicans and a few American merchants. Mario T. García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 13.

³ *Buck's Directory of El Paso, Tex. for 1902* (El Paso: El Paso Directory Co., 1902), 7.

vigilante Minutemen). A closer examination of late-nineteenth century El Paso reveals, however, the stunning emergence of a metropolitan center that was defined by forces both national and transnational. Rather than developing on a track peripheral to the nation, the borderlands became a central site of industrialization, urbanization, imperial desires, and immigration, an expansive arena where the epic themes defining the United States during the Gilded Age unfolded.⁴ At the same time, its location at the border between two growing nation-states highlights the transnational influences that shaped much of the late-nineteenth century United States and Mexico. In following the movement of capital, things, and people – especially people – across borders, this chapter provides a dynamic portrait of borderlands relations that is unshackled from “the centralizing logic of the nation,” to quote Samuel Truett and Elliott Young.⁵ By doing so, we can better understand the lived, on-the-ground experiences of thousands of diverse immigrants – whether they came in the form of capitalists and investors or laborers and working families – who by their migrations articulated the motivations, dreams, and aspirations that were at once defined by the nation and yet free of national boundaries.

The history of the El Paso-Juárez border is a story of migration, with multiple and contested meanings projected from a variety of migratory vantage points. This chapter unravels the various economic, political, and social factors that spurred the mass movement to the El

⁴ See also Katherine Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans: Racial Division and Labor War in the Arizona Borderlands* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Pablo Mitchell, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁵ Samuel Truett and Elliott Young, “Introduction: Making Transnational History: Nations, Regions, and Borderlands,” in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S. Mexico Borderlands History*, ed. Samuel Truett and Elliott Young (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 6. See also David Thelen, “The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History,” *The Journal of American History* 86:3 (1999), 966 (urging historians to interrogate and critique the assumed “centrality of the nation-state and . . . the nation-centered traditions of historical practice”).

Paso-Juárez border, along with the more personal – but just as socially-defined – expectations and desires that immigrants themselves carried. For the settlers who became the city’s official planners and investors, the immigration of skilled white workers was part and parcel of El Paso’s commercial package, a necessary component of its metropolitan success. But for the masses of unskilled laborers and working class men and women who found their way to El Paso, their migration was infused with other kinds of hopes and dreams.

In particular, the Pass emerged as a historic transit point for the mass movement of Mexican, Chinese, and black men and women looking to cross new boundaries in a world increasingly defined by a narrowing of economic opportunities, political rights, and social freedoms. The 1880s marked not only the rising moment of rapid industrialization throughout the continent, but also the institutionalization of new white supremacist regimes in the United States and the vast dispossession of lands and rights in Mexico. Seeking to rewrite their displacement with new stories of opportunity, these marginalized men and women were not unlike the thousands of Europeans and white Americans who used their migration strategically – moving across oceans and from city to city in search of a better life for themselves and their families. However, during the era of the Porfiriato, Chinese Exclusion, and Jim Crow, the multiple boundaries that intersected at the El Paso-Juárez border offered many Mexican, Chinese, and black people a unique gateway to freedoms that were not realized so easily elsewhere.

The second half of this chapter examines the migrations of these diverse groups to El Paso, contextualizing what were ultimately personal choices by examining the wider economic, political, and social changes that were reshaping the United States, Mexico, and the borderlands at the dawn of the twentieth century. Laying bare the intersections between race, class, and

nation-building, the history of multiracial immigration to the borderlands reveals the tensions between the power of the nation and the dynamics of transnational mobility. But while their migrations rendered the border more porous, fluid, and permeable, the ways in which they turned to the border to evade the oppressive racial and class regimes of each nation re-infused the border with significance and meaning. Their migrations amounted to a mobile critique of the nation, both U.S. and Mexican. In their struggles to realize greater freedoms by crossing geopolitical and racial borders, these pioneers turned the nation's periphery into a testing ground for exploring fundamental questions about democracy and equality in the late nineteenth century. In doing so, they revealed the illiberal practices that, for so many of them, overwhelmingly defined the nation's core.

Carving the Pass

Before the railroads came, people came. Long before any American set foot on the desert ground here, the area had been inhabited and marked already by the footprints of native Indians and Mexicans. The first Spanish expedition followed the Rio Grande from the south in 1581, passing through this natural channel between two mountain ranges that sprang up out of the harsh Chihuahuan Desert. But it was not until 1598 that Don Juan de Oñate crossed the Río Grande and named the site of crossing "El Paso del Norte" [the Pass of the North], officially claiming for the Spanish empire an important gateway between its colonial outposts in the northern frontier of New Spain, as colonial Mexico was officially named. Franciscans established the Mission Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Mansos del Paso del Norte (now in the central square of Juárez) in 1659, which later became a point of refuge for Spanish and Indian survivors of New Mexico's Pueblo Revolt in 1680. The additional buildings of missions

by these early refugees led to the establishment of riverbank settlements such as Ysleta, Senecú, and Socorro, and the Pass emerged a principal stop along the historic Camino Real during the Spanish (1659-1821) and Mexican periods (1821-1846), a place where weary traders and travelers could find rest and supplies on trips between Santa Fe and Ciudad Chihuahua.⁶ The settlement of the Chihuahuan frontier continued steadily, spurred on by the prospects of mineral wealth, agricultural lands, and large grazing fields contained in the region.⁷

Americans did not arrive until the early 1800s, and still then the trickle of Americans did not amount to much until the Santa Fe trade routes finally reached Missouri in the 1820s, opening up an ever-expanding line of commerce that ran goods from U.S. manufacturers to Santa Fe, through El Paso del Norte, and on to Ciudad Chihuahua. Merchants shipped crates of tobacco and liquor, dry goods, skins and fur, salt, and arms and ammunition across the Río Grande while *hacendados* drove herds of sheep and cattle across the river from New Mexico to Chihuahua and back.⁸ Owen P. White, also known as El Paso's "first historian," imagined the excitement and anticipation with which the early inhabitants of Paso del Norte must have awaited the periodic arrival of both north and south bound caravans: "The *señorita* whose lover had been away for three months or more on one of these perilous caravan trips had her personal

⁶ W. H. Timmons, *El Paso: A Borderlands History* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1990), 7-15; Oscar J. Martínez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), 9; García, *Desert Immigrants*, 11. Historian W. H. Timmons identifies the Rodríguez-Chamuscado expedition of 1581 as the first party of Spaniards to arrive at the El Paso area. For more detailed histories of early El Paso, see also C. L. Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North: Four Centuries on the Rio Grande* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1968), 1-210; Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 9-13; Timmons, *El Paso*, xvii-xix, 1-168.

⁷ Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 23. On the agricultural potential of El Paso del Norte, see Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North*, 88-99.

⁸ Owen P. White, *Out of the Desert: The Historical Romance of El Paso* (El Paso: The McMath Co., 1923), 20-21; García, *Desert Immigrants*, 11; Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North*, 100-23.

reasons for feeling overjoyed at the sight of the slow-moving wagons; the merchant and trader whose uninsured stock of merchandise or whose herd of cattle or sheep had been risked on the venture of the trip had his reasons, and the rest of the population had theirs. . . . These caravans generally consisted of an immense wagon train manned by about three hundred men, with an escort of from fifty to a hundred ‘dragoons,’ while herd of cattle or sheep, running high into the thousands, were frequently driven with them on their southward journey.”⁹ By the early nineteenth century, El Paso del Norte had become a major transit point for the mass shipment of goods and the movement of hundreds of people, and it continued to remain so even after its capture by American forces during the U.S.-Mexican War (1846-1848) and the subsequent annexation of land north of the Río Grande by the United States.¹⁰

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 is a politically momentous moment in the history of U.S.-Mexican relations, for upon its signing the Río Grande instantly became an international border, one that split and divided a massive amount of land that had previously been designated as northern Mexico. El Paso del Norte was now a Mexican border town, and the opposite side of the river was now the American city of Franklin, soon to be renamed El Paso in 1859.¹¹ But the year 1848 signaled another pivotal moment in the history of the Pass: the discovery of California gold. The Gold Rush introduced a new and significant migratory flow that intersected with the north-south traffic of the historic Camino Real, and the Pass became the

⁹ Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North*, 213; White, *Out of the Desert*, 19-20.

¹⁰ García, *Desert Immigrants*, 12. For a more detailed history on the actual processes of making the U.S.-Mexico border as well as drawing the boundary between Texas and New Mexico, see Paula Rebert, *La Gran Línea: Mapping the United States-Mexico Boundary, 1849-1857* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001); Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Timmons, *El Paso*, 120-31.

¹¹ Timmons, *El Paso*, xviii. El Paso County was organized in 1850, and the town’s name was changed from Franklin to El Paso in 1859. *Ibid.*, 120.

campgrounds for a stampede of eager Forty-niners who now depressed the land with a foot trail running east and west.¹² The arrival in 1858 of Butterfield's Overland Mail Company only increased the significance of this border transit point. As the wagons carrying mail and passengers from St. Louis to San Francisco stopped in El Paso for necessary rest and replenishment, El Paso became – as historian W. H. Timmons put it – “the continental crossroads.”¹³

Nevertheless, the increasing numbers of American travelers who passed through El Paso did not stimulate any significant settlement of Americans at the border.¹⁴ The United States stationed soldiers at the Rio Grande in the late 1840s to defend the new boundary, monitor Apache Indians, and help police the increasing traffic of California emigrants, and a military post at nearby Fort Bliss was established in 1854.¹⁵ Otherwise, however, El Paso still remained

¹² Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 10; Timmons, *El Paso*, 103-09. Still, the majority of Gold Rush emigrants journeyed by sea, sailing up the continental coast from places like Chile, crossing the Pacific Ocean as in the case of Chinese immigrants, or voyaging completely around South America's Cape Horn on their travels from Europe and the eastern regions of the United States. See, e.g., Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2000), 57-95.

¹³ Timmons, *El Paso*, 143. An Overland Mail Company stage coach could make its St. Louis-San Francisco trip in less than twenty-five days, and at least six days before a mail bag dispatched from St. Louis could reach San Francisco by ship.

¹⁴ In the early 1820s, an Anglo-American from Missouri named John G. Heath did attempt to colonize a tract of land called El Brazito (Little Arm), about 33 miles north of El Paso del Norte, with 30 Catholic families (150 colonists) from Missouri. In 1825, after descending the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers in flatboats with all his colonists and all of their supplies, chartering a boat from New Orleans to the Mexican port of Soto la Marina, and then making their way westward across the Bolsón de Mapimí river basin to Chihuahua and El Paso del Norte, Heath and his colonists arrived at El Brazito, only to be turned back home (and financially ruined) because in the meantime the Iturbide regime had been overthrown, the regime's colonization law repealed, and Heath's El Brazito land grant had been repudiated by the governor of New Mexico. *Ibid.*, 76-77.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 106, 131.

geographically separated by too great a distance and too harsh a terrain from any center of population and power to attract settlers, let alone any political attention. Thus White bemoaned that even the state of Texas “failed utterly to bring [El Paso] under her sovereignty.”¹⁶ El Paso in the late 1850s remained a relatively quiet frontier hamlet with a population of 300, consisting mostly of Mexicans; by the early 1870s, Mexican communities spread out across the valley and on both sides of the river shared a combined population of approximately 13,000, while the Anglo population in the entire valley remained low in the two or three hundreds.¹⁷

Forerunners of civilization’s advance

If up to 1881 El Paso’s “position was so remote and isolated that she could scarcely be said to be a spectator, for she did not see, or scarcely know, what was going on in the great world around her,” by 1883, El Paso could no longer be ignored.¹⁸ As Hans Mickle wrote, “Colorado has its Leadville and Denver, Nebraska its Omaha, Missouri its Kansas City, and now Texas has its El Paso. Two years ago she was hardly recognized in the Texas sisterhood of cities; in two years hence she will occupy a position near the head of the family.”¹⁹ What had happened in those intervening years? The arrival of the first Southern Pacific train that rolled into El Paso from

¹⁶ White, *Out of the Desert*, 24. Even well into the late-twentieth century, El Pasoans have complained of being overlooked and neglected by the rest of the state, where the notion has been widely held that “Texas ends at the Pecos river.” See, e.g., W. H. Timmons, “El Paso -- Where Texas History Begins,” *Password* 31:2 (1986), 56.

¹⁷ García, *Desert Immigrants*, 12-13; Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 12-13.

¹⁸ C. A. Gould & Co., *General Business Directory of the City of El Paso for 1886-87* (Dallas: A. D. Aldridge & Co., 1886), 13.

¹⁹ Mickle, “El Paso, The Future Immense,” *San Antonio Daily Express*, February 4, 1883.

Los Angeles on May 26, 1881. “Alladin’s [sic] lamp never worked greater wonders,” according to Mickle, for overnight,

As from the skies men appeared. Lots worth only tens were sold at thousands. Red lumber from California, ready planed and notched, cut and numbered was put together into houses in a night. Another road, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe soon followed, and Chicago and St. Louis men, carrying with them their rivalry, jostled hard the Californians. Brick yards were established, and architects made plans, and two or three story brick blocks of four and five stores grew like mushrooms.²⁰

The race to build up the city had begun, and the sounds of hammer and nail and men yelling to be heard over the construction was met by the steady thunder of even more railroads canvassing the town: the Texas & Pacific, the Galveston, Harrisburg & San Antonio, and then the Mexican Central in 1884. With the completion of the Southern Pacific to New Orleans, El Paso emerged “the half way station” between that city and San Francisco, on “the longest line of railway in the world under one management.”²¹

“Nature has given her the position,” certain city promoters reasoned, “and the laws of trade, like those of nature, will always assert themselves.”²² The railroads, “forerunners of civilization’s advance” according to certain mindsets, “pointed their progress towards the City of the Pass” and in doing so, granted it a metropolitan destiny that not only tied it to tributary towns

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid. The Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe arrived almost a month after the Southern Pacific in 1881, while the Texas & Pacific and the Galveston, Harrisburg & San Antonio railroad lines were both connected by 1883. The governor of Chihuahua drove the first spike in Ciudad Juárez for the Mexican Central in 1881, but it was not until 1884 that the Mexican Central finally connected the Juárez border to Mexico City. García, *Desert Immigrants*, 14; Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 21; Florence C. Lister and Robert H. Lister, *Chihuahua: Storehouse of Storms* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1966), 175. The date of the first Southern Pacific train’s arrival in El Paso is found in Timmons, *El Paso*, 167.

²² *General Business Directory for 1886-87*, 7.

throughout the Southwest, but also connected the Pass as a regional satellite to national and international centers in both the United States and Mexico.²³ In a period of three years, El Paso suddenly became the center of a vast grid of track lines that ran from the city thousands of miles across the Southwest and California to San Francisco (Southern Pacific); through the fertile Río Grande Valley in New Mexico and the Great Plains to Kansas City (Santa Fe); across the great expanse of Texas to the Arkansas border (Texas & Pacific) and to New Orleans (Galveston, Harrisburg & San Antonio); and through the vast mineral and agricultural lands of northern and central Mexico to Mexico City.²⁴ On the Mexican Central, passengers were assured of a safe travel “[f]ree from yellow fever, perils and sickness by sea, stage traveling, the prostrating heat of the coasts and losses and delays of baggage.”²⁵ The “annihilation of space and time” facilitated by the speed of the train meant that people and things could move a given distance at a fraction of the time, but it also suggested a spatial shrinking of distance even as transport distances expanded. Suddenly, El Paso was not so far from San Francisco or New York, from Chicago or Mexico City. What would have taken weeks by wagon now could be covered in a few days, and as people began to experience travel distance “more in hours than in miles,” an Englishman’s prediction made in 1839 inched closer to realization in the United States: “As distances were thus annihilated, the surface of our country would, as it were, shrivel in size until it became not much bigger than one immense city.”²⁶

²³ *Buck’s City Directory of El Paso, Tex. for 1902* (El Paso: El Paso Directory Co., 1902), 6.

²⁴ *El Paso, Texas and Paso del Norte, Mexico, Business Directory for 1885* (Albuquerque: Rackliff & Waaney, 1885), 5-6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

²⁶ William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1991), 76; Wolfgang Schivelbusch, “Railroad Space and Railroad Time,” *New*

What did the railroads bring closer to El Paso? Well, if the train was the central motor of American industrialization, then Northeastern capitalists were the ones driving it. As Mickle put it, “While the railroad giants grapple and wrestle on Wall Street, we, in this far-off country, feel the shaking of the ground as it were, as one or the other receives a flat throw. This is the theatre of their operations while New York is but the council tent.”²⁷ The railroads that criss-crossed El Paso were the projects of Gilded-Age industrialists including Jay Gould, and the Mexican Central railroad was owned by Boston, New York, and Chicago capitalists as well.²⁸ Moreover, eastern capital continued to flow into the region even after the railroad lines were completed, attracted by the lure of rich copper deposits in Arizona, New Mexico, and the northern Mexican states of Sonora and Chihuahua. Investors were convinced “beyond doubt that when the vast treasure-vaults which are tributary to El Paso, begin to unload their wealth, that those who cast their lot in the metropolis of the Southwest will reap a rich harvest.”²⁹ It was a very modern

German Critique No. 14 (Spring, 1978), 32; John F. Stover, *American Railroads*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

²⁷ Hans Mickle, “A New Transcontinental Railroad: How Texas May Retain the Trade of Chihuahua,” *The San Antonio Daily Express*, February 9, 1883. See also White, *Out of the Desert*, 206.

²⁸ *El Paso and Paso del Norte Business Directory for 1885*, 5-6.

²⁹ D. R. Payne, *El Paso, Illustrated* (1892), 3-4; *El Paso and Paso del Norte Business Directory for 1885*, 8; García, *Desert Immigrants*, 13; Timmons, *El Paso*, 129-31. These rich mineral deposits were located in the strip of land acquired by the United States from Mexico in the Gadsden Purchase (1853), now known as southern New Mexico and Arizona. So rich in copper were certain areas of Arizona that the yield of copper from the Copper Queen mine alone in 1925 was worth ten times what the United States paid for the entire Gadsden Purchase. Robert G. Raymer, “Early Copper Mining in Arizona,” *Pacific Historical Review* 4:2 (1935), 129. The Mexican state of Chihuahua had a long-established history of mineral largess; the Spanish first began to mine in the surrounding mountains of Chihuahua during the seventeenth century, and some of these mines were so rich they continued to be worked constantly for several hundred years thereafter. *Buck’s City Directory for 1902*, 25. By 1902, the state of Chihuahua ranked first in the republic in mining, with a monthly production of gold and silver bullion alone at over eight hundred thousand dollars. *Ibid.*

marriage of convenience between the railroad and the mine, for as mineral speculation expanded deeper into the borderlands so did the rail tracks. And as additional feeder rail lines extended El Paso's reach more intensely into New Mexico and northwestern Mexico, they transformed El Paso into "an eight-spoked wheel" of locomotion itself by means of which the city, at the center, had unrivaled "access to the territory from which she draws her wealth and to which she sends supplies."³⁰

The extension of rail lines into Mexico was especially enticing to some American financiers, who eyed its lands and commercial potential. After all, the Southern Pacific was not built over hundreds of miles of desert "with the sole and only purpose of handling the California business, between the Pacific and the gulf. Being at the door of Mexico, it is but natural that company should want a share of its trade."³¹ The Texas and Pacific Railway Company promised its shareholders that its line from Fort Worth to El Paso would secure a very productive trade with Mexico:

Such a road will develop a rich mineral and agricultural country and furnish transportation facilities to this vast population; and, via your road, it will open new markets to the trade and commerce of the United States, and enable American merchants to compete for the trade and commerce of more than 10,000,000 of people that are now almost entirely supplied by foreign merchants, via the coast. It is believed that this Mexican traffic will, within a very few years after the completion of your road, be of greater volume and more remunerative than the Pacific coast business.

³⁰ *Buck's City Directory for 1902*, 7, 23-32. The "spokes" of this locomotive wheel were "the Santa Fe, from the north, the White Oaks route from the northeast, the Texas & Pacific from the east, the G. H. & S. A. from the southeast, the Mexican Central from the south, the Sierra Madre from the southwest, the Bisbee from the west and the Southern Pacific from the west and northwest." *Ibid.*, 23.

³¹ Mickle, "A New Transcontinental Railroad," *San Antonio Daily Express*, February 9, 1883. See also García, *Desert Immigrants*, 16.

It was important that investors understood just how much they could gain by promoting trade with Mexico. If business was thriving on the Pacific coast, they only had to add up how much more money could be made in Mexico, “a nation with a population exceeding 10,000,000 of people, or more than ten times that of the Pacific Coast States and Territories.”³²

In fact, commerce was to be “the weapon, the all-powerful arm” with which the United States would accomplish its final conquest of Mexico:

. . . a conquest not like that of Hernando Cortez, or Scott, or Taylor, yet we shall enter the halls of the proud Montezumas in greater triumph and return with a far richer reward than they, and with no stain or suspicion of wrong or oppression upon our consciences. We shall conquer Mexico with our arts of peace, our commerce; and El Paso will be the great highway through which it must be accomplished. And we will be richer, and Mexico both happier, richer, and more powerful, after she is thus subdued. . . .³³

With the railroads and the telegraph passing through El Paso as the agents of U.S. conquest, investors could rest assured that they would reap in dollars the beneficent work of American empire, all the while civilizing, enriching, and building up “the waste places.”³⁴ To make things

³² “The Texas-Pacific Road, Text of the Annual Report to the Shareholders,” *New York Times*, August 12, 1880, 5. See also *General Business Directory for 1886-87*, 7, where trade with Mexico is described as El Paso’s “most important and brilliant commercial prospect.”

³³ *General Business Directory for 1886-87*, 22.

³⁴ *Ibid.* Indeed, the commercial penetration of U.S. capital and products into Mexico has often been explained by historians as another kind of imperial invasion in addition to the territorial conquests of the Mexican frontier. See, e.g., David J. Weber, *The Mexican Frontier, 1821-1846: The American Southwest Under Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982); Daniel Lewis, *Iron Horse Imperialism: The Southern Pacific of Mexico, 1880-1951* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007) (examining the ways in which Mexican nationbuilding worked alongside U.S. corporate hegemony); John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). Andrés Reséndez argues that Mexico’s northern frontier was economically drawn to the U.S. even before the Mexican-American War, as U.S. trade and consumption patterns informed how local frontier residents conditioned and defined their complicated national loyalties and

easier on the businessman, Americans were promised that “the railroad offers facilities enabling them to take advantage of American markets, while themselves being on Mexican territory, handling Mexican money and paying Mexican prices.”³⁵ Soon, businessmen were contacting the U.S. consular office in Juárez, interested in the importation of U.S.-made goods into the region’s markets; for example, *The Chicago-Times Herald* sent a letter asking, among other information, “what method, if any, you would suggest by which our merchants and manufacturers can introduce their goods,” and requesting “recommendations for improving and facilitating Commercial intercourse between the United States (and especially the Country tributary to Chicago), and [Mexico].”³⁶ Massive amounts of capital crossed the border, as foreign investors and companies began staking claims to Mexican land for mining and agricultural industry. Attracted by Chihuahua’s mineral resources, cheap land, and close proximity to the United States, foreign investors pumped more nonrailroad capital into the border state than into any other region in Mexico before 1910.³⁷

In return, as investors continued to pump capital into the railroads and mines in the Southwest and northern Mexico, sending more and more trains straight into the veins of mineral deposits in the region, more and more cargo wagons filled with copper and other raw materials

identities. Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

³⁵ *Buck’s City Directory for 1902*, 27.

³⁶ Luis M. Bonford to Edwin T. Uhl, Assistant Secretary of State, August 6, 1895, Despatches from United States Consuls in Ciudad Juárez (Paso del Norte), 1850-1906, M184, National Archives, College Park, [hereafter Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Ciudad Juárez, M184, NARA/CP], reel 5.

³⁷ Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 5.

began to roll out on the tracks. The land proved to be a veritable treasure trove of rich copper, gold, silver, mercury, lead, zinc, and azurite deposits, as well as sulfur, coal, iron, brick, clay, cement and many other raw materials.³⁸ Underneath the grazing country of the borderlands lay a vast mineral one, and news spread quickly among enterprising capitalists in the northeast and Europe of a “new border empire, of untold mineral treasure, vast grazing ranges bathed in sunshine and a new frontier to develop.”³⁹

At the center of all this borderland industrial activity lay the Pass, where huge corporate smelters set up shop on both sides of the river alongside foundry and mining supply companies, providing services and goods to all of the tributary towns connected to it by rail.⁴⁰ By 1902, the city was a mineral marketplace:

The prospector is abroad with his pick and grub-stake. Development work is rapidly being pushed according to law. Leases are making and claims are being formed. Mines are sold and mining companies are being formed. Ores are shipped and dividends declared. New machinery is purchased and old machinery is enlarged. The assayer is busy, the sampler is overcrowded, the concentrator is working over hours, the smelter is behind with its orders, the dealer in mine, mill and smelter supplies increases his force of clerks, the railroads are kept busy and every description of tradesman catering to the wants or pleasure of the mining classes feels the effects of the wondrous activity.⁴¹

³⁸ *Buck's City Directory for 1902*, 24.

³⁹ Quoted in Miguel Tinker Salas, *In the Shadow of the Eagles: Sonora and the Transformation of the Border During the Porfiriato* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 101-02. See also García, *Desert Immigrants*, 13-14. Agriculture and live stock grazing were also heavily promoted, but lagged behind El Paso's railroad and mining industries due to the lack of water and irrigation. See, e.g., *General Business Directory for 1886-87*, 25-33, 37-48; *Buck's City Directory for 1902*, 16-20; García, *Desert Immigrants*, 30-31.

⁴⁰ *Buck's City Directory for 1902*, 32-33; García, *Desert Immigrants*, 17-20.

⁴¹ *Buck's City Directory for 1902*, 22.

The Juárez-El Paso border became an international turnstile for large transfers of money, mineral products, machinery, and goods between Mexico and the United States, and ores were shipped to El Paso from Mexico City, 1224 miles away, as well as from California and northeastern New Mexico. The El Paso smelter in one year paid more than one million dollars for ore shipped 500 miles from the mines of Chiepa near Arispe, Sonora.⁴² Carried on the Mexican Central and the Sierra Madre roads which connected El Paso with the “vigorous young giant of the south,” the importation of ore through the Paso del Norte custom house outranked all other ports of U.S. entry; almost \$5.4 million worth of gold, silver, and lead ore passed through El Paso alone into the United States during 1890-1891, while \$4 million worth of ore came in through all other ports during that same period. By 1899 the custom house reported \$6,197,000 in imports of bullion, coin, and ores, with 167,000 tons of ores imported for smelting purposes. Including almost \$200,000 in cattle, lace, fruit, sugar, and tobacco imports, as well as \$5 million in exports crossing the border to Mexico (not including coal, which was on the free list), the possibilities for prosperity based on El Paso’s fortuitous location on the border with Mexico seemed endless.⁴³

A large, floating population

While the bird’s eye view offered an impressive scenery of raw materials, goods, and capital exchanging hands and markets across the border and continent, there was also an immeasurable level of human activity “down” on the “ground,” as established settlers and newcomers began building the local infrastructures that would modernize the desert cityscape. Brick buildings

⁴² Ibid., 23-24; García, *Desert Immigrants*, 20-23.

⁴³ Payne, *El Paso, Illustrated*, 9; *Buck’s City Directory for 1902*, 24, 27.

replaced adobe houses; business blocks were erected one after the other; dirt paths became wide streets that, though still dusty with the “inevitable sand” of the Rio Grande, “cross[ed] each other at right angle with few exceptions”; property values increased; and electric street cars and street lights lined the roads that organized and consolidated the “natural metropolis” that sprang up out of the desert borderlands.⁴⁴ Men and women rushed to El Paso to claim a piece of their “future great,” and local leaders could boast that El Paso was “no longer a standstill city . . . The future holds up to view the largest possible amount of promise, and the people are awake to the opportunities of the hour.”⁴⁵ El Paso was a modern city, one worthy of appearing on the map in the hands of travelers and the capital futures of even more investors.

The work of transforming the remote desert hamlet into a connected metropolitan center was no easy feat, but local developers and promoters at least had a well-drawn script to follow in trying to channel capitalists and laborers to the region. By this point in the nineteenth century, the “booster” style of speculating and promoting urban centers in the Great West, such as St. Louis or Chicago, had become a template for other nascent city developers, interested newspaper editors, merchants, and chambers of commerce. El Paso boosters fully embraced the exaggerated imperial metaphors that fueled booster theorizing, and they repeatedly invoked the

⁴⁴ Mickle, “El Paso, The Future Immense,” *San Antonio Daily Express*, February 4, 1883; *General Business Directory for 1886-87*, 9-11. For reference to El Paso as the “natural metropolis” of the borderlands, see El Paso Chamber of Commerce, *El Paso, What it is and Why* (El Paso: El Paso Chamber of Commerce, 1917), 1. Land worth \$830 in 1880, for example, was worth \$4500 only six years later. See “Statement of Facts,” Ed. and S. A. McElroy v. Joseph Magoffin, Case no. M11344, Texas Supreme Court case files (Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives) [hereafter TSCCF].

⁴⁵ El Paso Directory Co., *Directory of the City of El Paso, 1888* (El Paso: Times Publishing Co., 1888), 1.

desert empire of Egypt and its Nile River in the place of El Paso and the Río Grande.⁴⁶

Recognizing the national and international implications of the extensive railroad network for El

Paso, they promoted El Paso as “the imperial highway of nations”:

The great northern republic was advancing westward with the leaps of a giant. The southern republic was shaking itself free from the enmeshing restraints of anarchy, revolution, and military despotism. And El Paso lay as the natural gateway between these empires.

Its imperial reach was to know no limits, and its commercial reach would extend beyond the four corners of the North American continent to the rest of the world.⁴⁷

Empires need subjects, however, and the necessary linchpin for the great imperial city was population growth.⁴⁸ With the railroads came railroad men and real estate dealers, bankers and merchants, business men and lawyers, miners and saloon keepers. But to the chagrin of the city’s more respectable circles, the popular reputation of El Paso and the greater Southwest was soon overshadowed by the lore of gamblers, infamous gunslingers, and “sporting” women.⁴⁹ To

⁴⁶ As William Cronon has pointed out, “*Empire*: its metaphors form the very core of booster rhetoric.” Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, 41. For invocations of the Río Grande as the American Nile, see, e.g., *General Business Directory for 1886-87*, 40; *Buck’s City Directory for 1902*, 16; “Speech by Richard F. Burges, City Attorney, Welcoming the Republican State Convention, El Paso, Texas, in 1906,” Box 31, Burges-Perrenot Family Papers, 1890-1986, MS 262 (C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library). For more on boosters and booster theories of urban and regional growth, see Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, 34-46.

⁴⁷ *Buck’s City Directory for 1902*, 6-7; *General Business Directory for 1886-87*, 22.

⁴⁸ For booster theories involving population density and demographic statistics, see Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, 39-40.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Alonzo van Oden and Ann Jensen, *Texas Ranger’s Diary and Scrapbook* (Dallas: Kaleidograph Press, 1936); W. W. Mills, *Forty years at El Paso, 1858-1898* (El Paso: C. Hertzog, 1962); John Middagh, *Frontier Newspaper: The El Paso Times* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1958), 65-81; Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North*, 236-48, 277-344. Owen P. White referred to the men and women of the “sporting element” as “border parasites.” White, *Out of*

counter this unfavorable image and attract more capital, boosters immediately called for “an infusion of a live and vigorous element of population to make [the valley region] a blooming Eden. Munificently endowed with unrivalled resources of wealth, immigration only will develop and utilize the rich benefactions nature has so lavishly bestowed.” Indeed, at times it seemed that immigrants needed only to move to the region and reap the benefits of the land, which was simply waiting to unleash its wealth onto the provident passer-by:

The coal fields and gold and silver mines of White Oaks are only waiting for a railroad, which will soon be built. The onyx-stone of Mexico is waiting for enterprising capital to place it on the market, and the whole of the agricultural lands around us is waiting for reservoirs and canals. The stock ranges only want capital to dig wells and place pumps on them, which will supply vast ranges for stock; and the forests have never echoed with the sound of the woodman’s ax, or the hum of the buzz-saw; the virgin soil of the valleys only awaits the plowshare . . .

Boosters promised that it was simply up to “capital” to make the inroads; those immigrants who were attentive enough to follow would be led to a veritable Garden of Eden. “[T]rade upon our prospects,” they thus urged capitalists and laborers, “come and be not only one among us, but one of us.”⁵⁰ The *El Paso Daily Times* soon re-imagined the famous edict by Horace Greely,

the Desert, 130. For the argument that gamblers were not in fact engaged in activity substantively different from capitalist market speculation (i.e., the speculation and investments in bank and railroad stocks, land schemes, etc.), see Joshua D. Rothman, “The Hazards of the Flush Times: Gambling, Mob Violence, and the Anxieties of America’s Market Revolution,” *Journal of American History* 95:3 (2008), 651-77.

⁵⁰ *El Paso Herald*, December 7, 1881, 2; Payne, *El Paso, Illustrated*, 4, 10. See also *General Business Directory for 1886-87*, 71 (promoting permanent settlement). Indeed, boosters promised that the valley land was so productive that they urged people:

Cultivate alfalfa – if you only have one acre which you can irrigate, cultivate alfalfa. This one acre will furnish feed for your cow and horse . . . raise and fatten enough pork to more than pay your taxes and furnish you with bacon for your breakfast, ham for your lunch and a jowl for your greens . . . turn off enough hay for

boasting that what Greely intended to say was “Go to El Paso, young man, and grow up with the city.”⁵¹

Indeed, many had already “answered” the call – young and old, men and women and children, U.S.-born and Mexico-born and other nationals. Even before the railroads finally reached El Paso, thousands of newcomers were rolling into town “in buggies, hacks, and wagons, on horseback, and even afoot” to face a flood of crowds so large that, as Texas Ranger James B. Gillett described, “[a]t night there was not enough room for people on the sidewalks and they filled the streets.” As lots jumped from \$100 an acre to \$200 per front foot and hotels remained “utterly inadequate” to house the swelling population, people pitched tents in the streets and hundreds slept in saloons.⁵² Once the railroads arrived, the population pulsed even more dramatically, the human volume within the city limits virtually expanding and shrinking several times over the course of days, weeks, and months. By the turn of the century, the Southern Pacific carried four daily passenger trains in and out of the city to the tune of about two hundred people, or a monthly average of 6000; passengers came and went from various locations all along the Southern Pacific’s expansive lines, which terminated in Oregon, Utah, and Louisiana but then connected to partnered railroad company lines leading in from and out to so many other places in the United States. Meanwhile, the Texas & Pacific shuttled people within

you to buy shoes for your wife and children and present each with a good winter dress . . . enable you to raise one hundred and fifty chickens, fifty geese, fifty turkeys and thirty-five ducks for market, and yet to properly attend to this one acre *will not demand more than one hour* of each of the working days in the year.

El Paso Herald, February 8, 1889, 2 (emphasis added).

⁵¹ *El Paso Daily Times*, October 31, 1901, 4, quoted in García, *Desert Immigrants*, 15.

⁵² James B. Gillett, *Six Years with the Texas Rangers, 1875-1881* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 232; *Lone Star*, July 30, 1884, quoted in Timmons, *El Paso*, 167.

its terminals in western Texas, northern Texas, and the Mississippi valley, handling no less than 1500 persons a month at El Paso, while the Santa Fe carried a monthly average of 2000 to 2500 people in and out of the city along lines that connected the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean. And of course, the Mexican Central connected the dense cities of central Mexico to the border at Juárez, its passenger service to the city handling a monthly average of 5000 persons.⁵³

To be sure, much of this foot traffic was comprised of men and women drawn to El Paso's tourist attractions, promoted by boosters who attached the modern conveniences of El Paso to the health benefits of the region and the romantic exoticism of Juárez. Indeed, fluctuation in population was built into the design of the city, with nearly 100 hotels and lodging houses by the turn of the century taking in boarders and tourists, and hosting an average of 700 visitors arriving daily during the winter months.⁵⁴ Tourists were encouraged to cross the river, witness the bullfights and horse-racing sights of Juárez, admire the old mission church of Guadalupe, and take pictures of the Mexican women "seen in groups of a dozen kneeling on the bare [church] floor, which is cleanly swept, worshipping before the images and pictures on the wall, and reciting their prayers and incantations, heedless of Kodaks and other photograph instruments which may be ranged upon them by [other] tourists who are taking in the town and

⁵³ *Buck's City Directory for 1902*, 36-38. Other regional lines, such as the Rio Grande, Sierra Madre & Pacific Railroad and the El Paso & Northeastern Railroad, also ran a voluminous traffic of American and Mexican passengers through El Paso and the Southwest, and the proposed extensions of even more lines into the city only promised to increase El Paso's prominence as a major thoroughway for domestic and foreign passengers and commerce. *Ibid.*, 38-39.

⁵⁴ *Buck's City Directory for 1902*, 12; García, *Desert Immigrants*, 27-29.

seeing the sights.”⁵⁵ Meanwhile, visitors would be “bathed in sunshine under a cloudless sky,” surrounded by the many other “transients who have just come from the North, others from the East, and a good many from New Mexico.”⁵⁶ With its mild winters and humidity-free summers, the border town emerged a key railway stop on the route between the Pacific coast and the Atlantic shores year-round and travelers were promised a veritable fountain of youth as they would be swept by “cool and invigorating breezes, laden with resinous aroma and surcharged with electricity, carrying health to diseased lungs and throats, strengthening the entire frame, building up the physical man, invigorating depleted brain tissue, restoring destroyed appetite, quieting excitable nerves – in a word, turning back the hands of life on the dial of age.”⁵⁷ Those who could not find peace of mind and health in this “Mecca of the afflicted” had only one resort

⁵⁵ Payne, *El Paso, Illustrated*, 7. See also *General Business Directory for 1886-87*, 11-12. A romanticized image of Mexicans was emphasized as an aesthetic highlight of border tourism, and boosters called attention to the “number of Mexicans who live in El Paso, besides those who continually come here to trade from the opposite side of the river, and their quaint costumes often make the streets present a picturesque and novel appearance. The laborers especially, with their ornamented, high-crowned hats and bright-colored blankets, make excellent subjects for the artist’s brush.” Payne, *El Paso, Illustrated*, 7.

⁵⁶ Rudolf Eickemeyer, *Letters from the Southwest* (Astor Place, New York: J. J. Little & Co., 1894), 8, 42. See also *El Paso Herald*, October 12, 1881, 1; Payne, *El Paso, Illustrated*, 6.

⁵⁷ Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 22; *Buck’s City Directory for 1902*, 44. Boosters also promised that the dry atmosphere provided a more hospitable working environment, and that the laborer was thereby “enabled to work in an atmosphere ten degrees hotter than he could stand in the East; and besides this difference in daytime the nights are always cool, which gives rest and refreshing sleep, and therefore health and vigor, strengthening the whole system in general.” Payne, *El Paso, Illustrated*, 5. In general, the promotion of the city differed very little from booster business elsewhere, and all focused on the natural advantages of their target cities by emphasizing the regional resources, transportation routes, and climatic forces. See Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*, 34-39.

left to visit: “If one cannot sleep here then there remains but one refuge for him – the grave, where the dreamless sleep can be broken by no sounds of earth.”⁵⁸

More significant than the throngs of border tourists and health vacationers flocking to El Paso, however, were the forces of transience that heavily directed the migration of economically-driven actors across the region, especially among the poorer stratum of nineteenth-century society. The industrial welfare of El Paso was based on an economy of “transients,” relying on not only the temporary vacationer passing through on his way to some other destination, but also on the countless laborers who were tethered to and pulled along by the demands of the railroad and mining industries in the borderlands. Publishers of city directories repeatedly apologized for inaccurate or partial listings in their directories by pinning margins of error on the daily changes happening in the town and the attendant population fluctuations occasioned by such constant changes. It was a city of “regulars” and “transients,” and in such “railroad centers and towns where there is a large floating population,” estimation and rough guesses were as close as the enumerators could get.⁵⁹ The city was a body in motion, its core settled by a few but its veins pumping with people on the move for their big break.

In fact, from the very first whispers of the railroad coming to El Paso, people were not only arriving in droves to stake their claim to the promised boom, but were constantly repositioning themselves within the town, displacing others as they searched for more

⁵⁸ *Buck's City Directory for 1902*, 45. Ironically enough, El Paso has also been referred to as “a Mecca for suicides,” often the last resort of despairing prostitutes and gamblers who had lost all their money, and possibly money belonging to somebody else. Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North*, 282.

⁵⁹ See, e.g., *El Paso Directory for 1888*, 1; *General Business Directory for 1886-87*, ii (for “large floating population” reference). See Eickemeyer, *Letters from the Southwest*, 42 (for reference to “regulars” and “transients” in El Paso).

advantageous testing grounds upon which they might make their new homes.⁶⁰ For example, in December 1880, R. H. Brown drove his wagon into town, loaded with his wife and child. For the first few nights, the family slept on the floor of Mrs. Gillock's house, where the female guests slept in one room altogether while the men slept in another room. But Brown soon bought some land in town, kicked out the "colored woman named Ella" who had been renting the small adobe building on the property, and moved in.⁶¹ During the day, he worked the front room as a saloon. At night, after the saloon had closed, he and his wife slept "on blankets and comforts" on the cramped floor of the back room, surrounded by looming carts of liquors, kegs, cigars, and other goods, with him making promises of eventually building a two-story house on the land for her comfort. But soon John Speck, Brown's business partner from Silver City, New Mexico, joined them. Brown deeded half of the land to Speck according to their partnership agreement and moved out to a rented house on San Antonio Street, where Mrs. Brown commenced taking boarders, while Speck settled into the back room of the saloon with his employee, Ed. McElroy.⁶²

The records are silent as to what happened over the next months, but for whatever reasons Brown dissolved the partnership in August 1881 and deeded the entire lot to Speck. His wife claimed that Brown then simply went away without telling her where he was heading, and the couple's history thereafter was one of constant motion. Mrs. Brown returned to Silver City a few days after her husband's disappearance; in Silver City, she began receiving letters from

⁶⁰ *General Business Directory for 1886-87*, 17-18; Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North*, 214.

⁶¹ "Statement of Facts" and "Brief for Appellee," *McElroy*, TSCCF. Brown also kicked out the tailor who had been renting the back room of the building from Ella; apparently she only occupied the front room.

⁶² "Brief for Appellee," *McElroy*, TSCCF.

Brown and subsequently joined him in Winnipeg, Manitoba; the couple then moved on to Miles City, Montana about a month later; and then she went to Santa Fe, New Mexico about 4 months later in May 1882, expecting Brown to follow her after collecting some outstanding bills. The two would not be reunited again; Brown died in Miles City in September, 1882.⁶³ At some point in the following months, Mrs. Brown met up with McElroy again and the two were married in 1884 in “the Indian Territory.”⁶⁴

The last remaining trace of her whereabouts appears in 1886, when the McElroys brought a lawsuit in El Paso claiming a homestead right to the property that Brown purchased in 1880 and subsequently transferred to Speck. Aimed at providing some measure of security to debtors and their vulnerable families during the economic ups-and-downs of nineteenth-century markets, state homestead exemption laws transformed gender and family relations by requiring an owner to get his wife’s consent before he could dispose of their homestead property, which the Texas constitution defined by “both the residence on the land for the purpose of a home and the intent to make it such.”⁶⁵ If indeed the property had been intended and used as a family home – hence the legal significance of having slept in the back room and of Brown’s promises to rebuild a home on the property – Mrs. Brown’s (now Mrs. McElroy) homestead claim could have effectively voided Brown’s transfer of property deeds to Speck. Unfortunately for her, however,

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ “Statement of Facts,” *McElroy*, TSCCF. The defense attempted to sully her reputation by insinuating that she had an adulterous affair with McElroy when she was still with Brown in El Paso.

⁶⁵ “Brief for Appellee,” *McElroy*, TSCCF. The property subsequently exchanged hands until it came under the control of Joseph Magoffin, who was thus named the defendant in the suit. For more about the history of homestead exemption laws, see Paul Goodman, “The Emergence of Homestead Exemption in the United States: Accommodation and Resistance to the Market Revolution, 1840-1880,” *Journal of American History* 80:2 (1993), 470-98.

the court found that even if she could have established a homestead interest in the property, she had abandoned that right by leaving Texas to live a life of “wandering,” never going anywhere “with the intention of permanently remaining” but constantly “remov[ing] from place to place” instead. “[T]heir every action,” the court reasoned, “was inconsistent with any claim to a residence in Texas,” or anywhere else for that matter.⁶⁶ Her wanderings had effectively nullified her claims to any roots, to her homestead. Presumably, Mrs. McElroy moved on again, heading off to other places in search of new opportunities – another tired migrant looking for a break in a land of, to borrow Cynthia Radding’s coinage, “wandering peoples.”⁶⁷

Like Mrs. Brown, a throng of white Americans born in states ranging from California to New York, and from Texas to Illinois found their circuitous way to El Paso and the border by the turn of the century. How long many of these men and women stayed is not clear. Some stayed, others moved on as the Browns did, and still others chased opportunities across the border.⁶⁸ In February 1901, Gordon Campbell White, a Southern Pacific Railroad employee who eventually became a transportation specialist for the U.S. government, wrote in his diary soon after his

⁶⁶ “Brief for Appellee,” *McElroy*, TSCCF; *E. and S. McElroy v. Joseph McGoffin* [sic], 68 Tex. 208, 1887 Tex. LEXIS 666 (1887), 209.

⁶⁷ Cynthia Radding, *Wandering Peoples: Colonialism, Ethnic Spaces, and Ecological Frontiers in Northwestern Mexico, 1700-1850* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997). There are no listings for any person by the name of McElroy in the first published city directory in 1888. *El Paso Directory for 1888*.

⁶⁸ In 1885, the American consul in Juárez complained of the difficulty of tracking down Americans in Mexico: “I have endeavored to secure a larger registration of Americans [domiciled in this consular district] but find Americans generally are indifferent and the majority of names upon register I have secured by personal solicitation.” Eugene Fechet to Second Assistant Secretary of State, Paso del Norte, February 8, 1885, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Ciudad Juárez, M184, NARA/CP, reel 3.

arrival, “Railroad men on the bum head for this place. There is a constant stream going and coming.”⁶⁹

If permanent settlement was the socially preferable outcome of immigration, it became so despite the overwhelming patterns of mobility exercised by emigrants in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. With urbanization taking place across the United States at a dizzying pace, cities became irresistible magnets for an endless reservoir of “restless, footloose people” who picked up when dissatisfied with their present lot and moved on to find other opportunities in other cities. Population turnover, constant geographical mobility, and circulating migration went hand in hand with urban growth, fed not only by streams of native-born Americans but also immigrants from abroad. Although those who attained a measure of wealth and comfort in the community tended to stay put, most struggled to gain a foothold on the social ladder of upward mobility and were more often than not, according to Stephan Thernstrom, “tossed helplessly about from city to city, from state to state, alienated but invisible and impotent,” looking endlessly for their first big break.⁷⁰ Following the Panic of 1893, unemployed men and women took to the rails again, many of them following the tracks to El Paso; the arrival in 1894 of jobless petitioners referred to in the *El Paso Herald* as “General” Frye’s “Industrial Army”

⁶⁹ Gordon Campbell White Diary, February 3, 1901, vol. 5, p. 141, Campbell W. Pennington Papers, 1872- (Benson Latin American Collection, General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin).

⁷⁰ Stephan Thernstrom, “Urbanization, Migration, and Social Mobility in Late Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History*, ed. Barton J. Bernstein (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), 159, 173. See also John C. Hudson, “Migration to an American Frontier,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 66:2 (1976), 242-65; Richard White, *“It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”: A New History of the American West* (Norman, Ok.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 183-211.

apparently created much anxiety for local citizens, who sighed with relief after they quickly and without incident moved on to other pastures.⁷¹

The Shades of Migration

Of course, although city developers and boosters actively recruited immigrants to El Paso, they were still particular about what that immigrant should look like. Eschewing the rough and tumble crowd that often accompanied the boom of mining towns, they imagined an influx of industrious, young American men and their families: “There is a chance here for everybody with either brains, energy, or capital,” they promised, “and for the happy possessor of all these there is an illimitable field; and they are invited to come.”⁷² They called for capitalists, miners, manufacturers, and agriculturalists “from every State in the Union, and from every country in Europe. . . . We need population. We want immigrants of kindred races, that we may be a homogenous people. We are all immigrants or their descendents.”⁷³ The call for immigration was therefore a limited one, circumscribed by a desire to develop the community with persons from the “kindred races.”

The majority of immigrants to El Paso by the turn of the century appear to have fit the desired shades of whiteness that was implied by the invocation of “kindred races.” By 1889, the El Paso city directory publisher boasted that “The principal increase [in population] has been among the Americans, and we are happy to state that most of the newcomers brought families and some means and have settled permanently, while the single persons are mostly professional

⁷¹ *El Paso Herald*, May 14, 1894, 1.

⁷² *General Business Directory for 1886-87*, 21.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 71.

men and mechanics, fewer of the non-producing element having found their way here than in former years.”⁷⁴ By 1900, there were slightly over 15,000 persons designated as “white” counted in the U.S. census for El Paso County, making up almost 60 percent of the county’s total population. Most white Americans in El Paso had been born in Texas and other Southern states, but a significant number also came from the midwestern states of Missouri and Illinois, as well as California and New York. A sizeable European-born contingent also appeared, most noticeably Jews from Germany and Austria-Hungary seeking to escape militaristic regimes that were prevailing in Europe, but also British, Irish, French, and Italian immigrants as well.⁷⁵ Boosters and developers could relax with the knowledge that El Paso was well on its way to replicating the white man’s land of other significant metropolitan centers in the United States.

The railroads, on the other hand, were much less discriminating about who they brought to the El Paso-Juárez border, and even as El Paso was inundated with a variety of American

⁷⁴ El Paso Directory Company, *Directory of the City of El Paso, 1889* (El Paso: Times Publishing Co., 1889), 1.

⁷⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Texas, El Paso County (microfilm: National Archives micropublication T623) (National Archives), accessed through Ancestry.com; Timmons, *El Paso*, 190. See also U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Special census of the population of El Paso, Tex., January 15, 1916* (Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1916), 4. It should be noted that the enumeration of “whites” in the 1900 census is misleading, as the racial category included persons of Mexican ancestry who were, at that time, not reported separately from U.S. and European-born “whites.” The 15,000 figure for El Paso County’s “white” population provided in the text reflects the figure left after subtracting the number of persons designated as Mexican-born, reported at slightly over 9,000. On treatment of Mexicans as racially different from American and European “whites,” see, e.g., Arnoldo De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983). There is a substantial body of literature that discusses the whiteness of European immigrants during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. For more recent examples, see David Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White* (New York: Perseus Books, 2005); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

accents and European dialects, it also swelled with black, brown, and yellow bodies that looked, sounded, and acted differently than what white men and women were used to in the places from which they came. African American emigrants in the American Southwest were not quite like the black men and women who lived in the U.S. North or South; the Chinese in the borderlands who sometimes “spoke Spanish and smiled in English” were an anomaly so far away from San Francisco; and many white Americans and European immigrants had never encountered Mexicans before.⁷⁶ Indeed, in the streets of burgeoning borderlands cities, people of all different backgrounds came together for the first time:

The walks of the street contain a motley crowd. On the curbstones were groups of Mexicans, with their dusky features and wearing their favorite sombreros; numbers of Indians were moving listlessly, bedecked with bright and gaudy colors, with long, black hair, without any covering on their heads. The Chinaman has his share in the motley crowd, in his native costumes, sprightly on his feet, and ever on the alert. The African, with features unlike any other, varies the type of nationalities and last, the Caucasian, with bright and cheery face, is more the type of manhood than all the rest together.⁷⁷

Even as it bewildered this ethnocentric reporter, the “motley” racial mixing of Phoenix in 1888 depicted in this newspaper reportage offered a typical example of what was developing all along the border, and particularly at the El Paso-Juárez boundary.⁷⁸ By 1901, newly-arrived emigrants

⁷⁶ Edward Eugene Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees: An Odyssey of the Southwest” (Masters thesis, Saint Mary’s University, 1947), 57 (for description about the Chinese).

⁷⁷ Quoted in Bradford Luckingham, *The Urban Southwest: A Profile History of Albuquerque, El Paso, Phoenix, Tucson* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1982), 21.

⁷⁸ Ibid. See, e.g., Haiming Liu, *The Transnational History of a Chinese Family: Immigrant Letters, Family Business, and Reverse Migration* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 107; Manuel Lee Mancilla, *Viaje al corazón de la península: Testimonio de Manuel Lee Mancilla* [Journey to the heart of the peninsula: The testimonio of Manuel Lee Mancilla], ed. Maricela González Félix (Mexicali: Instituto de Cultura de Baja California, 2000), 43 (describing Mexican-Chinese relations and the presence of “Americans, Filipinos, Japanese and blacks” in

to El Paso such as Campbell White found themselves “quite blue,” for not only was the town full of people looking for work, but American day laborers found themselves “held down by the Mexican and the Chinaman to a dollar a day.”⁷⁹

Much of the migratory momentum from Mexico was the result of a particularly aggressive agenda to modernize the country by President Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911) and his supporters. After decades of civil unrest, Díaz’s ascendance to power in 1876 catapulted Mexico through a staggering rate of capitalist development and nation-state formation. With the rise of liberalism starting in the 1850s, elites designed programs to place the nation on what they believed were modern foundations for economic growth and political stability, leading most significantly to the liquidation and privatization of Church and communal village properties under the Ley Lerdo (1856).⁸⁰ In addition to commodifying land and labor, the Díaz regime focused relentlessly on building the national market and capital accumulation by appealing to foreign capitalists, protecting domestic capitalists with tax exemptions, encouraging domestic

Mexicali); Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 46-68 (describing black-Mexican relations in the borderlands). There has been an increased interest in Chinese-Mexican relations in the borderlands during the past decade, and recently published historical examinations include Robert Chao Romero, *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010); Grace Peña Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); and Julia Maria Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans: Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

⁷⁹ Gordon Campbell White Diary, February 3, 1901, vol. 5, p. 141, Pennington Papers, BLAC.

⁸⁰ Friedrich Katz, “The Liberal Republic and the Porfiriato, 1867-1910,” in *Mexico Since Independence*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 49; John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 258-67.

manufacturing, and developing communications and transport systems.⁸¹ A significant portion of energy went into encouraging foreign immigration, and officials promoted colonization schemes inviting Europeans and Americans to settle and cultivate Mexico's agricultural potential, particularly in the northern frontier territories of Sonora, Chihuahua, and Baja California, as well as along the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacífico Sur regions. European, American, and even Asian immigrants answered the call here as well: Mexico's immigrant population of 48,000 in 1895 steadily gained another 10,000 by 1900 and rose to 116,527 by 1910.⁸²

The Porfirian policy of privatizing land, privileging foreigners, and modernizing the country's transportation systems worked; as anthropologist Ana María Alonso notes, "The Porfiriato saw the first sustained economic growth in Mexico since the colonial period."⁸³ But at the same time, the rapid economic growth and the infiltration of American capital dramatically sped up the processes of land expropriation, reorganizing the economic geography of wealth and land ownership throughout the country. Wealth and resources were concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer families while over 90 percent of Mexicans were left landless by 1911, their communities destroyed, millions of Mexican *campesinos* alienated and struggling in rural

⁸¹ Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 126; Tinker Salas, *In the Shadow of the Eagles*, 139-48; Lister and Lister, *Chihuahua*, 173.

⁸² Moisés González Navarro, *Los extranjeros en México y los mexicanos en el extranjero, 1821-1970* [Foreigners in Mexico and Mexicans abroad, 1821-1970] (3 vols., México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1993), II, 122-34, 201. 60 colonies were established throughout the regions of Mexico during the Porfiriato, including twenty in the north, and with Chihuahua holding the most number of colonies. *Ibid.*, 134.

⁸³ Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 128.

poverty.⁸⁴ Forms of debt peonage and coercive labor practices increased heavily in the central and southern parts of the country, becoming more and more similar to overt slavery particularly in Mexico's Southeast. "Voluntary" contract workers were treated no differently from forced laborers deported to the region for their political opposition to the regime; laborers in the South were virtually prisoners working the fields in chains, overseen by armed men, and "locked up at night in a large shed to all intents and purposes," as U.S. representative John Lind reported after visiting a Veracruz sugar plantation.⁸⁵

On the northern frontier, however, suffering from sparse settlement, a chronic shortage of labor, fierce competition from mining, and the proximity of the United States, haciendas were compelled to provide better pay and labor conditions. It was the construction of the Mexican Central, however, and its higher wages and convenient transportation that initiated a sudden surge of northern migration. Not only did the railroads help to more closely tie regional elites to the central government and integrate the "peripheries" to a more consolidated nation-state, it also carried thousands of Mexican workers from the interior out towards the northern border. New settlements of railroad employees and their families literally mushroomed on the frontier as tracks were put down from Mexico City to Juárez, and small towns such as Torreón, grew in importance and population simply by virtue of their proximity to the railroad's path to the

⁸⁴ Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution*, 6; Katz, "The Liberal Republic and the Porfiriato," 94; Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 127-28. See also Daniel Nugent, *Spent Cartridges of Revolution: An Anthropological History of Namiquipa, Chihuahua* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Emilio Kourí, *A Pueblo Divided: Business, Property, and Community in Papantla, Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004). Land shortages and rural poverty were exacerbated by a significant population explosion between 1875 and 1910, during which time Mario García reports that the total population of Mexico increased by more than 50 percent. García, *Desert Immigrants*, 34.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Friedrich Katz, "Labor Conditions on Haciendas in Porfirian Mexico: Some Trends and Tendencies," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 54:1 (1974), 16-17. It should be noted that the sugar plantation was owned by an American.

border.⁸⁶ More importantly, as the final terminal of the Mexican Central Railroad, El Paso received thousands of Mexican immigrants coming from Chihuahua and the interior, and emerged the most prominent labor supply center for the Southwest, distributing newly arrived immigrants to workplaces throughout the Southwest and beyond.⁸⁷ An estimated sixty thousand Mexicans reportedly passed through Ciudad Juárez from 1902 to 1907.⁸⁸

The railroad thus transformed the northern landscape, throwing communities into upheaval as Mexicans from the interior overwhelmed under-resourced towns and villages in the North, and leaving many to struggle in an increasingly unstable and unpredictable economic environment. As early as May 1884, the U.S. consul in Juárez reported “Trouble on [the] Mexican Central Railway” and accounts of “hostility of inhabitants of Mexico to railroads”:

Since April 15th four accidents have happened: the first between Zacatecas and Agua Caliente, several rails were removed and several cars of the passenger train were derailed but nobody was seriously injured. As far as I can ascertain the track was torn up by some natives that had been discharged by Railway Co. These men were tempted by the higher wages paid by Railway Co. to leave

⁸⁶ Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 20-21.

⁸⁷ For El Paso as the Southwestern labor supply center and the work of labor contractors, see García, *Desert Immigrants*, 33, 51-63. See also George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 48, Table 6 (identifying El Paso as the most active port of entry for those Mexican adult male migrants who went on to Los Angeles).

⁸⁸ Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution*, 122. However, as Mario García noted, figures that attempt to numerically capture the movement of Mexicans across the border are faulty, as immigration officials failed to keep adequate records, and many Mexicans crossed and recrossed the frontier several times due to seasonal employment in the United States, while others crossed illegally and undetected at various points along the lengthy and unguarded desert boundary. García, *Desert Immigrants*, 35. Underreporting was a prevalent problem, for as the U.S. consul in Juárez admitted, “It is difficult for me to ascertain when laborers or immigrants leave this Consular District for the United States, as they can quietly and singly pass over one of the various bridges, or, a good part of the year, wade the Rio Grande.” A. J. Sampson to Josiah Quincy (Assistant Secretary of State), April 17, 1893, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Ciudad Juárez, M184, NARA/CP, reel 5.

the haciendas where they were employed. Upon discharge from Railway they returned to their former employers and sought work but were refused because they had gone to work for R. R. Co. In their ignorant way they blamed R. R. Co. for the position they thus found themselves and in revenge tore up some rails.⁸⁹

Others apparently placed rocks and timbers upon tracks with the intention of derailing passing trains, priests in some of the more remote smaller towns preached against the railroads and the foreigners, and hardly a train arrived at Juárez from the interior without broken windows or having had stones and gunfire thrown at them.⁹⁰ Left high and dry, with their communities and livelihood completely disrupted by the modern railroad economy introduced by Americans, many Mexican laborers sought their own brand of retributive justice, literally taking back their work in pieces and rails. Then they moved on.

The semi-agricultural and industrial laborer in the North thus found himself in a world heavily dependent on the industrial economy's cyclical fluctuations as well as agricultural uncertainties. The advantage of the North, however, was that work was still more diversified than elsewhere, ostensibly giving Mexican laborers different options and strategies to make a living. As Friedrich Katz explains, most of the time "[w]henver a recession or crisis occurred separately, the agricultural workers could always resort to another occupation. If the harvest was bad they could go to the mines, if there was no work to be found in mining they could go to the United States, and if the Americans offered no work they could go to an hacienda and try sharecropping."⁹¹ And while common laborers who remained in the interior continued to toil for

⁸⁹ Eugene Fechet to Second Assistant Secretary of State, May 13, 1884, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Ciudad Juárez, M184, NARA/CP, reel 2.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Katz, "Labor Conditions on Haciendas in Porfirian Mexico," 35.

\$.23 (U.S.) a day, those who could divorce themselves from the ties of land and village to join the expanding labor force in northern Mexico's railroad and mining camps found themselves earning \$.88 (U.S.) per day in urban centers like Juárez, while many took the extra northward step across the Rio Grande to make \$1.00 to \$1.50 per day.⁹² By 1905, labor contractors – both Mexicans and Americans living in Mexico – were offering Mexican laborers train tickets, \$5 advances, and “two dollars and a half in gold” to work for one year in places like Albuquerque, New Mexico, after which they could cash in a railroad ticket back home to Mexico. When caught at the El Paso border by immigration officials and suspected of being illegal contract laborers, they were instructed “to say that we were going in search of work and not to divulge any of the promises made,” and officials encountered great difficulties in picking out the contracted laborer from the body of Mexican immigrants crossing the border for permissible reasons.⁹³ Mobility and cross-border migration had become the trademark of the new Mexican

⁹² The labor shortage in Chihuahua was thereby a constant problem; a firm could import laborers from central Mexico only to lose them to U.S. employers. Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution*, 9; Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 20; García, *Desert Immigrants*, 34-35; Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 43-44. The momentum northward all the way to the border was no doubt accelerated by Chihuahua's desolating crop failures in the late-1870s, which resulted in starvation in some districts and brought commerce and mining throughout the state to a halt. Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution*, 27. From the U.S. side of the border, official immigration reports complained about seasonal migrant laborers entering the U.S. from Canada and Mexico, calling for prohibitive features against the “so-called ‘birds of passage,’ who make annual incursions into our labor fields with no intention of becoming a part of us, but come for the sole reason of a season's profitable work, wages here being, on an average, 40 per cent higher than in Canada and 100 per cent higher than in Mexico.” See, e.g., *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Immigration to the Secretary of the Treasury for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1892*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1892), 11.

⁹³ Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution*, 122; Thomas D. Edwards to Robert Racon, Assistant Secretary of State, November 25, 1905, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Ciudad Juárez, M184, NARA/CP, reel 6.

worker. Between 1900 and 1930, approximately 1.5 million Mexicans migrated to the United States, most settling in the Southwest.⁹⁴

For the Chinese immigrants who came to the El Paso-Juárez border, their migrations took a not altogether different path. Of course they came farther and their routes were usually trans-oceanic. Between 1840 and 1940, after U.S. trade reached across the Pacific in the mid-nineteenth century and established new steamship routes into the ports of Asia, more than 8 million Chinese followed the trail of capital and labor opportunities into Southeast Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Australia, and the Americas. Departing China was illegal until 1893, but that did not stop Chinese men and women from looking abroad to escape the distresses of famine, natural disasters, and political instability in China.⁹⁵ Many thus crossed sea and then land to find refuge and different opportunities in El Paso.

Chinese immigrants came east after first landing in California, spreading into Texas and across the South as they followed railroad work and Southern demands for “coolie” agricultural labor.⁹⁶ But many others also landed in Mexico; recruited by the Porfirian government and

⁹⁴ Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 18.

⁹⁵ Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 10-11; Erika Lee, “Defying Exclusion: Chinese Immigrants and Their Strategies During the Exclusion Era,” in *Chinese American Transnationalism: The Flow of People, Resources, and Ideas Between China and America During the Exclusion Era*, ed. Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 3; Evelyn Hu-DeHart, “Immigrants to a Developing Society: The Chinese in Northern Mexico, 1875-1932,” *Journal of Arizona History* 21 (Autumn 1980), 275; Romero, “The Dragon in Big Lusong,” 30. For additional information about China’s emigration policies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Carine Pina-Guerassimoff and Eric Guerassimoff, “The “Overseas Chinese”: The State and Emigration from the 1890s through the 1990s,” in *Citizenship and Those Who Leave: The Politics of Emigration and Expatriation*, ed. Nancy L. Green and François Weil (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 245-50.

⁹⁶ Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 153-63. See also Marilyn Dell Brady, *The Asian Texans* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 11. The literature on Chinese immigration to California during the exclusion era is voluminous, but more recent works

excluded from the United States after 1882, these Chinese immigrants would follow the channels of migration to the northern borderlands with their Mexican counterparts.

The first Chinese to be brought to Texas appear to have been a group of 250 or so contract laborers shipped to Calvert, Texas to work on the Houston & Texas Central Railroad in 1870; there were more Chinese in Calvert than there were in the whole state of New York at this time. To the railroad company's displeasure, many white planters and farmers in the South began to recruit Chinese workers away from the railroads, using Chinese laborers for agricultural work in the place of black men and women. In places like Hearne, Texas, post-bellum white farmers were in agreement that after working with "Laborers Freedman Convicts [sic] and Chinamen as renters . . . that Chinamen are preferable to either of the above classes. The Freedmen are indolent improvident [sic] . . . [and] the trouble is the young generation are almost worthless, unreliable as Laborers."⁹⁷ Still, despite the risk of losing some Chinese employees to southern farmers, the railroad companies continued to import Chinese laborers and *The El Paso Herald* reported in October 1881 that "Eight carloads of Chinamen passed Trinidad [Texas] this week bound for the railroad front in Texas."⁹⁸

that discuss it include Chan, *Chinese American Transnationalism*; Liu, *The Transnational History of a Chinese Family*; Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁹⁷ Irwin A. Tang, "The Chinese Texan Experiment," in *Asian Texans: Our Histories and Our Lives*, ed. Irwin A. Tang (Austin: The It Works, 2007), 26-28; Texas Manuscripts, Hearne, H. B., 1818 – , Hearne, Tex. [1887], BANC MSS P-O 91 (Bancroft Library, University of California at Berkeley).

⁹⁸ *El Paso Herald*, Oct. 5, 1881, 2.

Whether laborers on the railroad sent word back to communities in San Francisco and China about El Paso's burgeoning opportunities is not definitely known. But we do know that entrepreneurial Chinese began to trickle into early El Paso along with every other high-hoping speculator before the Southern Pacific ever raised its first depot station in the border town. In addition to engineering parties and railroad and building contractors, "two other new institutions, the Chinese laundry and the Chinese restaurant, came and remained as permanent features of the town."⁹⁹ The numbers of Chinese increased dramatically, however, once the trains arrived; it has been claimed that at least one-thousand Chinese laborers were left unemployed in El Paso by the Southern Pacific alone, and as other railroad companies completed their lines, more and more laid-off Chinese laborers began to drift along the tracks back to El Paso.¹⁰⁰

By 1883, the impact of Chinese immigration eastward into the Southwest and Texas was clearly perceptible. As Mickle wrote:

The Mongolian is arriving every day, and is a very important factor in the city's future, as he furnishes domestic servants. But for him this place would be bad off for menials. White servants cannot be had and could hardly be brought here, and Mexicans will never serve among the Americans unless you speak Spanish, and then they are poor at best. But John is ever willing for money. Some of the best eating I have had since I left San Antonio has been prepared by Chinese cooks. They have quite a number of stores, and more immigrants are arriving on almost every train. They are turning their attention to agricultural pursuits, and are renting irrigable lands on both sides of the river, and in a few years the

⁹⁹ White, *Out of the Desert*, 131.

¹⁰⁰ Anna Louise Fahy, "Chinese Borderland Community Development: A Case Study of El Paso, 1881-1909" (Masters thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 2001), 35 fn. 16, 38, 39. W. H. Timmons claims that there were at least 1,600 Chinese laborers employed by the Southern Pacific to construct this line. Timmons, *El Paso*, 166. Some of these Chinese worked and died with the Southern Pacific: "Allegedly, the graves of many Chinese laborers lie along the Southern Pacific track in far West Texas towns like Marfa and Alpine." Brady, *The Asian Texans*, 12-14.

onions and vegetables of El Paso will be no small item of her wealth.¹⁰¹

Signs bearing names such as “Soo Wah, Sun Lee, Hop Woo and Ah Sin” were hung up all over the town, and the Chinese were soon considered the leading competitor in railroad, laundry, cooking, and agricultural work, as well as in “sporting” activities, on both sides of the border. Chinese boardinghouses, barbershops, and restaurants were unavoidable, and Chinese doctors advertised their services to the larger community. Some Chinese, such as Sam Hing, were quite successful and influential in the larger community. In 1892, the U.S. consul was apparently embroiled in some personal financial lending trouble that led back to Hing, and for which he was required to report to the State Department:

I do not now and never did owe Sam Hing one cent. The facts are he had money to loan and I could use \$100.00 to advantage, but he would not loan it to me. He loaned it to a Chinaman (as I suppose) by name of Ah Yee. At least Ah Yee loaned me \$100.00, for which I gave him a note and which I paid \$60.00 July 6th 1892 and the balance July 22nd 1892.¹⁰²

In the markets, in the fields, in the gambling halls, and behind the official doors of El Paso and Juárez – there was no space where the “pig-tailed, blue-clad figures” could not be found.¹⁰³ As carload upon carload full of “Chinamen” continued to unload in El Paso, some cried out, “Are the Caucassians [sic] to be overwhelmed by the Mongolian Heathen?”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Mickle, “El Paso, The Future Immense,” *San Antonio Daily Express*, February 4, 1883.

¹⁰² White, *Out of the Desert*, 155-56; A. J. Sampson to William F. Wharton, Assistant Secretary of State, January 7, 1892, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Ciudad Juárez, M184, NARA/CP, reel 5. For examples of Chinese physicians advertising in the daily newspaper, see *El Paso Herald*, July 31, 1899; January 11, 1904, 4.

¹⁰³ White, *Out of the Desert*, 155-56; Brady, *The Asian Texans*, 15.

¹⁰⁴ *El Paso Herald*, October 5, 1881, 2.

The influx of Chinese immigration into El Paso was unnerving for some, but it is not surprising that El Paso might echo some of the virulent anti-Chinese sentiment of California, since Californians were so well-represented in the white immigration to the region and anti-Chinese rhetoric had spread to a national level. There were demands made in local newspapers for the Chinese in El Paso to “be centered and forced to remain in a given locality” for reasons of public health and property values, but it does not appear that any such plan for segregation came into effect.¹⁰⁵ Nor were they targeted for economic boycotts and exclusion from city limits, and in these respects the prejudice that Chinese immigrants encountered in El Paso differed from that found in other parts of the Southwest. It never quite reached the institutional levels established elsewhere in Arizona, for example, where miners established “white man’s camps” to exclude Mexicans and Chinese from certain districts. From the 1860s well into the 1920s, Bisbee forbade any Chinese from living or working in the district, and Chinese truck farmers could sell their produce in town so long as they left by sundown. In areas such as Tombstone and Silver City (New Mexico), where Chinese were permitted to live and set up businesses, they were still beleaguered by economic boycotts and threatened by anti-Chinese campaigns and political activities that called for their removal.¹⁰⁶

In El Paso, on the other hand, it seemed to white Americans as if Chinese immigrants were being given free reign over the region’s resources. One *Herald* editorial complained that “[a] good many residents complain of dull times, but it is noticeable that no such complaint comes from the Mongolians in our midst. The heathen Mongolian seems to be the cherished and special favorite of those who have labor to give . . .” The next day, the same paper warned that

¹⁰⁵ See, e.g., *El Paso Herald*, February 5, 1889; February 7, 1889, 2; February 8, 1889, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Benton-Cohen, *Borderline Americans*, 71-78, 82-83. See also *Lone Star*, November 28, 1885, 2; December 2, 1885, 2.

“[i]t is not probably that the time is near at hand when we shall have a heathen Chinese for lord mayor, but there is little doubt but what our affluent Asiatic neighbors are nurturing sinister designs in that direction. The ease with which they have been permitted to corner certain pursuits and grow rich and populous gives them the right to indulge in the most hopeful expectations.”¹⁰⁷ Conditions for economic advancement thus appear to have been somewhat favorable for Chinese immigrants in El Paso, which soon became, as some asserted,

[T]he Chinese Mecca of the southwest. The pig tails flock here from every direction, feeling sure that they will be liberally patronized and that they will not be financially hampered by the industrious American woman. The policy here is to throw everything in the way of the imported heathen and let the deserving American whistle, so to speak.¹⁰⁸

At least it seemed the only explanation that local observers had for El Paso’s special status for Chinese immigrants.

Ignoring the xenophobic sentiments expressed in the above quotation, Chinese immigration in the borderlands was undeniably heavier and more intense in the 1890s than it had ever been. For the circulation of Chinese immigrants moving along the east-west plane of the American South and Southwest was augmented now by a significant vein of Chinese migration appearing in Mexico, the result of a strategy that the Porfirian Mexican government adopted after failing to convince enough European and Americans to invest their capital by actually immigrating to sparsely-populated areas of Mexico and establishing colonies. The diplomatic official Matías Romero pushed for recruiting Chinese colonists as early as 1875, pointing to “[t]he great population of that vast empire, the fact that many of them are agriculturists, the

¹⁰⁷ *El Paso Herald*, February 7, 1889, 2; February 8, 1889, 2.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, February 5, 1889, 2.

relatively low wages they earn, and the proximity of our coast to Asia.” It also helped that the Chinese, according to Romero, bore a comfortable resemblance to “the original race of our Indians.” “This is not an idle dream,” he continued, “Chinese immigration has been going on for years, and wherever it has occurred prudently, the results have been favorable.”¹⁰⁹ For elites fashioning Mexico’s modernization, the United States – one of the places in which Chinese immigration had “occurred prudently” and with favorable results – provided a tempting model. Indeed, some insisted on adopting American economic ways, expertise, and technology, rationalizing that “by Americanizing ourselves, we Mexicanize ourselves more and more.”¹¹⁰ Supposedly docile, cheap, and exploitable, the Chinese were thus pinned as ideal for the railroad workforce in Mexico as well, and large numbers of Chinese already in the southwestern United States were recruited by the Mexican Central to build the railroad linking Ciudad Juárez to Mexico City. Governor Terrezas may have driven the first spike in Juárez in 1881, but once the ceremonies were over it took the work of imported laborers, including large numbers of Chinese, to finish the road three years later.¹¹¹

Chinese immigration to Mexico and the borderlands really came to fruition, however, when the United States banned Chinese labor immigration with the 1882 Exclusion Act and

¹⁰⁹ Romero quote from Kennett Cott, “Mexican Diplomacy and the Chinese Issue, 1876-1910,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 67:1 (1987), 65. For more on early Chinese immigration efforts, see González Navarro, *Los extranjeros en México*, II, 43; José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo, *El movimiento antichino en México: Problemas del racismo y del nacimiento durante la Revolución Mexicana* [The anti-Chinese movement in Mexico: Problems of racism and its origins during the Mexican Revolution] (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1991), 41-53; Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 13-15, 32-35.

¹¹⁰ *La Constitución*, June 4, 1881, 4, quoted in Tinker Salas, *In the Shadow of the Eagles*, 132.

¹¹¹ Robert H. Duncan, “The Chinese and the Economic Development of Northern Baja California, 1889-1929,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 74:4 (1994), 617; Lister and Lister, *Chihuahua*, 174-75.

thereby diverted some of the immigrant flow to Mexico. Threatened by the economic progress of recent Chinese immigrants, workers in California and opportunistic politicians were finally successful in their push for Chinese exclusion.¹¹² Passed in 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act, otherwise known as the nation's first racist immigration law, barred all Chinese laborers from entering the United States and denied Chinese immigrants the right of naturalized citizenship.¹¹³

¹¹² Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home*, 57-65. For the role of politicians, see Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

¹¹³ Chinese Exclusion Act, May 6, 1882 (22 Stat. 58); Lee, *At America's Gates*, 2-4; Edward P. Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy, 1798-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 430; Lucy E. Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 7-23 (describing the role of race theory and nativism in the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882). Only merchants, teachers, students, diplomats, and travelers were "exempt" from exclusion. Later acts of Congress renewed and strengthened the 1882 Act. In 1884, Congress passed a bill excluding Chinese laborers arriving from any foreign country and not just China. In 1888, Congress further restricted Chinese immigration by excluding returning Chinese laborers from entering the country unless he had "a lawful wife, child, or parent in the United States, or had property or debts due him worth at least \$1,000." The Scott Act also "nullified 20,000 return certificates already granted and immediately denied entrance to returning Chinese laborers." The Geary Act in 1892 renewed the exclusion of Chinese laborers for another ten years, and in 1904 the Chinese Exclusion Act was again extended but this time without any time constraints. Lee, *At America's Gates*, 45-46. Chinese exclusion remained a permanent part of U.S. immigration policy until it was officially repealed in 1943, after the United States allied itself with China during World War II and Washington buckled under the hypocrisy of the exclusion laws. It should be noted, however, that the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Acts did not open any floodgate. The annual quota of 105 that Congress established for Chinese immigration betrayed, as Mae Ngai points out, "Congress's continued antipathy towards Chinese migration" since, unlike any other immigration quota, it applied to all Chinese persons regardless of their country of birth or residence. Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton University Press, 2004), 203. With the term "Chinese persons" further defined as "persons who are of as much as one-half Chinese blood," the racial quota for Chinese also reached those persons of mixed-descent and national origin. *Wagio Kong Tjauw Wong v. P. A. Esperdy*, 214 F. Supp. 264 (S.D.N.Y. 1963), 265. See also Mae M. Ngai, "Legacies of Exclusion: Illegal Chinese Immigration during the Cold War Years," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18:1 (1998), 29, fn. 16; Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 36-38. There would be no significant immigration of Chinese persons until the reform of U.S. immigration policies in 1965.

Legislated exclusion, however, was by no means a complete barrier to Chinese migration, and as much as it was a legislative “watershed” in U.S. immigration history, more Chinese gained legal admission into the United States from 1882 to 1943 than during the pre-exclusion era, from 1849 to 1882. Moreover, those denied legal entry at San Francisco or other coastal ports of entry found another way, entering the United States through what Erika Lee has described as “the back doors” of Canada and Mexico.¹¹⁴

Word spread too that China had entered negotiations with Mexico “in order to create a vast current of immigration” between the two countries.” The resultant 1899 China-Mexico Treaty of Amity and Commerce encouraged Chinese settlement in Mexico by completely opening the doors of Mexico to Chinese immigration. With its guarantee of “free and voluntary movement” between Mexico and China and the assurance that Chinese immigrants enjoyed the same legal rights as Mexican nationals, they found expanding economic opportunities and political conditions preferable to that of the United States.¹¹⁵ In mines, railroad projects, and farming, work was readily available and competition minimized as Mexicans in turn sought better pay opportunities north in the United States. While fewer than 1,000 Chinese were living in Mexico in 1895, by 1930 their number grew to almost 18,000, concentrated mainly in the northern frontier states.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Lee, *At America's Gates*, 12, 151.

¹¹⁵ *El Ciudadano*, May 14, 1892, 4; Romero, “The Dragon in Big Lusong,” 48-51; Duncan, “The Chinese and the Economic Development of Northern Baja California,” 616-17; James R. Curtis, “Mexicali’s Chinatown,” *Geographical Review* 85:3 (1995), 337; Hu-DeHart, “Immigrants to a Developing Society,” 277.

¹¹⁶ Gómez Izquierdo, *El movimiento antichino en Mexico*, 55-64; Raymond B. Craib, “Chinese Immigrants in Porfirian Mexico: A Preliminary Study of Settlement, Economic Activity and Anti-Chinese Sentiment,” *The Latin American Institute Research Paper Series* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1996), 7-8; Curtis, “Mexicali’s Chinatown,” 337; Evelyn Hu-DeHart, “Racism and Anti-Chinese Persecution in Sonora, Mexico, 1876-1932,” *Amerasia*

The proximity of the border, however, remained a big lure and enticed many Chinese laborers with the image of crossing easily into the United States. In fact, a lucrative business was built around the organized trafficking of Chinese into the United States through Mexico, and smuggling agents thrived in an elaborate black market of counterfeit papers that extended from China to Mexico, Cuba, New York, New Orleans, and San Francisco.¹¹⁷ The railroads, however, made El Paso the favored point of destination for Chinese immigrants, since all railroad travel between the United States and Mexico went through El Paso-Juárez. Some in El Paso asked aloud whether any steps were being taken “to prevent the wholesale immigration of Chinese to the United States via the Mexican frontier,” noting in particular the magnetic pull that the border and El Paso especially seemed to exercise on Chinese immigrants, and warning:

The Chinese population of El Paso seems to increase as time rolls on. When they begin to come over the Mexican border in herds and droves, as they will if something is not done to prevent them, there will be a howl from the natives in this neck o’ the woods

Journal 9:2 (1982), 3; García, *Desert Immigrants*, 33-36. By 1910, Sonora had the largest Chinese population in all of Mexico. Craib, “Chinese Immigrants in Porfirian Mexico,” 9.

¹¹⁷ Additional details and analysis of Chinese immigration practices through Mexican and at the border are provided in chapter three of this dissertation. Baja California, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Sinaloa, Sonora, and Tamaulipas had the highest concentration of Chinese immigrants in Mexico. Roberto Ham Chande, “La migración china hacia México a través del Registro Nacional de Extranjeros” [“Chinese migration to Mexico through the National Register of Foreigners”], in Ota Mishima, *Destino México*, 179. See also Robert Chao Romero, “Transnational Chinese Immigrant Smuggling to the United States via Mexico and Cuba, 1882-1916,” *Ameriasia Journal* 30:3 (2004/2005), 1-16; Clifford Alan Perkins, *Border Patrol: With the U.S. Immigration Service on the Mexican Boundary, 1910-1954* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1978), 12, 44-46; Romero, “The Dragon in Big Lusong”, 91-97; Grace Delgado, “In the Age of Exclusion: Race, Region and Chinese Identity in the Making of the Arizona-Sonora Borderlands, 1863-1943” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2000), 207; Grace Peña Delgado, “At Exclusion’s Southern Gate: Changing Categories of Race and Class Among Chinese Fronterizos, 1882-1904,” in Truett and Young, *Continental Crossroads*, 198; Lee, “Enforcing the Borders,” 59-63.

which will be heard distinctly from the “Halls of the Montezumas” to Washington.¹¹⁸

The case files of those Chinese immigrants who reached El Paso but were captured by border immigration officials and detained for violating the exclusion acts reveal that many planned to move on immediately, using El Paso as the transit exchange point for other destinations, including San Francisco, Chicago, St. Louis, New York, and Boston. We can only guess as to how many other Chinese men and women were successful in crossing the border, and where they decided to head on the next train out.

Not surprisingly, the increased foot traffic of Chinese migration through the Pass helped to establish a sizeable Chinese community in El Paso, and the largest in Texas. On January 1, 1882, the *El Paso Times* reported 500 Chinese present in the city with a total population of 2800, with 1600 Americans, 600 Mexicans, and 100 “colored.” Over the next five decades, the number of Chinese counted in El Paso’s population enumerations would range from the low hundreds to one thousand.¹¹⁹ All the while, the number of Chinese immigrants arriving at Juárez from China and through Mexico’s interior were beginning to swell the Mexican city’s population. The U.S. consul in Juárez reported in late-December, 1898, that the *El Paso Times* had printed that “five hundred Chinamen are idle in [Juárez] and watching for an opportunity to gain entrance to the United States.” Although he suspected some exaggeration as to the exact number of Chinese in Juárez, Kindrick confirmed that “it is undoubtedly true there are a great

¹¹⁸ *Lone Star*, February 7, 1885, 3.

¹¹⁹ *El Paso Times*, January 1, 1882, p. 2, quoted in Irwin A. Tang and Anna L. Fahy, “Chinese El Paso, 1881-1941,” in Tang, *Asian Texans*, 53-54.

many, and that their object in remaining here is to gain admission to the United States.”¹²⁰ By 1904, the *El Paso Herald* warned that “[i]f this Chinese immigration to Mexico continues it will be necessary to run a barb wire along our side of the Rio Grande.”¹²¹

If the Chinese were coming to Juárez in hopes of crossing into the United States, African Americans were heading to El Paso for the freedoms it promised, in part, based on its proximity to Mexico and the American Southwest. Free African Americans seeking an escape from the growing restrictions on black rights in the Northeast and South during the antebellum years looked not only to the “racial frontier” of the West, as historian Quintard Taylor put it, but also began to imagine alternative racial dynamics in Mexico. Missouri farmer George Washington Bush may have caught “Oregon fever” in the 1840s, uprooting his family for the westward migration, but he vowed at the same time that “if he could not have a free man’s rights [in Oregon], he would seek the protection of the Mexican Government in California or New Mexico.”¹²²

The international border held an even more special significance for enslaved African Americans, whose “fugitive” footprints carved an underground railroad across Texas to freedom

¹²⁰ Charles W. Kindrick to David J. Hill, Assistant Secretary of State, December 28, 1898, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Ciudad Juárez, M184, NARA/CP, reel 6. This image is in stark contrast to a government count in 1894 of Chinese nationals [“súbditos chinos”], which reported only 22 Chinese men and 2 women in Ciudad Juárez, most of whom could be found near the Central Mexican Railroad station. Report of Alberto Vargas, April 6, 1894, MF 513, Part 2, Roll 74, Book 2, Frame 255-56, Ciudad Juárez Municipal Archives, MF 513 (C. L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, University of Texas at El Paso). See also Chester Chope, interviewed by Wilma Cleveland, July 27, 1968, Transcript no. 27, *El Paso History* (Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso), 13 (for statement that Chinese in Juárez came directly from China through Mexico, and were not like earlier Chinese immigrants who came with railroad work).

¹²¹ *El Paso Herald*, January 11, 1904, 4.

¹²² Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998), 81-82.

in Mexico where slavery was banned and locals often resisted slaveholder efforts to retrieve runaway slaves. The slave population of Texas grew steadily between 1821 and 1865, as bondsmen migrated into Eastern Texas with their owners and slave traders aboard coastal ships from New Orleans, on riverboats up the Red River, or by land on wagons and on foot. The 1860 census reported 182,556 slaves in Texas, a figure that was outnumbered by the influx of “refugeed” slaveowners and their slaves pouring into Texas from neighboring states during the Civil War. Some would go farther southwest, only this time they went without their masters. The dangers were many on this perilous route to freedom – the pursuit by heavily armed slave-hunting parties, the unknown terrain, the threat of attack by nomadic Comanches or Apaches – and yet thousands of slaves were able to reach shelter in Mexico by 1851, where they were welcomed and experienced for the first time a more racially-open environment.¹²³ Ex-slaves from Texas such as Felix Haywood remembered the fugitive path to Mexico in assured terms, recalling,

There was no reason to *run* up north. All we had to do was to *walk*, but walk south, and we’d be free as soon as we crossed the Rio Grande. In Mexico you could be free. They didn’t care what

¹²³ Ibid., 54, 60-61; Alwyn Barr, *Black Texans: A History of African Americans in Texas, 1528-1995*, 2nd ed. (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 15-17, 29-32; Ronnie C. Tyler, “Fugitive Slaves in Mexico,” *Journal of Negro History* 57:1 (1972), 1, 3. See also Sean Kelley, “‘Mexico in His Head’: Slavery and the Texas-Mexico Border, 1810-1860,” *Journal of Social History* 37:3 (2004), 709-23. By 1855, more than four thousand black fugitives were estimated as having fled to northern Mexico, at a value of more than \$3.2 million. Horne, *Black and Brown*, 16. Mexico’s opposition to slavery and its more relaxed racial attitudes attracted at least one attempt by Benjamin Lundy, a white abolitionist, and Nicholas Drouett, a mulatto, to establish a colony of free blacks in Texas during the 1830s. Their efforts were shelved with the outbreak of the Texas Revolution. Barr, *Black Texans*, 5-6. Although it produced a constituency of almost unanimously pro-Southern Anglos during the Civil War, antebellum El Paso only had a few slaveholders. It has been argued that the pro-Southern support was based not on any commitment to the institution of slavery but rather because enterprising Anglo El Pasoans identified Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederate States, with designs for a southern transcontinental route, from which El Paso with its strategic location as the “continental crossroads” had everything to gain. Timmons, *El Paso*, 147

color you were, black, white, yellow, or blue. Hundreds of slaves did go to Mexico and got on all right. We would hear about them and how they were going to be Mexicans. They brought up their children to speak only Mexican.¹²⁴

The route to freedom proved so enticing that some owners and pro-slavery sympathizers complained in the 1850s, “Something must be done for the protection of slave property in this state [of Texas]. Negroes are running off daily.”¹²⁵ Once the Civil War began, even more slaves sought emancipation across the water of the Rio Grande, aided by sympathetic Mexicans; as ex-slave Jacob Branch described, “The Mexicans rigged up flatboats out in the middle of the river, tied stakes with rope. When the colored people got to the rope they could pull themselves across the rest of the way on those boats.” Despite the best efforts of slaveowners, “plenty of slaves got through anyway.”¹²⁶

Following the war, the prospect of migrating to Mexico lost its appeal among the emancipated men and women, who were now less restricted in their movements within the United States. Despite the rise of anti-black violence and terror that accompanied Reconstruction, African Americans embraced the prospect of a more racially democratic future for Texas, and for a brief period in the 1870s exercised a significant political voice in state governance along with white Unionists.¹²⁷ But others defined freedom through migration. As ex-slave Austin Grant recalled, only one black family remained with his previous owner, “the

¹²⁴ Ron Tyler and Lawrence R. Murphy, eds., *The Slave Narratives of Texas* (Austin: State House Press, 1997), 69.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Horne, *Black and Brown*, 17.

¹²⁶ Tyler and Murphy, eds., *The Slave Narratives of Texas*, 101.

¹²⁷ For discussion of Reconstruction and black political activity in Texas, see Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 69-94; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 106-13.

rest was just like birds, they just flew.” Felix Haywood recalled that “Nobody took our homes, but right off colored folks started on the move. They seemed to want to get closer to freedom, so they knew what it was – like it was a place or a city.”¹²⁸ Almost immediately following their emancipation, African Americans throughout the South and in Texas thus began to walk, looking for better work, searching for family members who had been torn away from them, and hoping to find a place where they could more effectively define their newly won rights.¹²⁹

Many African American men sought opportunities to test the boundaries of their freedom further west, working first in the less-settled frontier as cowboys and Buffalo Soldiers and then eventually settling down nearby. The grandfather of Frances Hills, a long-time El Pasoan, came to Texas after the Civil War in search of his mother, whom he found in Wharton along with his future wife. After serving in the U.S. army as an Indian scout in the 1870s, he decided to settle his family in El Paso.¹³⁰ Racial tensions existed between blacks and whites in the “Wild West,” but often the perils of Indian attacks and the isolated environment required an interracial cooperation that made the discrimination of the open plains dramatically different from the workplace racism of Southern and east Texan plantations. Black soldiers in particular found expansive opportunities for redefining their freedom in the West, gaining through their military experiences not only adventure but also education, better chances at landing a good government

¹²⁸ Tyler and Murphy, eds., *The Slave Narratives of Texas*, 113.

¹²⁹ On post-emancipation migration, see Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 292-335; Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 317-63.

¹³⁰ Frances Hills, interviewed by Charlotte Ivy, October 12, 1985, Transcript no. 751, Black Community of El Paso (Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso), 1-2.

job, pride in their roles as defenders of national interests and symbols of authority, and the courage to press for their civil and equal rights.¹³¹

As the promises of Reconstruction failed to produce the freedoms they once hoped for, more and more black men and women began to imagine “exodus” movements, and many now followed the steady stream of people heading northward and westward, some testing the grounds in Texas where they would find wages double those in Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee, and others moving on even further. Between 1880 and 1900, the black population of Texas grew from 393,384 to 620,722, making Texas by far the largest black state in the western states and territories.¹³² Cities provided blacks more personal freedom, and attracted more and more black workers to abandon Southern agriculture, especially as the restrictions and violence of Jim Crow came to prevail throughout the South.¹³³ Black women were just as likely to migrate to the cities

¹³¹ Following the Civil War, among the first troops stationed at Fort Bliss were two companies of the 125th United States Colored Troops, stationed there to help clear out Indians and string telegraph wire across miles and miles of sparsely settled land. Garna L. Christian, “The El Paso Racial Crisis of 1900,” in *The African American Experience in Texas: An Anthology*, ed. Bruce A. Glasrud and James M. Smallwood (Lubbock, Tex.: Texas Tech University Press, 2007), 153. For more on African American military history as Buffalo Soldiers, see William H. Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Black Cavalry in the West*, rev. ed. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003); Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 164-91; Horne, *Black and Brown*; Ron Field and Alexander Bielakowski, *Buffalo Soldiers: African American Troops in the U.S. Forces, 1866-1945* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 2008). See also Paul H. Carlson, “William R. Shafter: Commanding Black Troops in West Texas,” in Glasrud and Smallwood, *The African American Experience in Texas*, 125-37 (describing the career of a white officer in command of black troops). On black cowboys and cattle ranchers, see Michael N. Searles, “In Search of the Black Cowboy in Texas,” in Glasrud and Smallwood, *The African American Experience in Texas*, 86-101; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 156-60.

¹³² Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 135. In addition to the well-known Liberia and Kansas emigration movements, there were some attempts to establish an emigrant African-American colony in Mexico, such as that of William H. Ellis. See Karl Jacoby, “Between North and South: The Alternative Borderlands of William H. Ellis and the African American Colony of 1895,” in Truett and Young, *Continental Crossroads*, 209-39.

¹³³ Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 483.

as men, journeying by foot from rural areas to find work opportunities in urban cities mostly limited to domestic chores.¹³⁴

As was the case for countless other immigrants to El Paso, the railroad was a large draw for African American men and their families. Some found positions as day-coach porters running the 300 miles between El Paso and Tucson, Albuquerque, and Sanderson; others worked as Pullman porters working the longer runs to California; and still others were employed in a variety of functions on the train as well as off, working as brakemen, dining-car waiters, rail yard laborers and cleaners, repairmen, and boilermakers.¹³⁵ Despite the drawbacks of railroad service work – including the long, hard hours, the relegation of black men to servile occupations, the discriminatory bars to promotion, and the countless racial disgraces they had to suffer from white passengers and co-workers – African Americans found work as porters and waiters relatively remunerative and secure. As one Pullman porter explained, railroad work gave them a “chance to meet people and see the country, and the opportunity to make a living in a pleasant way.”¹³⁶

For black railroad workers and passengers, the railroads also provided a locomotive lesson in Jim Crow and racism in the United States. For it was at El Paso that black men and women were forced to move to the Jim Crow car, usually positioned behind the dirty coal car and closest to the noisy engine, with no sleeping facilities for its passengers. If black travelers were allowed to eat in the dining car shared with whites, they were separated by a curtain. Black and white passengers who might have developed a friendship on the ride east from Los Angeles

¹³⁴ Tera Hunter describes the domestic labor experiences of black women in Reconstruction Atlanta in Tera W. Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 21-35.

¹³⁵ Charlotte Ivy, “Forgotten Color: Black Families in Early El Paso,” *Password* 35:1 (1990), 7.

¹³⁶ Eric Arnesen, *Brotherhoods of Color: Black Railroad Workers and the Struggle for Equality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 23.

would also find themselves forced into different cabins at El Paso. As Ralph Smith, a black porter with the Southern Pacific during Jim Crow, recalled, there were many times when he had to direct a black passenger to move to the Jim Crow car at El Paso, and “the white [friend] would rise up about it.” No wonder, then, that “many blacks who traveled southeast from Western states . . . saw El Paso as the gateway to segregation.”¹³⁷

Conversely, however, that suggests that for many African Americans traveling westward, El Paso also offered a gateway to freedom, a point of relief where the Jim Crow coach disappeared from the railroad tracks and black men and women could move about with fewer restrictions. Its symbolism as the middle ground of Jim Crow was reflected in the city’s own racial dynamics at the turn of the century, when some Jim Crow laws were enacted but apparently not rigorously enforced. To be clear, El Paso did not escape the pervasive racial ideologies of white supremacy found elsewhere in the United States, and African Americans in El Paso were often relegated to the lower economic stratum occupied by other Mexican and Chinese immigrants, usually as manual laborers and in the service sector. Although there was an active black middle class comprised of a few professionals, such as physicians, ministers, teachers, and business owners, most of the black residents in El Paso worked in the service sector as domestic workers, porters, and waiters.¹³⁸ Black families were also segregated for schooling,

¹³⁷ Ivy, “Forgotten Color,” 8; *El Paso Herald Post*, February 28, 1992, 32.

¹³⁸ Hine, *Black Victory*, 113; Ivy, “Forgotten Color,” 11, 13. Many histories of black El Paso often point in celebration to the success story of John Woods, one of the earliest affluent black men in El Paso, who came to own a blacksmith shop, a bar, a stage line, a grocery store, a saloon in Juárez, and a boarding house which he rented out as landlord to white boarders. See, e.g., Timmons, *El Paso*, 189. W. W. Mills described how his landlord, “John Woods, colored,” saved his life one night from an apparent murder attempt by a liquor smuggler. Mills, *Forty Years at El Paso*, 165. When his wife, Mary Woods, died, she left an estate estimated by some to be valued at \$160,000. But as Marilyn Bryan has suggested, Woods experienced growing financial difficulties starting in the 1880s, as evidenced by tax and debt problems, which Bryan links to the increase in the white population of El Paso in the 1880s. Marilyn T. Bryan, “The Economic,

churches, and benevolent associations, as well as for many recreational spaces such as theaters and restaurants. As long-time resident Francis Hills explained, in a telling way, “Of course there has always been separation. I don’t mean to imply that there wasn’t because, of course, the white people have established the black church, this kind of thing.”¹³⁹ African Americans still bristled under the racial constraints they experienced in El Paso, which “made us realize that even though we were in El Paso, we were Black.”¹⁴⁰

At the same time, Mrs. Hills recalled that although the streetcars were technically segregated between white and black passengers, many “somewhat ignored the fact that possibly blacks were sitting in areas where they [weren’t] supposed to sit.”¹⁴¹ The practices of Jim Crow were much more muted than in the deep South, as she realized when she left El Paso to attend college in Alabama:

I just couldn’t believe that I couldn’t go into the same bathroom and I couldn’t drink from the same water fountain downtown when I attended college in Alabama. It was terrible!! On the way there it was very highly segregated at that time. Even if you saw a place to get gas, you’d better be careful going in to get it. If you saw a place that said “Restroom for Colored,” then you get your gas and were probably welcome. That might not be the case somewhere else.

There were important things like going into stores and trying on clothes and purchasing what you wanted. There was no segregation regarding that in El Paso, but in Alabama and Georgia

Political, and Social Status of the Negro in El Paso,” *Password* 13:3 (1968), 75-78. And his ultimately unwitnessed and suspicious death at the hands of a policeman who was later released suggests that perhaps racial tensions were significant enough to motivate at least some violence against black men and women in El Paso.

¹³⁹ Frances Hills interview, 19.

¹⁴⁰ Maceo C. Dailey, Jr. and Kristine Navarro, eds., *Wheresoever My People Chance to Dwell: Oral Interviews with African American Women of El Paso* (Baltimore: Imprint Edition, 2000), 94.

¹⁴¹ Frances Hills interview, 18.

it was often prohibited for African Americans. . . . There were so many things that were somewhat liberal as far as El Paso was concerned.¹⁴²

Compared to other places in Texas and the South with heavily-segregated and terrorized black populations, El Paso thus seemed more accommodating for African Americans. As another black El Paso resident, Drusilla Nixon, explained, “You know, back in some of those towns you couldn’t raise your voice about a thing because if you did, you’d get lynched. That’s how my husband came to El Paso, because of a lynching right in front of his office [in Cameron, Texas]. He just packed his things up and came out to El Paso.”¹⁴³ When the Nixons subsequently moved into a house in the neighboring town of Ysleta, their impressions of a more accepting community were further confirmed:

All the time we were thinking, “My, my. When these people discover who we are, are we going to have any trouble?” You know, you had that kind of feeling. So we were just about to finish the house and the telephone rang and the woman said, “Is this Mrs. Nixon?” I said, “Yes.” “The Mrs. Nixon who’s building a house on Pendale?” I said, “Yes it is.” And I thought, “Here it comes, here it comes.” And she said, “Well, I’m your next door neighbor.” And I just held my breath. And she said, “I’m calling to tell you how glad we are that you’re going to be our neighbors.” And she just talked. And really, when she finished talking, the tears were just rolling down my cheeks. I couldn’t believe it.¹⁴⁴

It could be that the relatively small population of African Americans in El Paso offered little incentive for white residents to enforce white supremacy through violent repression and control. The size of the black community continuously fluctuated with the comings and goings

¹⁴² Dailey and Navarro, *Wheresoever My People Chance to Dwell*, 92.

¹⁴³ Drusilla Nixon, interviewed by Sarah E. John and Oscar J. Martínez, December 11, 1975, Transcript no. 194, Bicentennial (Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso), 18.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

of emigrants and black soldiers stationed at Fort Bliss, right outside city limits. But by the turn of the century, there were 473 African Americans in El Paso, in addition to 124 black men and their families residing at Fort Bliss; by 1910, the black population of 1,400 made up less than four percent of the county.¹⁴⁵ At the same time, the diverse urban and cosmopolitan features of boom-time El Paso may have diluted some of the anti-black prejudices and hostilities that Southern whites brought to the border. At least it seemed so for some black settlers such as Mrs. Nixon, who believed that El Paso was more racially relaxed “because people were here from all over the country. It wasn’t an old-time Southern town where they had been used to complete separation.”¹⁴⁶ The presence of Mexicans and Chinese immigrants may have also served as a racial distraction; indeed, it was not uncommon for newspapers to rail against Chinese immigrants while reporting more benignly about how, for example, a number of “our colored boys” performed a musical combination to the appreciation of the mayor and the neighborhood, or about a “young maid who, although dark-complexioned, is yet fair to gaze upon . . . In fact,” *The El Paso Daily Herald* reported somewhat facetiously, “it is boldly asserted that among her admirers the color line is not at all times drawn in accordance with the fourteenth

¹⁴⁵ Compare *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Texas, El Paso County; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Special Census of the population of El Paso, Tex., January 15, 1916*, 4; Hine, *Black Victory*, 113; Horne, *Black and Brown*, 53. Several scholars have attributed the greater degree of economic and political freedom experienced by African Americans in El Paso to the black community’s low population numbers. See, e.g., Christian, “The El Paso Racial Crisis of 1900,” in Glasrud and Smallwood, *The African American Experience in Texas*, 154-55; Timmons, *El Paso*, 188-89; Bryan, “The Economic, Political, and Social Status of the Negro in El Paso,” 74-78. A detailed history of Fort Bliss’ black soldiers at the turn of the twentieth-century can be found at Garna Loy Christian, “Sword and Plowshare: The Symbiotic Development of Fort Bliss and El Paso, Texas, 1849-1918,” (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 1977), 164-233.

¹⁴⁶ Drusilla Nixon interview, 18.

amendment.”¹⁴⁷ These various demographic factors combined to create an environment for black Americans that may not have been “perfect,” but as life-long resident Mrs. Ernestine Adams explained, “it was a lot worse in some other places.”¹⁴⁸ Or as Mrs. Nixon put it, “I remember a woman who moved out here . . . from some little town in East Texas and she said, ‘Oh my. This is wonderful.’ You’d have thought we had all kinds of freedom here the way she felt about it.”¹⁴⁹

The truth was, black men and women in El Paso did have all kinds of freedom at their disposal that few other African Americans in the United States enjoyed, for they sat at the crossroads of two boundaries that kept Jim Crow in check: that of the New Mexico Territory line as well as the Mexican border. Its proximity to New Mexican schools meant that black men and women in El Paso could, for example, attain a college education a mere forty miles to the west in Las Cruces. In fact, by 1920 El Paso’s black illiteracy rate stood at four percent, a striking contrast to 11.5 percent in Austin and 12.5 percent in Dallas.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, by simply crossing the border to Juárez for a few hours, many African Americans could experience a life outside of Jim Crow, finding a space where black people “could do all kinds of things . . . [and] were respected by all the people.”¹⁵¹ Many thus frequented the restaurants, shops, and various

¹⁴⁷ See, e.g., *Lone Star*, May 30, 1885, 3; *El Paso Daily Herald*, February 1, 1889, 1. See also Christian, “Sword and Plowshare,” 167.

¹⁴⁸ Dailey and Navarro, *Wheresoever My People Chance to Dwell*, 21.

¹⁴⁹ Drusilla Nixon interview, 18.

¹⁵⁰ Ivy, “Forgotten Color,” 14-15.

¹⁵¹ Frances Hills interview, 32.

entertainment events across the river, finding the atmosphere in Juárez and their Mexican neighbors much more “accepting” and “open” than on U.S. soil.¹⁵²

For some African Americans, though, even El Paso and the border would not be enough to extend relief against the oppressive reign of Jim Crow that continued to take root in the South and the violence of white supremacist ideology that spread across the U.S. As Leslie Brown clearly explains, the jocular term “Jim Crow” may have simply been meant to designate the segregation that were codified into law and remained the law of the land from 1876 to 1965, but African Americans experienced Jim Crow in the countless “profound abuses perpetrated in the name of white racial supremacy: the lynching of black men, the rape of black women, the burning of black schools and churches, the bombing of black neighborhoods, the destruction of black towns, race riots, and random violence attest that Jim Crow was homegrown oppression and terrorism, an American apartheid sanctioned by all three branches of government.”¹⁵³ Texas itself ranked third in the nation in lynchings between 1889 and 1918, most of the violence occurring in counties in East Texas and overwhelmingly against African Americans.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² See, e.g., *ibid.*, 9-10, 16-17; Drusilla Nixon interview, 9.

¹⁵³ Leslie Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 10–11.

¹⁵⁴ Georgia led all states with a total of 386 lynchings, while Mississippi followed next with 373 and Texas in third place with 335. James M. Sorelle, “The ‘Waco Horror’: The Lynching of Jesse Washington,” in Glasrud and Smallwood, *The African American Experience in Texas*, 183; Barr, *Black Texans*, 136. For a discussion of violence against Mexicans and lynchings, see William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, “Repression and Resistance: The Lynching of Persons of Mexican Origin in the United States, 1848-1928,” in *How the United States Racializes Latinos: White Hegemony and Its Consequences*, ed. Jose A. Cobas, Jorge Duany, and Joe R. Feagin (Boulder: Paradigm, 2009), 68-86; William D. Carrigan and Clive Webb, “*Muerto por Unos Desconocidos* (Killed by Persons Unknown): Mob Violence against Blacks and Mexicans,” in *Beyond Black & White: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the U.S. South and Southwest*, ed. Stephanie Cole and Alison M. Parker (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 35-74.

Although no such violence occurred in El Paso, it remained within the territorial confines of Jim Crow. Thus some beleaguered black men and women chose to escape Jim Crow by settling all-black towns across the state boundary in New Mexico, giving their new communities such apt names like Blackdom and Vado – Spanish for “ford” (as in crossing a ford) but also used at times as synonymous with “solution” or “way out.” Only twenty minutes from El Paso by car, some African Americans walked for a year to reach Vado from places as far as Georgia.¹⁵⁵

Others headed again for Mexico, looking across the international border for refuge. As Reconstruction came to an end, African Americans individually and collectively left their homes in the United States to start anew in Mexico; in the 1890s, assured by Mexican officials that Mexico would be their “Canaan, the land of hope and promise, where they would find relief from the persecution of southern whites,” hundreds of African Americans experimented with Mexican colonization schemes. Individually, men like Langston Hughes’ father left the United States to go “where a colored man could get ahead and make money quicker . . . My father went to Cuba, and then to Mexico, where there wasn’t any color line, or any Jim Crow.”¹⁵⁶ As late as 1919,

¹⁵⁵ Horne, *Black and Brown*, 61. Compare with Monroe Billington, “Black History and New Mexico Place Names,” *Password* 29:3 (1984), 107-13 (discussing the role of blacks in New Mexico history and the prevalence of place names including the term “Negro” or “nigger”)

¹⁵⁶ Quotes from Horne, *Black and Brown*, 21. Horne describes various emigration schemes in further detail on pages 21-24, 81-85. See also González Navarro, *Los extranjeros en México*, II, 235 (describing a failed black colonization plan in Tlahualillo, Durango after a smallpox epidemic spread throughout the colony); Jacoby, “Between North and South,” 209-39; Delores Nason McBroome, “Harvests of Gold: African American Boosterism, Agriculture, and Investment in Allensworth and Little Liberia,” in *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, ed. Lawrence B. de Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor (Los Angeles: Autry Museum of Western Heritage, 2001), 149-80. African Americans were not the only persecuted group to accept the invitation to settle Mexico; the flight from religious persecution pushed groups of Mormon families into Chihuahua and northern Mexico during the Porfiriato. Lister and Lister, *Chihuahua*, 190-91; González Navarro, *Los extranjeros en México*, II, 243-51.

legendary black boxer Jack Johnson placed ads in black newspapers inviting colonists for “Jack Johnson’s Land Company”:

Colored People. You who are lynched, tortured, mobbed, persecuted and discriminated against in the boasted “Land of Liberty.” . . . OWN A HOME IN MEXICO where one man is as good as another and it is not your nationality that counts but simply you! . . . 5.00 an acre and up . . . best of all there is [no] “race prejudice” in Mexico and in fact, severe punishment is meted out to those who discriminate against a man because of his color or race. Neither is there censorship, espionage or conscription.¹⁵⁷

His imagining of Mexico as the land of freedom would be neither the first nor the last during the era of Jim Crow.

The Settling Dust

Despite this constant movement of people shuttling to and fro on railroad tracks crossing the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, some people settled down – at least long enough for population enumerators – and the resident population of El Paso seemed to skyrocket. Whereas estimates put El Paso’s population at no more than 375 or 400 persons in 1880, the population in 1883 was said to be about 3,000, and the influx of Californians and Chicago businessmen was remaking the sleepy town into a city “more American than any other town on the Rio Grande, in Texas, with several hundred Chinamen and Mexicans.”¹⁵⁸ 11,120 persons were counted by 1889 – including 8013 Americans, 2115 Mexicans, 680 Colored, and 312 Chinese – and by 1890, the

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in Horne, *Black and Brown*, 2.

¹⁵⁸ Mickle, “El Paso, The Future Immense,” *San Antonio Daily Express*, February 4, 1883.

city boasted “a gain in ten years of 10,600 or more than 1000 for each year of the decade.”¹⁵⁹ El Paso’s growth rate rapidly overshadowed Juárez’s. By 1892, some estimated that El Paso’s population had surpassed that of Juárez by 2,000.¹⁶⁰ While the population of Juárez seemed to dwindle at eight thousand by 1899, a population of 20,523 was recorded in El Paso. The American city’s increase of 1,896 during the previous year was no small matter since, as one city directory was quick to point out, “Galveston, during the same period, shows a *decrease* of 1,143. The comparison is made to emphasize the fact that El Paso today is the most progressive city in the state, and no town within Texas’ borders has greater possibilities or a brighter future.”¹⁶¹ As the U.S. Bureau of the Census explained about El Paso’s growth, “the most marked percentage increase in the population of El Paso between consecutive censuses occurred from 1880 to 1890, and was due primarily to the coming of the first railroad in 1881; and the continuance of the city’s unusually rapid growth has been due in no small degree to its development into an important transcontinental and international railroad center.” By 1900, the U.S. federal census

¹⁵⁹ *El Paso Directory for 1889*, 1; *Buck’s City Directory for 1902*, 7. It should be noted that undercounting was systematically introduced into how city directory enumerators identified persons worthy of making the tally. Generally, only heads of families and grown persons having occupations appeared in city directories; children and other dependants were not listed. See e.g. *El Paso Directory for 1888*, 1.

¹⁶⁰ Payne, *El Paso, Illustrated*, 8. The pamphlet claimed that the population of El Paso was about 12,000 and that of Juárez was 10,000 in the early 1890s.

¹⁶¹ Charles W. Kindrick to David J. Hill, Assistant Secretary of State, December 9, 1898, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Ciudad Juárez, M184, NARA/CP, reel 6; John F. Worley, *Worley’s Directory of the City of El Paso, Tex., 1900* (Dallas: John F. Worley & Co., 1900), 3 (emphasis in original). According to Kindrick, the U.S. consul in Juárez, five thousand “Mexicans of the peon class” alone were estimated to reside in El Paso along the river front.

takers reported a population near fourteen thousand in the city's three main wards and over twenty-five thousand in the county.¹⁶²

Of course, underreporting was a constant problem, and an especially prevalent one when it came to the Mexican and Chinese population in El Paso. The 1886-87 business directory admitted that “the Mexican population . . . [was] partially omitted, as obtaining names and occupations is impracticable [sic] and for which due allowance will be given in estimating population.” And the 1888 city directory publishers complained that “[i]n compilation of our work we found many obstacles in our way. The Mexican population not being accustomed to directories were loath to give names and information, and the Chinese could only be reached through an interpreter, while many engaged in questionable pursuits, avoided the canvassers and could be reached only after the loss of much time and at great annoyance.”¹⁶³

Boosters and city directory publishers thus balked at what they considered an unfair and paltry representation by the U.S. Census Bureau of the actual population. Dismissing the 1900

¹⁶² U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Special census of the population of El Paso, Tex., January 15, 1916*, 3; *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Texas, El Paso County.

¹⁶³ *General Business Directory for 1886-87*, ii; *El Paso Directory for 1888*, 1. See also García, *Desert Immigrants*, 35. The problem of underreporting may also have been aggravated by racial confusion on the part of census enumerators who encountered a diverse populace. In her study of Dallas around the turn of the twentieth century, Stephanie Cole shows the difficulty that census enumerators encountered in fitting the local populace into the four official racial categories of the 1900 census: White, Negro, Mongolian, or Indian. For example, Chinese residents were listed as white by some enumerators and Chinese by others, and children of a black mother and Mexican father were listed as “black” while the son of a black mother and Chinese father was listed as “Chinese” (despite the “one-drop” rule). Such inconsistencies point to the rapid demographic and social changes that Southwestern cities such as Dallas and El Paso experienced, creating multiracial communities that did not fit into the black-white binary model of race relations and identities. Stephanie Cole, “Finding Race in Turn-of-the-Century Dallas,” in Cole and Parker, *Beyond Black and White*, 75-76. For an examination of the practice of racial enumeration in census-taking, see Melissa Nobles, *Shades of Citizenship: Race and the Census in Modern Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) (where she emphasizes the census’ role in the construction of race in the U.S. and Brazil and the policy implications that result there from).

census figures as entered by the enumerators, one directory publisher emphasized the value of local knowledge, and the ability to seek out “each house in every nook and corner of the city”:

[T]he absurdity of this count is manifest to everyone who visits El Paso, and is supremely ludicrous to those who have resided here during the last decade. The directory enumeration and the school census equally show how imperfectly was taken the national census, while the experience of several thousand confirms the statement that in the most thickly populated parts of the town many blocks were never visited by the enumerators. The population of El Paso did without doubt more than double during the last decade, and, unless all indications prove false, it may safely be asserted that the increase during 1900-1901 has been the most remarkable known in the history of the place. Conservative estimate cannot be far wrong in putting El Paso’s present population at fully 30,000.¹⁶⁴

The counting of bodies was an imprecise exercise at best, requiring not only the legwork of the door-to-door canvasser, but also some contorted calculations. The 1902 directory multiplied the 10,700 names reported in the directory by a factor of 2.75, apparently a smaller multiple than what other cities adopted, to capture “the total number of inhabitants, the smelter being included in the total, and all transients excluded.”¹⁶⁵ For this great metropolis of the Southwest, the slogan for settlement was to be “100,000 population by 1910.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ *Buck’s City Directory for 1902*, 3, 7. In contrast, the 1900 U.S. manuscript census reported a population of 14,030 within the city’s three main wards, and a population of 25,346 in the entire county. *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Texas, El Paso County.

¹⁶⁵ *Buck’s City Directory for 1902*, 1.

¹⁶⁶ John F. Worley, *John F. Worley Directory Co.’s El Paso Directory for 1908* (Dallas: John F. Worley Printing Co., 1908), 5. In actuality, by 1910 the city directory people identified 45,000 inhabitants in El Paso, and the U.S. manuscript census recorded a population of 52,649 in the entire county. John F. Worley, *Worley Directory of El Paso, Texas, 1910* (Dallas: John F. Worley Directory Co., 1910), 3; U.S. Bureau of Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910* (microfilm: NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 1549), Records of the Bureau of the Census, RG 29 (National Archives, Washington, D.C.), accessed through Ancestry.com.

Mobility would remain a common refrain in the borderlands, however, as El Paso settled into the twentieth century, particularly for “transient” laborers who were cut loose by injuries, lack of work, or unendurable labor conditions. Some workers struck back at employers, through organized labor activity as well as countless subversive ways.¹⁶⁷ Others simply moved on, from job to job. And still others used their mobility as a statement of their rights as workers and as persons. When the Galveston, Harrisburg, & San Antonio railroad company failed to provide 24-year old Ramon Rubio with the necessary hospital and medical attention he demanded as provided for in his labor contract, Rubio set off on a two-month, seven hundred mile trek back home to Socorro, New Mexico. Then he sued the company in the El Paso County Court for breach of contract and won.¹⁶⁸ For African American children aspiring to hold careers other than as manual laborers or domestic servants, their mobility was key. As a retired teacher from the segregated black Douglass school recalled,

¹⁶⁷ See, e.g., García, *Desert Immigrants*, 97-99, 107-09. Small acts of pilfering could also take on overtones of resistance or sabotage; 150 Chinese railroad laborers were reportedly arrested at nearby Camp Rice and sent to El Paso in September 1884 as prisoners for poisoning small ponds of water in the vicinity, purportedly to capture fish, but instead “causing the death of many cattle that were in the habit of drinking from the ponds,” and no doubt creating trouble for the railroad company. *Lone Star*, September 10, 1884, 3.

¹⁶⁸ “Plaintiff’s First Amended Original Petition,” *G. H. and S. A. Ry. Co. v. Ramon Rubio*, Case no. 2413, Texas 4th Court of Appeals case files (Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission). Hired in El Paso around September 10, 1900 by the railroad company’s labor agents, he was transported to Schulenberg, near Flatonia, Texas, where he contracted malaria after being there for 10 days. Although his contract provided that the company would furnish him with all necessary hospital and medical attention, for which the sum of fifty cents monthly would be deducted by from Rubio’s wages, he never received the medical attention he requested. The jury found for Rubio in the amount of \$200, and the appeals court upheld the finding of breach of contract, although it denied the damages for “great bodily and mental pain and anguish” that Rubio claimed to have incurred in walking home to Socorro, finding it “his voluntary and independent act” and not a natural result of defendant’s refusal to provide assistance nor a reasonably expectable result. “Judgment of Court of Civil Appeals,” *Rubio*.

What was not good about [a Douglass education was] that the students had no outlet. They could not go downtown and practice what they were taught in the classroom. They were not hired during the summer. They were not hired as part-time workers. What they learned was just learning. They were not being hired.

Realizing the limitations they faced in the still-Jim Crow El Paso, young African Americans shifted gears and turned to different directions; they “knew that they wouldn’t be in El Paso all their lives. They were going to get out of here.”¹⁶⁹ Like the thousands of black, brown, and yellow men and women who came before them and the thousands that followed after, they let their feet do the talking.

¹⁶⁹ Dailey and Navarro, *Wheresoever My People Chance to Dwell*, 80.

CHAPTER TWO

“OF THEIR OWN COLOR BUT NOT OF THEIR OWN RACE”

One Sunday night in April 1877, a Dallas hotel employee named William Wells asked his co-worker Chin Chang if he wanted to “go and see some girls.” They went off together into the Texas night and eventually arrived at the house of Annie Shaw, a “negro woman.” After a few minutes, Wells departed, leaving the “Chinaman” with Shaw, who immediately “locked the door, and put out the light, and . . . went to bed” with Chin Chang. We might never have known of this titillating encounter between a black woman and a Chinese man in nineteenth-century Texas, if Shaw had not immediately afterwards tried to rob Chin Chang of the \$100 he carried around in his vest. Alerted by the sound of a silver dime dropping onto the floor, Chin Chang jumped up and grabbed her but “[s]he jerked loose from him and ran out of the back door, taking with her all of the money which witness had in his vest.” Apparently part of a set-up, she fled the house to find Wells and split the money. But Chin Chang caught up with the two thieves and had them arrested. Found guilty of theft and sentenced to the penitentiary, Wells appealed but the judge upheld the lower court’s rulings, thereby closing the legal record on Wells, Shaw, and Chin Chang.¹

Almost half-way between Dallas and El Paso, in Tom Green County, two Chinese men allegedly murdered one Chan Sing one Sunday night on July 20, 1884. The two men lived and worked with “little Sing,” a nickname derived from his “small stature, -- his height not exceeding five and a half feet,” on the land of Jim Spears, where they raised vegetables for sale in town at

¹ The events of the theft are reported as prior history in *William Wells v. State of Texas*, 4 Tex. Ct. App. 20, 1878 Tex. Crim. App. LEXIS 83, (1878).

San Angelo. Spears, who also happened to be county sheriff, leased out his land to several other white and Mexican renters, some of whom, like Guadalupe Garcia, “was at the house of the Chinamen nearly every day” and worked from time to time for them in their garden. On the night in question, the four “Chinamen” reportedly had supper together, and then later that night, around 10 o’clock “a great uproar and noise” was heard coming from the “Chinamen’s house.” Garcia heard “blows struck, hallooing, screaming and crying. He heard what he took to be little Sing’s voice crying out in great distress.”² Similarly, a neighbor identified as Mrs. Chewing described hearing “a violent commotion in the Chinese quarters.” Although she could not recognize the voice in distress, she testified that “it did not sound like the voice of an American, and did sound like that of a Chinaman. ‘Chinese don’t make a noise like other folks,’” she testified.

The next day Garcia went to check on little Sing but did not find him. The disappearance of the little “Chinaman” was not of little consequence. When Sing failed to appear in town as usual, another “Chinaman” named Louie went armed with a gun to the Spears farm to look for him and confront Sing’s housemates. Spears himself went out to his farm several times to look for Sing, “and the last time he went out he found Mr. Grigsby and others out there,” presumably also looking for Sing. A reward was set for the discovery of Sing if he was alive, or his body if he was dead. Two weeks after the night in question, the decomposed part of a human body – missing its head, arms, and legs – was found a mile and a half away in the Concho river. The only circumstantial evidence that the prosecution could offer seemed to hinge on the shirt still

² It should also be noted that the veracity of Guadalupe Garcia’s testimony was challenged by the defense attorney on cross-examination: “Cross-examined, the witness stated that he was a Mexican. . . . He knew what would be done with him if he lied about this matter. The authorities would put him in jail and kill him.” *Hung Ah Hang v. State of Texas*, 18 Tex. Ct. App. 675, 1885 Tex. Crim. App. LEXIS 154, (1885).

hanging on the body, which many recognized as one that little Sing owned but which was so common that “there might be from one to five hundred counterparts of that shirt in the county,” according to one witness. At the same time, others offered a more racial explanation. D. Q. McCarty, a member of the coroner’s jury, testified that not only was the body evidently of a small-sized man, but “the skin was of the color of a Chinaman. . . . If the body had been that of a mulatto or a Mexican, and had lain, as this one had apparently, in the water some weeks, the color of the skin would perhaps have resembled the color of the skin adhering to this body.”³

On Friday night, October 6, 1893, policemen and state rangers in El Paso raided the residences of a number of “colored men and Mexicans,” as reported by *The El Paso Daily Times*. As a result of the raid, seven “negro” men and five Mexican women were arrested. One young Mexican girl was let go on bail “on account of her having a very young infant in her arms,” but the others were led to the county jail facing felony charges. What heinous crime had these black men and Mexican women committed? *The El Paso Daily Times* headline said it all:

“Miscegenationists raided.”⁴ Or as noted in the Register of Prisoners ledger for the county jail,

³ Taken from the prior history and opinion of the Court of Appeals of Texas, *ibid*. The case only involved one of the alleged murderers, Hung Ah Hang, who had received “imprisonment in the penitentiary for life” by the lower court. The Texas Court of Appeals found the “evidence is wholly insufficient to sustain the conviction” and reversed and remanded the case. Subsequent history for this case is unavailable.

⁴ *El Paso Times*, October 7, 1893. The newspaper reported seven black men and only five Mexican women arrested that night for miscegenation. Apparently, one of the Mexican wives had not been “captured” and another had not been arrested (no reason was given). The next day, the newspaper printed a list of the parties arrested, where it shows that a “white” woman named Miss Hamilton and a racially unidentified Josephine Hutchison had been included as two of the “five Mexican women” that had been arrested. The list reads in full:

Among those arrested were E. Franklin, negro, and Natividad, Mexican, for fornication, and the following for unlawful marriage: W. W. Wiley, negro, and Miss Hamilton, white; J. W. Williams, negro, and Cuca, Mexican; Mr. Oliver, negro, and Rosa, Mexican;

Soledad Louisa had been committed for “knowingly intermarrying with . . . a negro.”⁵ They had all violated the state law against intermarriage, which prohibited “white” persons from marrying or being married to “a negro, or person of mixed blood descended from negro ancestry to the third generation . . .”⁶ Presumably, the anti-miscegenation law had been triggered and the women had been arrested because Mexicans were officially deemed “white” for legal and federal purposes, such as the census. That most if not all of the couples were legally married, some of them having married in Mexico, did not matter; the law refused to recognize mixed-race marriages as legally permissible even if they had been given legal blessing elsewhere. The

Julian Nelson, negro, and Solidad, Mexican; Mr. Hood, negro, Mexican woman not captured; J. W. Shanklin, negro, and Josephine Hutchison; O. Brown, negro, and Mexican woman not arrested.

El Paso Times, October 8, 1893. The county jail Register of Prisoners identified the arrested as: Joseph Williams, Julian Nelson, O. Brown, W. W. Willy, J. W. Shanklen, Josephine Hudson, Rosa Diez, Louisa Solidad, and F. Moody. Register of Prisoners (confined in El Paso County Jail), August 21, 1891 to December 30, 1893, 353-58, “Register of Prisoners,” El Paso County Records (C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library); Register of Prisoners (confined in El Paso County Jail), March 14, 1886 to July 26, 1894, prisoner no. 321-331, “Register of Prisoners,” El Paso County Records. It should be noted that Joseph Williams, arrested for “Unlawful marriage with white woman,” was also described in prison records as having been born in Mexico. Register of Prisoners (confined in El Paso County Jail), March 14, 1886 to July 26, 1894, prisoner no. 321, “Register of Prisoners,” El Paso County Records.

⁵ Register of Prisoners (confined in El Paso County Jail), Aug 21, 1891 to Dec 30, 1893, 358, “Register of Prisoners,” El Paso County Records.

⁶ *Emile Francois v. State*, 9 Texas Court of Appeals Reports 145, (1880). Although there were cases of interracial marriage that were protected by the Texas Supreme Court immediately following the Civil War and during Reconstruction, by 1880 the Texas courts issued new rulings that upheld the state’s miscegenation law and punished violators. Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 33-40, 61-63. The statute, Penal Code, art. 386, designated the crime of intermarriage a felony punishable by imprisonment for two to five years. An amendment to the statute in 1879 made both the white and black partners subject to punishment (whereas the original statute had made unlawful marriage criminally punishable with respects to whites only).

newspaper concluded that the arrests that night were “only the inauguration of a general movement against all violators of the law against miscegenation, adultery, and fornication.”⁷

The multiracial landscapes illustrated in the above cases were by no means unique or rare. From urban settings such as Dallas to rural environments like the Spears farm, and from the coastal metropolises to the rapidly industrializing U.S.-Mexico borderlands, peoples of diverse origins and cultural backgrounds were converging, intersecting, and re-shaping homogenous notions of community by the dawn of the twentieth century.⁸ Through shared residential, working, recreational, and civic spaces, physically dissimilar bodies were constantly coming into contact, appraising each other, and attempting to make sense of differences perceived in skin color, hair styles, bodily smells, and the sounds that came out of their mouths.

At the continental crossroads of multiple railways lines that led in every direction across the United States and into Mexico, El Paso in particular witnessed one of the most spectacular convergences of diverse immigrants in the 1880s and 1890s. The majority of El Paso’s

⁷ *El Paso Times*, October 7, 1893.

⁸ See, e.g., Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City During the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000); Mary Ting Li Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Murder, Miscegenation, and Other Dangerous Encounters in Turn-of-the-Century New York City* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006); Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Bradford Luckingham, *The Urban Southwest: A Profile History of Albuquerque, El Paso, Phoenix, Tucson* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1982), 21; Manuel Lee Mancilla, *Viaje al corazón de la península: Testimonio de Manuel Lee Mancilla* [Journey to the heart of the peninsula: The testimonio of Manuel Lee Mancilla], ed. Maricela González Félix (Mexicali: Instituto de Cultura de Baja California, 2000), 43 (describing Mexican-Chinese relations and the presence of “Americans, Filipinos, Japanese and blacks” in Mexicali); Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 46-68.

immigrants may have been white Americans and European immigrants who came to invest their time, labor, and hopes in the region's burgeoning economy. As highlighted in chapter one, however, the railroads were not discriminating about who they brought to the El Paso-Juárez border. During this period of rapid industrialization, combined with the institutionalization of powerful new white supremacist regimes in the United States and the vast dispossession of lands and rights in Mexico, more and more marginalized African Americans, Mexicans, and Chinese also found their way to El Paso. In the era of the Porfiriato, Chinese Exclusion, and Jim Crow, the multiple boundaries that intersected at El Paso – meaning the international U.S.-Mexico border as well as the limits of Jim Crow, which ended where El Paso met the New Mexico Territory line – offered many Mexican, Chinese, and black people a unique gateway to freedoms that were not realized so easily elsewhere. Dislocated Mexicans came looking for new opportunities to support themselves and their families; African Americans sought to escape the oppressive reach of Jim Crow and redefine their freedoms; Chinese immigrants migrated through Mexico to the border in hopes of crossing undetected by U.S. immigration officials. Coming together in the burgeoning borderland city, these pioneers also created a new social environment where they could redefine themselves and their relationships with others outside of the constraints imposed by, for example, an increasingly-violent white Southern society or the anti-Chinese campaigns sweeping the United States during the late-nineteenth century. The lack of strict color lines in El Paso provided African Americans, Chinese, and Mexicans more space to live, labor, and love across boundaries of group identities based on culture, ethnicity, and race.

What follows is a “hidden history of mestizo America” – as historian Gary Nash calls the United States' past of racial intermixture – when it was not so hidden, and a story about how it

started to become hidden.⁹ Using the case of the “colored” “miscegenationists” as a touchstone for multiracial relations in El Paso, this chapter examines the conditions under which a diverse populace came together, intersected, and interacted in the borderlands during the late-nineteenth century. It also begins to explore the ways in which history can be rewritten, and the ways in which “instead of acknowledging the actual race mixing and intimacy that occurred,” as Ariela Gross argues, social actors imposed notions of segregation onto multiracial realities.¹⁰ Under the mantle of “progress,” reformers attempted to erase the multiracial facets of modern American life and reconstruct a world where the races do not mix and never did.

A multiracial cosmopolitanism

As El Paso mushroomed into a multinational and multiethnic city following the arrival of the railroads, city developers and boosters immediately adopted the language of what John Higham has called the “cosmopolitan traditions” of American nationalism, repainting the city’s image from lawless frontier to one of progress, industriousness, and economic opportunity.¹¹

Acknowledging the border town’s sudden diversity in population, some boosters in 1886 went so far as to claim that “[w]e will give all immigrants a hearty welcome, and extend to them full and

⁹ Gary B. Nash, “The Hidden History of Mestizo America,” in *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History*, ed. Martha Hodes (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 10-32.

¹⁰ Ariela J. Gross, *What Blood Won’t Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 77. For a richly detailed history of miscegenation law in America, see Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*.

¹¹ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 19-23. For a discussion of late-nineteenth century cosmopolitan household consumption and its relation to American commercial expansion, imperialism, and globalization, see Kristin Hoganson, “Cosmopolitan Domesticity: Importing the American Dream, 1865-1920,” *American Historical Review* 107:1 (February 2002), 55-83.

complete protection. We have no prejudices to overcome, for we are already cosmopolitan.”¹²

The city attorney, Richard F. Burges, described in greater detail how “El Paso is a cosmopolitan city,” claiming that “[n]owhere else in Texas will be found such a representation of races, parties and creeds as in El Paso. About forty per cent of our population is drawn from the great Republic south of us. . . . Visit our Chinatown and see in miniature that reproduction of the far east [sic] that has been the wonder of all visitors to the Pacific Coast.”¹³ Heterogeneous and diverse, El Paso quickly emerged as what historian Mary Ryan might call, one of the “ungainly, urban mongrels” of the nineteenth-century U.S.¹⁴

Indeed, as noted by a traveler named Rudolf Eickemeyer visiting from the East Coast during the spring of 1893, El Paso offered something other than a multiracial landscape divided by segregated barrios, Chinatowns, and ghettos. Rather, one could enter “the most stylish of the gambling-houses” and enter a room filled with “a promiscuous crowd. There were Chinamen, Mexicans (real ‘Greasers’), negroes of all shades and colors, a few cow-boys, and some business men.” Eickemeyer was intrigued and mystified by this crowd, and proceeded to count and catalogue the players: “At one of the faro-tables I counted five Chinamen, two mulattoes, and one cow-boy; at the other the cow-boys seemed to be in the majority, and some rough-looking

¹² C. A. Gould & Co., *General Business Directory of the City of El Paso for 1886-87* (Dallas: A. D. Aldridge & Co., 1886), 49.

¹³ “Speech by Richard F. Burges, City Attorney, Welcoming the Republican State Convention, El Paso, Texas, in 1906,” Box 31, Burges-Perrenot Family Papers, 1890-1986, MS 262 (C.L. Sonnichsen Special Collections Department, The University of Texas at El Paso Library). It should be noted that Burges was the brother of William H. Burges, an El Paso attorney who represented many Chinese immigrants in their exclusion cases. In urban centers like New York City and San Francisco, Chinatowns were similarly included in tourist literature but were often disparaged and racially marked as socially dangerous and unhealthy spaces as well. See, e.g., Lui, *Chinatown Trunk Mystery*, 21-25, 40-41; Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 153.

¹⁴ Ryan, *Civic Wars*, 11.

‘Greasers’ completed the set.” In one of the more revealing statements that Eickemeyer wrote in his letter back home, he stated that “Of course, I did not stay long. It takes time to get used to such things . . .”¹⁵

That is not to say, however, that El Paso was a tabula rasa for race and ethnic relations during the late-nineteenth century. The great majority of “white” residents reported in the 1900 census hailed from former slave states, accounting for 71.5 percent of the county’s U.S. and European-born “white” population.¹⁶ These emigrants from the Jim Crow South no doubt imported with themselves deeply-ingrained ideas about black-white relations and the supremacy of whiteness in the racial hierarchy of the United States. As discussed in chapter one, Jim Crow segregation was certainly practiced in El Paso. African Americans felt the stigma of Jim Crow most sharply when, travelling eastward on the railways across the New Mexico-Texas line, they were forced into segregated cabins upon reaching El Paso. And by 1885 a separate school for black children was organized in a church building; the city soon thereafter established the all-black Douglass school-house in a new brick building while American and Mexican children were taught at a separate school administered in both English and Spanish.¹⁷

¹⁵ Rudolf Eickemeyer, *Letters from the Southwest* (Astor Place, New York: J. J. Little & Co., 1894), 11.

¹⁶ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Texas, El Paso County (microfilm: National Archives micropublication T623) (National Archives), accessed through Ancestry.com. These states include the eleven Confederate states as well as Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri. The figures for El Paso’s “white” population exclude those persons identified as Mexican-born.

¹⁷ C. L. Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North: Four Centuries on the Rio Grande* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1968), 233; D. R. Payne, *El Paso, Illustrated* (1892), 6.



Figure 2.1. Images such as this advertisement reproduced the Jim Crow sentimentality of other Southern communities. His outfit, dark skin, accentuated lips, and somewhat feminine gait re-emphasized the subservient role of the African American figure to El Paso's white society, represented here by the white woman. At the same time, the ad suggests that African Americans enjoyed a position of "belonging" alongside whites, in contrast to the Chinese who controlled much of the laundering business in El Paso and who were the likely targets of the ad's complaint of "careless and indifferent laundering" and "slipshod work."

Source: *El Paso Herald*, January 17, 1902, p. 3.

At the same time, however, these emigrants were entering a region where earlier Anglo American inhabitants had, as Miguel Tinker Salas reminds us, along with their Mexican neighbors "produced a complex layering of culture."¹⁸ The few Americans that had settled the El Paso area before 1880 had generally coexisted peacefully with the predominantly Mexican community, intermarrying, learning each other's languages, and working together to survive in

¹⁸ Miguel Tinker Salas, *In the Shadow of the Eagles: Sonora and the Transformation of the Border during the Porfiriato* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 150.

the harsh and unforgiving desert environment so far removed from other population centers.¹⁹

As one white southerner from Mississippi observed, West Texas by the 1880s had become a “‘melting pot’ of races,” a “hybrid population” whose hybridization only increased over time as men and women failed to “draw the color line”:

The long, dangerous trip from the East was too much for white women, and prior to the coming of the railroad in the eighties, very few of them came West. Thus, practically the only women in West Texas were Mexicans of the lower class, and they do not draw the color line. The result was that Mexican women married foreigners, negroes, and an occasional white man who had forgotten that his skin was white. The racial mixture that resulted after this condition had existed for a quarter of a century may be imagined. I knew an Irish girl who married a Jew, while her brother married a Mexican. I knew a Mexican woman married to a negro, while her niece married a white man.²⁰

For this particular man born and raised in the Confederate South, who lamented that “[t]he first dozen years of my life were spent [during] the reconstruction period when the South was menaced by negroes drunk with their newly acquired freedom,” the crossing of racial lines in the borderlands was remarkable.²¹ The “hybridization” would only continue through the remaining years of the nineteenth century. Even as El Paso lost its aura of isolation following the arrival of the various railway lines in the 1880s, and even as American and European white immigrants poured into the city, they only constituted 59 percent of the county’s entire population in 1900. Some 40 percent of the remaining population was comprised of Mexicans, African Americans,

¹⁹ Mario T. García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 13; W. W. Mills, *Forty years at El Paso, 1858-1898* (El Paso: C. Hertzog, 1962), 23.

²⁰ Dr. I. J. Bush, *Gringo Doctor* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1939), 37.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

Chinese, and Native Americans who found space to shape the new community's dynamics according to their own social values.²²

Because they left little of their contemporary impressions in writing, we can only imagine what these diverse men and women thought of each other, and the levels of curiosity, wonderment, and repulsion that informed their interactions. Although each immigrant could fashion his and her own preference, taste, and world view, they each were also vessels that carried the cultural and social baggage of their countries and regions of origin – perhaps modified by encounters with differing cultural and social values along the journey – to the borderlands. For example, they came from societies that had each experienced a long, complicated, and contentious relationship with Anglo American hegemony and racial ideologies of white superiority, whether it came in the form of slavery and Jim Crow, merchants and missionaries, or the Mexican-American War and intense capitalist invasions. By the late nineteenth century, Mexico's political and intellectual elites were also beginning to develop a new national identity based on the ideological and mythic figure of the "mestizo" which, despite its assumptions of racial mixture, was constructed to "whiten" the nation and erase the Indian that elites disparaged as "backwards," "inferior," and an impediment to the nation's modern progress. Thus José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo insists that "[r]acism is no mere marginal apparition nor accident in the history of Mexico, but totally the opposite, an omnipresent phenomenon, constant and unavoidable, that marks a continuity between the racist ways of perceiving the "Indian races" by Porfirista and nationalist/revolutionary elites."²³

²² *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Texas, El Paso County.

²³ José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo, "Racismo y nacionalismo en el discurso de las élites mexicanas: Historia Patria y Antropología Indigenista" ["Racism and nationalism in the discourse of Mexican elites: National History and Indigenous Anthropology"], in *Los caminos del racismo en México* [Paths of racism in Mexico], ed. José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo (México, D.F.: Plaza y

Whether non-elite Mexicans adopted these ideological and political attitudes, and to what extent, is a different matter. At a most basic level, it can be assumed that most Mexican, Chinese, and black immigrants were not newcomers to the notion of racial and ethnic difference. But they came to El Paso from regions and communities that were less invested at this time in the more explicit, violent, and strict racial ideologies espoused, for example, in the white South. We may not be able to precisely determine the racial understandings that members of each group held towards each other, but whatever those group prejudices and biases may have been, they were flexible enough that many of these late-nineteenth century pioneers could exercise a high degree of exogenous mobility and pursue common interests that resulted in a surprisingly rich geography of multiracial interactions and social relations. Indeed, once Eickemeyer left the gambling houses to continue his explorations of El Paso outdoors, he was astonished to find himself so soon visually taking in the “Mexican” part of El Paso where there remained “hundreds – yes, I should say thousands of adobe houses with just one, or at the outside two, rooms, all of them one story high, inhabited by Mexicans, negroes, and Chinamen.” The exotic foreignness of “Dobe-town,” as he called it, was marked not simply by the local building

Valdés, 2005), 121 (“El racismo no es mera aparición marginal o un accidente en la historia de México, sino todo lo contrario, se trata de un fenómeno omnipresente, constante e inevitable, que marca una continuidad entre los modos racistas de percibir a las ‘razas indias’, propias de las élites porfirianas y de las nacional/revolucionarias.”). See also Alicia Castellanos Guerrero, “Para hacer nación: discursos racistas en el México decimonónico [“To make the nation: racist discourses in nineteenth-century Mexico”], in Gómez Izquierdo, *Los caminos del racismo en México*, 89-115. The Porfiriato’s models of economic development and modern nation-building – primarily the mass dispossession of lands belonging to Indian communities, the creation of a reliable labor force, the recruitment of European immigration, and the forced assimilation of Indians – lent themselves to the racist and new social Darwinist rationalizations of Díaz’s científicos. Thus, Alan Knight explains, “powerful ideologies as well as economic factors favored the development [in Mexico] of a more virulent racism in the later nineteenth century” than during the colonial and post-independence periods. Alan Knight, “Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo: Mexico, 1910-1940,” in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*, ed. Richard Graham (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 78.

materials of baked straw and mud, but also by the racially-mixed character of the community's inhabitants.²⁴

It is most likely that the sweep of black-Mexican "miscegenationists" that night of October 6, 1893 took place in this section of the city. "Dobe-town," or what the Mexicans called Chihuahuita, was the main barrio in El Paso, located in the southern half of the city. Because of its proximity to the border as well as to the railroads, construction firms, and other downtown employers for whom many Mexicans worked, Chihuahuita boomed alongside El Paso more generally and by 1900, Chihuahuita covered almost all of El Segundo Barrio (the Second Ward), which ran from the downtown business area to the Río Grande.²⁵ According to the city directory, in 1902 about 55 per cent of the city's population was Mexican, and 60 per cent of them lived south of downtown's Overland Street.²⁶

²⁴ Eickemeyer, *Letters from the Southwest*, 14-15. For reference to "Dobe-town," see *ibid.*, 12.

²⁵ García, *Desert Immigrants*, 127-30. Outside of Chihuahuita, the ASARCO camps (along the western limits of El Paso and along the Rio Grande) and East El Paso (in the southeastern part of El Paso and again along the river border) were the most densely Mexican sections of the city between 1880 and 1920. As García explains, residents in these sections suffered very poor living conditions, characterized by substandard and overcrowded housing, high infant mortality rates, the lack of sanitation and presence of diseases, and high crime. But see Monica Perales, *Smelertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010) (showing how residents working for ASARCO still forged positive and meaningful community relationships despite the harsh working and living conditions).

²⁶ *Buck's Directory of El Paso, Tex. for 1902* (El Paso: El Paso Directory Co., 1902), 1.



Figure 2.2. Map of El Paso in 1900.
Source: Sanborn Map, El Paso, Texas; Juarez, Mexico (1900).

Terms such as “barrio” can be misleading, however. Indeed, this section of the city was not exclusively reserved for Mexicans, even as it retained Spanish-derived monikers due to the significant numbers of Mexican immigrants who resided there.²⁷ By 1900, the overwhelming majority of all working-class non-whites and whites lived in the districts surrounding the railroads, industrial shops, and businesses where they worked, which were usually located in the central and southern portions of the city.²⁸ People with Spanish surnames lived and worked next to those whose names were marked as “Chinese,” or with a lower-case “c” next to it for “colored” in city directories and “B” for “black” in the censuses.²⁹ Residential mixing between

²⁷ Similarly, although it was common-place for early El Pasoans to refer to an area of downtown as “Chinatown,” the area was in fact merely part of the city’s main business district. As historian Anna Fahy explains, although many Chinese lived and worked in the central business district, “the Chinese lived and worked throughout El Paso, working for Chinese and non-Chinese alike, and provid[ing] services needed by El Paso residents and travelers.” Anna Louise Fahy, “Chinese Borderland Community Development: A Case Study of El Paso, 1881-1909” (Masters thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 2001), 3, 115-18. Contrast with W. H. Timmons, *El Paso: A Borderlands History* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1990), 188 (explaining that most El Paso Chinese lived on South Oregon Street between Overland and Second Street, and concluding that “[f]or the most part the Chinese remained apart from the rest of the community”); Cleofas Calleros, *El Paso - Then and Now* (El Paso: American Printing Company, 1954), 51 (concluding, based on the 1896 city directory, that the Chinese “settlement was located on South Oregon Street between Overland and Third Streets. The colony, with a consul and two temples was the city’s colorful Chinatown.”). There were also no exclusively black neighborhoods in El Paso. As black El Pasoan Ruth Nash King explained, during a visit to Houston her son had observed that “‘You just go for miles and miles and never see anything but black people.’ He had never seen anything like that because here you don’t get that sort of thing.” Ruth Nash King, interviewed by Charlotte Ivy, Oct. 29, 1985, Transcript No. 765, Black Community of El Paso (Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso), 22.

²⁸ See Charlotte Ivy, “Forgotten Color: Black Families in Early El Paso,” *Password* 35:1 (1990), 11; Timmons, *El Paso*, 184; Fahy, “Chinese Borderland Community Development,” 80.

²⁹ See, e.g., John F. Worley, *John F. Worley Directory Co.’s El Paso Directory for 1903* (Dallas: Press of John F. Worley, 1903); *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Texas, El Paso County. See also Grace Peña Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 44-47 (describing mixed residential patterns and Chinese-Mexican relations in Tucson, Arizona).

white and non-white El Pasoans was minimized to some extent, a factor of not only racial and cultural prejudices, but also of occupational and wage disparities. The city never enacted restrictive covenants or other legal restrictions on housing, though. As Drusilla Nixon, a long-time black resident of El Paso, remembered about the city's racial environment well into the 1930s, "in most places you had to live in a ghetto, but not in El Paso. . . . There were certain neighborhoods where you had trouble buying; but if you could buy a house and move into it I think you were all right." As black families moved out of the Second Ward, they moved into neighborhoods that spread eastward along the tracks, such as Gateway East. "Gateway East was Manzana Street then," clarified Nixon, "and it was a very mixed neighborhood."³⁰ There were some African Americans, Mexicans, and Chinese who lived in predominantly white neighborhoods north of downtown.³¹ But for the most part, by 1900 Second Street – just at the southern limits of the business district – became the dividing line between the increasingly white residential districts to the north of the various railroad tracks and South El Paso's more racially-mixed population.³²

That being said, the borders between the mixed and crowded housing of "Dobe-town" and the level streets and brick buildings representing the more "American" progress desired by El Paso's white elite class were never clearly delineated. Rather, this section of town emerged as a racial borderland for the city, or a small-scale version of what Richard White has called "the

³⁰ Drusilla Nixon, interviewed by Sarah E. John and Oscar J. Martínez, December 11, 1975, Transcript no. 194, Bicentennial (Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso), 18-19; Ivy, "Forgotten Color," 11. See also Frances Hills, interviewed by Charlotte Ivy, October 12, 1985, Transcript no. 751, Black Community of El Paso (Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso), 4-5.

³¹ See e.g., *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Texas, El Paso County.

³² Timmons, *El Paso*, 184.

Ward	Black/Colored	Chinese	Mexican-born	White/Other
Ward 1 (southwestern part of the city, near the Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe railroad tracks)	118	29	1186	1378
Ward 2 (from central to southwestern and southern parts of the city, running to the Río Grande)	204	152	3443	3493
Ward 3 (northern parts of the city, which included the Southern Pacific railroad tracks)	108	85	372	3462

Figure 2.3. 1900 El Paso census enumeration by city ward.
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Texas, El Paso County (microfilm: National Archives micropublication T623) (National Archives).

middle ground” – a place “in between” cultures and people searching for accommodation and common meaning, and out of which “arise new meanings and through them new practices.”³³ Studies of borderlands and port cities have emphasized these places as spaces where “cultural worlds collide and coalesce,” and as mixed “frontier settlements in which were forged new hybrid human identities and cultures. . . . not only and not always defined by hostility and exploitation, but also by friendships, interminglings, and the birth of new multicultural peoples.”³⁴ As Eickemeyer describes his walk down El Paso Street, starting from the Plaza at the center of the city and continuing through the downtown business section, he passed “a good

³³ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), x.

³⁴ James F. Brooks, *Captives and Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 9; John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), xix.

number of brick blocks, interspersed here and there with one-story adobe houses,” until he reached Dobe-town at “the end of the business part.” As mortar and mud buildings began to overlap, so did their inhabitants, whittling away at the boundaries between the two sections of the city.

Indeed, in a matter of blocks, as Eickemeyer reached the end of the business part, he saw on his right “the ruins of an adobe house; and thereby hangs a tale,” he promised his reader. Apparently, among the “great many Chinamen” residing in El Paso was “an old crippled Chinaman, who was, as his countrymen said, ‘no good.’” Tired of supporting the old man, the “Chinamen” restrained him, saturated the house with kerosene, and set a fire. A city policeman discovered the fire early enough to kick in the door and try to pull out the old man, but failed to release the restraints and “had to let him burn up.”³⁵ As The El Paso Daily Herald reported a few days later, “El Paso is said to have about 499 Chinamen. Before his brethren decided to make a bonfire of Moy Jim a couple of nights ago, the number was estimated at 500.”³⁶ The disposal of poor Moy Jim’s body was as public as the fire itself. Eickemeyer explains,

The first or second week of my residence here I concluded to see some of the city authorities, and so my son Carl and I took a walk to the city hall. We found there a great crowd passing in and out of an engine-room of the Fire Department, and, on inquiring, ascertained that a roasted Chinaman was on exhibition. You may imagine how quickly I got out. . . . The Chinaman was [eventually] buried at the city’s expense, and that is the whole story.”³⁷

³⁵ Eickemeyer, *Letters from the Southwest*, 12-13.

³⁶ *El Paso Herald*, February 10, 1893, 1.

³⁷ Eickemeyer, *Letters from the Southwest*, 12-13.

Dobe-town and its life was not segregated from the city's public life. Rather, at times at least, the supposedly inner dynamics of Dobe-town was made public for all citizens and became part of the public spectacle of the city's civic life.

Mary Ryan's idea of "the public" as "a symbol of the possibility of unification without homogenization, of integration without assimilation" in mid-nineteenth century American cities may thus still apply well into late-nineteenth century El Paso.³⁸ The city's planners and boosters imagined El Paso growing vibrantly with a robust and industrious population, young white men and women working in concert to rapidly build a metropolitan center of commerce and trade, fighting the parochial image of the wild frontier. The Plaza represented in typical fashion the civic center of the city; as Eickemeyer describes, "[o]n the left, and about the middle of the square, 'Uncle Sam' has put his Federal building, containing the post-office, custom-house, and courts, and the flag is flying all day; so you feel at home, anyhow, no matter how strange the surroundings may seem."³⁹

However, it was also in the crowded Plaza that he observed a mixed audience including northeastern tourists and Mexicans listening to a performance by a Mexican band.⁴⁰ It was in the city streets surrounding the Plaza that pedestrians crossing the downtown area would have noticed "a decrepit old Chinaman sitting around the Plaza Laundry with his head enveloped in a coffee sack," and might have complained to authorities "as their imagination leads them to believe he is a leper in disguise."⁴¹ Or more pleasantly, city residents in the city's north side

³⁸ Ryan, *Civic Wars*, 4.

³⁹ Eickemeyer, *Letters from the Southwest*, 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 40-41.

⁴¹ *El Paso Herald*, December 7, 1881, 2.

could be serenaded by “[a] number of our colored boys [who] have organized a musical combination for the purpose of serenading and entertaining friends. Last evening,” the El Paso Herald reported, “they visited Mayor Magoffin and softly touched the guitar strings to the appreciation of the mayor and the neighborhood.”⁴² At the city limits, down by the river banks, some residents could find themselves gathered around “two good-looking darkies” battling it out for the “Colored Hand” of a “young maid who, although dark-complexioned, is yet fair to gaze upon. Her bright eyes and winning ways have captivated and enthralled more than one heart. In fact it is boldly asserted that among her admirers the color line is not at all times drawn in accordance with the fourteenth amendment. . . .”⁴³ One could peer into a meeting of “colored” men and a “sprinkling” of Mexicans who came together in attendance to listen to a mayoral candidate speak about “the value of their franchise and its power to do good.”⁴⁴ Or one might have found himself among “a throng of delighted spectators” watching “[a] regular knock down and drag out pugilistic encounter occur[ing] in the custom house yard back of the post office Sunday morning between a negro and a Mexican.”⁴⁵

The din of urban living was thus amplified by the images and sounds of a diverse populace working, socializing, and going about their daily, everyday lives. “Colored” women and Mexican men would ride and be jostled together on crowded street cars.⁴⁶ White women

⁴² Ibid., May 30, 1885, 3.

⁴³ Ibid., February 1, 1889, 1.

⁴⁴ Ibid., April 6, 1894.

⁴⁵ Ibid., July 31, 1899.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Recall testimony of Alderete, Statement of Facts, Jan. 21, 1904, El Paso Electric Street Railway Co. v. Isaac Alderete, Case no. 3028, Texas 4th Court of Appeals case files (Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission).

would listen for the sounds of the horse-drawn wagon and the Chinese farmer bringing fresh produce to their door.⁴⁷ Or they would watch Chinese laundrymen at work, setting up their washtubs outside in the yards behind their laundry operations where “[t]hey’d fill their mouths full of water and then they’d blow the water out on the clothes and then they’d iron.”⁴⁸ The Chinese laundryman, meanwhile, might keep track of his mostly white clientele by recording visual cues such as “thin gentlemen with missing teeth, fat man with long fingernails, unhappy lady who coughs, freckled gentleman with loud voice, and sneezing man who scratches head,” as did one Wong Wun who opened the “House of 10,000 Washings” in 1897.⁴⁹ Downtown streets would overflow with exchanges in English, Spanish, and Chinese spilling out of grocery stores, restaurants, business fronts, and the street carts dotting the walkways of El Paso. In January 1902, The El Paso Herald reported under a caption titled “Yellow and Black” that “[a] little example of carnival incongruity is to be seen in a Chinese restaurant here on one of the principal streets where negroes are employed as waiters along with the Chinamen.”⁵⁰ And no doubt, with so many black, Mexican, and Chinese men employed by the railroads, a common sight would have been the masses of black, white, Mexican, and Chinese bodies digging up roads, bent over tracks, cleaning train engines and coaches, servicing the myriad of other different bodies riding

⁴⁷ Fahy, “Chinese Borderland Community Development,” 90-91.

⁴⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 78-79.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁵⁰ *El Paso Herald*, January 16, 1902, 9. The newspaper found this scenario to be “a striking commentary on the fact that, when a few years ago, negroes were scarce here, they are getting plentiful, while there is not enough Chinamen, owing to stringent exclusion law enforcement locally, to supply the demand of the oriental employers.”

in and out on several railways passing through the city, and otherwise crossing each other's paths in the rail yards where they worked and often lived.⁵¹

Public spaces and streets thus tied the city together in ways that, as Ryan explains, “allowed people in transit to take in something of one another's cultures along the way,” routing “everyday intercourse between a vast mixture of peoples.”⁵² Indeed, for some older Mexican Americans who had lived and grown up in “Smelertown,” in the shadow of mining company ASARCO, memories of El Paso included fond memories of African American porters who worked on the passenger trains that passed daily over Smelertown. Remembered as *tirapanes*, literally translated as “bread throwers,” these African American porters would share leftover rolls and pastries from their passenger trains with Mexican children from Smelertown.⁵³ The city spaces, pedestrian arteries, and rail ways joined all classes of people in “routine and casual intermingling . . . set[ting] the spatial stage, the limits and possibilities, for people to come together, to view both the differences and commonalities through which a public might find itself.”⁵⁴ The streets made differences visible, but the shared space that streets invoked enabled participants – both willing and unwilling – to share in experience and rituals. Events that commenced at the new Chinese Masonic Temple, for example, and proceeded outside in the streets helped unite the Chinese community with the broader El Paso community through participation. For funerals of prominent Chinese residents, the finest hearse available wove through city streets in a procession joined by the city's famous McGinty's band and a huge

⁵¹ Ivy, “Forgotten Color,” 11; Fahy, “Chinese Borderland Community Development,” 72-74.

⁵² Ryan, *Civic Wars*, 39.

⁵³ Perales, *Smelertown*, 74.

⁵⁴ Ryan, *Civic Wars*, 43.

celebratory dragon.⁵⁵ Chinese New Year celebrations could not go unnoticed, especially when some commenced to “firing six shooters and crackers” and otherwise disrupting the peace for their neighbors; in 1895, the “Mongolians” reportedly discharged fire crackers “wholesale around their premises, and ere they knew it a fine fire had been started on the south side [of the city]. The fire was extinguished, and the Celestials given to understand that the whole outfit would be rounded up if there was any more of this sort of thing.”⁵⁶ Still, for other observers and side participants, it was during the New Year season “that the Celestial truly shines. For the period he comes out of his shell of stoicism and indifference in which the Christian always finds him and is a truly lovable being,” an El Paso Herald reporter wrote.⁵⁷

Through shared work, recreational, and public spaces, the various groups thus established an infrastructure of contact that ensured the exchange of time, words, and sentiments on a regular basis. Economic competition and contact gave way at times to other relations of empathy, compassion, and friendliness. Many of these interactions may have been based loosely on shared forms of recreation, as in the gambling halls or in more private spaces of social recreation. For example, one winter night in 1911, a Japanese man by the name of Oyama lost his clothes in a “badger” game he played with two black men and a Mexican woman. Barefoot and naked, Oyama walked back to his hotel, after which he filed a complaint with the El Paso

⁵⁵ Fahy, “Chinese Borderland Community Development,” 108.

⁵⁶ *El Paso Herald*, January 25, 1895, 4.

⁵⁷ *El Paso Herald*, February 11, 1904, quoted in Marilyn Dell Brady, *The Asian Texans* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 29.

police and had the three arrested, no doubt providing a somewhat scandalous story for newspaper readers the next day.⁵⁸

At times, however, men and women of different national and racial backgrounds forged more serious, personal, and intimate forms of interracial alliances. As early as October 1885, a local newspaper announced:

Born – In this city, Wednesday morning, Oct. 14, 1885, to the wife of Sam Hing, a fine healthy boy. This is probably the first Chinaman ever born in the state of Texas, and he is not full-blooded, his mother being a New Orleans creole. Sam is the happiest man in El Paso today. He has already bought a town lot near the S. P. round house and will shortly put him up a residence. This young China man is not one of the class that “must go.”⁵⁹

In addition, one of the most prominent Chinese American families in El Paso today are descendants of a Chinese immigrant in the 1880s named Carlos Wong and his Mexican wife, Francisca Perez, described in family lore as not just a Mexicana but as an “Aztec princess.”⁶⁰ By

⁵⁸ Christe Celia Armendariz, “Inconspicuous but Estimable Immigrants: The Japanese in El Paso, 1890-1948” (Masters thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 1994), 71.

⁵⁹ *Lone Star*, October 14, 1885. In 1887, Hing was reported to have completed a “magnificent residence, containing all the latest improvements and present[ing] a striking contrast to the style in which the great masses of our Chinese inhabitants reside.” Nancy Ellen Farrar, *The Chinese in El Paso* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1972), 11 (quoting the caption for a postcard reproducing Hing’s house, published in 1887).

⁶⁰ Josephine Wong, Grace Got, and Herlinda Leong, interviewed by Richard Estrada, July 28, 1978, Transcript No. 257 (Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso), 2-8. According to family testimony, Wong came to Peru from China as a kind of “Chinese Columbus. Born into a well-to-do Cantonese family but “not satisfied to live within the confines,” he moved to Peru and married a Peruvian Indian woman, and when she died he gradually made his way up to Mexico and then the border. In the 1880s, Wong was apparently a labor contractor of Chinese laborers for the Mexican Central railroad and other railroad lines in Guadalajara, where he met Perez, and then he gradually gravitated north towards the border looking for entrepreneurial expansion opportunities with the railroad construction, alongside which he built a string of little hotels made up of rooms and restaurants. He married three times in total: the first time it was the

1900, according to county marriage license records, four applications for marriage licenses were submitted by Chinese men, three of whom were seeking to wed Mexican women.⁶¹

Eickemeyer himself may have recorded evidence of interracial households, even if he did not quite recognize or identify it as such. Ever-fascinated with the colored tableau he encountered in El Paso, Eickemeyer toured the Douglass “negro school” and observed, “No white children can go to it, and no negro can attend a white school; and yet I saw children in the negro school whiter than you or I” (emphasis in original).⁶² Though he paid some attention to the condition of the classroom itself and the learning materials, he was struck even more by the diverse range of “blackness” that confronted him:

The principal is nearly white, and is assisted by a lady teacher of about the same color. . . . He called out the sixth-year boys and girls, six in number, and as they stood in a row I had a fair opportunity to look them over. On the extreme left was a tall boy, as black as the ace of spades; next to him was another, two or three shades lighter, while the next one would have passed anywhere as a white boy. The girls differed in size and color as much as the boys; one of them had blue eyes and flaxen hair.⁶³

In actuality, interracial households may explain some of the mixed heritage suggested by the variations in skin color described by Eickemeyer. As Frances Hills, a long-time black resident of El Paso, clarified about the realities of segregation at the all-black Douglass School, “[t]he only

Peruvian woman; then to Perez, an “Aztec Indian woman”; and the third wife was a Spanish dancer he met during his travels as a businessman in Juárez.

⁶¹ Farrar, *The Chinese in El Paso*, 5. Applications for marriage licenses were filed by Apolonia Ornelas and Ah Ging on October 13, 1893, and by Louisa Alvarez and Chong Mung on May 31, 1900. Shan Yon Kee was married to Guadalupe Gemente on October 17, 1887, and Ah Sign and Ah Moy were married on January 19, 1888.

⁶² Eickemeyer, *Letters from the Southwest*, 48.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 48-49. He was further amused to hear the superintendant talk to the students “as if every little darky intended to be elected President of the United States at some future time.” *Ibid.*, 50. While such commentary reveals his own racist biases, it also suggests that El Paso fostered a kinder, possibly more hopeful racial environment for African Americans.

Hispanics that were there were the Hispanics that were mixed with black. In other words, one of the families that I recall quite well was the Sessions family; and he was a black and she was, of course, Hispanic and that family attended Douglass School.’⁶⁴

In the case of black-Mexican households, many of the older couples had actually met and come together in the early days of El Paso, before it boomed in the 1880s, when the black men served as “buffalo soldiers” with the U.S. Army and “enlisted” Mexican women as laundresses.⁶⁵ As the years progressed, and as the Second Ward expanded with Mexican and black families sharing the same streets and blocks, Mexican and black children spent much time playing together and became close friends. Although they attended different schools because of Jim Crow, many even walked to school together; as one long-time black resident of El Paso recalled, many of her school-age friends were “Mexican Americans and we were very close friends. . . . Most of them went to Beall and San Jacinto [schools] and so we would have to pass San Jacinto

⁶⁴ Frances Hills interview, 6. See also Leona Washington, interviewed by Charlotte Ivy, Nov. 2, 1985, Transcript no. 762, Black Community of El Paso (Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso), 18. See also Patton household, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Texas, El Paso County, Enumeration District 18, sheet B-12, dwelling 217; Moody household, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Texas, El Paso County, Enumeration District 18, sheet B-19, dwelling 353 (listing the racial identity of the children born to black men and Mexican women as “black”). Compare with Jinger household, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Texas, El Paso County, Enumeration District 19, sheet A-24, dwelling 453 (listing the names of children born to a Chinese man and his Mexican wife as Alexandro and Celestine, and identifying the children’s race as “Chinese”).

⁶⁵ *El Paso Times*, October 10, 1893; Horne, *Black and Brown*, 46-47. James Leiker explores the interracial unions of black soldiers and Mexican women in more detail in James N. Leiker, *Racial Borders: Black Soldiers Along the Rio Grande* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 84-89. See also Daniel Timothy Lee, “Between a New Germany and a New America: Unions between African-American Soldiers and German Women, 1945-1960” (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Berkeley, 2009) (examining the interracial marriages between black soldiers and German women during World War II, and their relationship to the state and to post-war civil rights struggles in the United States).

going to Douglass.”⁶⁶ Because of Jim Crow, many black children and families also opted to patronize Mexican theaters, such as the Alcazar and Colon, rather than suffer the indignity of enforced segregation and inferior balcony seating at the American theaters.⁶⁷ The shared social spaces fostered interracial intimacy, and by the 1930s black-Mexican families were so common in El Paso and their mixed children so numerous that they were called “negro-burros,” literally, “black donkeys.”⁶⁸

“A strange picture for an American city”

As suggested by this derogatory label, however, many of these relationships suffered under the strain of social disapproval from members of their own racial groups as well as the larger community. In fact, Mrs. Hing (the “New Orleans creole” mentioned above) apparently felt ostracized by the women of El Paso enough to leave town and move to Mexico, followed soon thereafter by Hing.⁶⁹ The response of some Mexican men in Chihuahua City to the interracial marriage between a “mulatto” and a Mexican woman may well represent the antipathies that simmered beneath the surface of black-Mexican unions. After their marriage, some of her “countrymen became indignant and ordered him to leave the place,” ending in disastrous results: the groom drew a knife and killed one of the men.⁷⁰ The strong bonds of childhood friendships

⁶⁶ Leona Washington interview, 4.

⁶⁷ Leona Washington interview, 5-6; Ruth Nash King interview, 7-8.

⁶⁸ Neil Foley, “Partly Colored or Other White: Mexican Americans and Their Problem with the Color Line,” in *Beyond Black and White: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the U.S. South and Southwest*, ed. Stephanie Cole and Alison M. Parker (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 134.

⁶⁹ See Farrar, *The Chinese in El Paso*, 11.

⁷⁰ “A Carnival of Crime in Chihuahua,” *San Antonio Daily Express*, January 24, 1883, 1.

also did not always withstand the social pressures that demanded – in subtle and not so subtle forms – monoracial associations. As Ruth King Nash explains, by the time she grew older and “it was time to go to parties and things, [she and her Mexican American friends] had gone our separate ways. . . . We went to different schools and really sincerely underlying it, I think it was [because of] color. . . . [It wasn’t something] we really thought about but I think color might have had something to do with it, I really do, coming from the parents perhaps.”⁷¹ Despite the more flexible attitude towards race that many held in El Paso, multiracial relations still faced formidable opposition and could often be sustained only through struggle.

Of course, the raid on “miscegenationists” provides the clearest evidence of the pressures – and particularly the increasingly institutionalized pressures of white supremacist laws – that mounted against interracial couples and their families. The raid was, however, more than a statement of general disapproval of mixed race relationships by the community. Rather, it was part of an organized movement by certain members of El Paso’s self-professed “respectable” classes to target and marginalize the presence of specific social ills in the city. Sharing in the reform spirit that infused the Progressive Era years with widespread movements against the ills of urbanization and industrialization, El Paso reformers energetically targeted gambling and prostitution, activities which happened to take place largely in an area of the downtown section concentrated around Utah Street and overlapping with Chihuahuita and El Segundo Barrio.⁷² In

⁷¹ Ruth Nash King interview, 15. Many parents may have been possibly threatened by the potential of mixed race and sex socialization as their children reached teenage years.

⁷² See, e.g., *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900*, Texas, El Paso County, Enumeration District 19, sheet A-21, B-21, A-22 (showing overlap of mixed-race blocks with “lewd” Utah Street district). On the reform movement against gambling halls, see J. F. Hulse, *Texas Lawyer: The Life of William H. Burges* (El Paso: Mangan Books, 1982), 39-57, 115-26. On the movement to reform the “Utah Street Reservation” and prostitution, see H. Gordon Frost, *The Gentlemen’s Club: The Story of Prostitution in El Paso* (El Paso: Mangan Books, 1983); Ann R. Gabbert, “Prostitution and Moral Reform in the Borderlands: El Paso, 1890-1920,” *Journal of*

1890, the city cracked down more strictly on prostitution by creating a restricted zone of tolerance, requiring all prostitutes to register with the police, and mandating weekly inspections by the city's health physician.⁷³ The campaigns against the city's vice culture were intended not only to produce more desirable and acceptable forms of social relationships and citizenship, but also to help transform El Paso from "Sin City" to "Sun City" – in other words, an industrious, modern American city worth investing in.⁷⁴ To do so, moral reformers pushed brothels, gambling operations, and bars across the border from El Paso to Juárez.⁷⁵

the History of Sexuality 12:4 (2003), 575-604. For additional studies about the vice industries in border towns during the early twentieth century, see Robin E. Robinson, "Vice and Tourism on the United States-Mexico Border: A Comparison of Three Communities in the Era of U.S. Prohibition" (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 2002); Eric Michael Schantz, "From the 'Mexicali Rose' to the Tijuana Brass: Vice Tours of the United States-Mexico Border, 1910-1965" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2001).

⁷³ Frost, *Gentlemen's Club*, 77, 79-80. See also *ibid.*, 93-94, 117-20, 125-26, 145-60 (describing repeated attempts by the moral community to minimize and control gambling and prostitution in El Paso). As Ann Gabbert explains, "the efforts of El Paso's reformers sputtered to a halt many times," as the city's civic leaders tried to balance moral imperatives with economically-sound programs, which often meant accommodating the vice industry to some extent. Gabbert, "Prostitution and Moral Reform in the Borderlands," 576.

⁷⁴ At the same time, as El Paso's earlier historians have recognized, the worlds of Magoffin Avenue – named after the city's mayor – and the more notorious red-light Utah Street were not discrete, but rather, they overlapped and leaked into each other. Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North*, 247-48. As Owen White explains, "While these men [e.g., saloon keepers and gamblers] were not constructive citizens in the true sense of the word – for no man can be constructive who conducts a business that is morally destructive – they were nevertheless imbued with an intense amount of public spirit. . . . [They] contributed liberally to all funds which were expended for public amusement, and by so doing they helped very materially to build up the civic pride of El Paso." During the city's early days, when there were no charitable organizations founded yet, the gambling men and "sporting" women were often among the first to help those in need. Owen P. White, *Out of the Desert: The Historical Romance of El Paso* (El Paso: McMath Co., 1923), 149-50.

⁷⁵ Oscar J. Martínez, *Troublesome Border* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988), 114. The formation of the border "vice" industry in northern Mexico was thus significantly funded by American capital, and such foreign investment continued throughout the Prohibition era (1918-33). *Ibid.*

The goal for local reformers, in other words, was to transform the city to conform more closely to the American cities that many left behind on the East Coast. Early appraisals of El Paso were not the most promising, as visitors described the city as evincing “few Texan characteristics” and, according to El Paso historian Owen White, looking “as typically Mexican as if it had been built five hundred miles south of the Rio Grande instead of one-half a mile north of it.”⁷⁶ However, by the 1890s, with the city’s boom still on the upswing, conditions were changing for residents and visitors. In fact, Eickemeyer had initially decided to visit El Paso based on an encyclopedia entry that described it as “a town on the border of Mexico, having forty-five hundred inhabitants, half of whom were barbarous natives.” But he was surprised to find “instead of the town described in the encyclopædia, a well-regulated American city, with churches and schools, and the schoolmaster on top.”⁷⁷ In addition, he noted with approval, “[t]he streets are as level as a table and as straight as arrows. The sidewalks, of asphalt, are kept in good order, and as it does not rain very often it is easy to keep them.”⁷⁸ When Gordon Campbell White arrived in El Paso in 1901, he observed that “[a]side from mule cars and many Mexicans El Paso is no wise different from any other city of 20000 in the U.S.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Hans Mickle, “El Paso, The Future Immense: A Pen Picture of the Town -- Its Present and Future Prospects,” *San Antonio Daily Express*, February 4, 1883; White, *Out of the Desert*, 157-58.

⁷⁷ Eickemeyer, *Letters from the Southwest*, 6-7.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁷⁹ Gordon Campbell White Diary, Feb 3, 1901, vol. 5, p. 143, Campbell W. Pennington Papers, 1872 - (Benson Latin American Collection, General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin). It appears that the city’s improvements lagged behind in some respects, however. As late as 1904, the streets – as straight as they were – still remained unpaved and, El Paso historian Owen White explained, as “[t]here were no storm sewers in the town . . . at the season of the summer thunder storms, and in the period of winter rains, the waters would rush down Oregon street and Mesa avenue in a rapid and irresistible flood and turn the business portion of the town into a lake.” White, *Out of the Desert*, 229. Meanwhile, the city did not have the most sanitary water source

In terms of modern infrastructure and notions of progress for late-nineteenth century Americans, El Paso seemed particularly advanced when compared to its southern neighbor. Although Paso del Norte, renamed Ciudad Juárez in 1888, had dominated the local valley prior to the 1880s, El Paso rapidly outpaced its sister city with the railroad's arrival. For many, the differences in population growth, capital accumulation, and resource development were stark. Hans Mickle, visiting El Paso in 1883, took a street car from El Paso to the Mexican Central depot across the river and found that "[w]hile almost everything on [the El Paso] side is new and lively, on the other side it is old and sleepy. Going over the street cars the first thing that attracts your attention are the mud walls, inclosing mud houses, and vineyards and orchards, everywhere traversed by irrigation ditches. . . . [The adobe houses] have flat roofs, of dirt or cement; the walls extend all around the yard or block, enclosing other houses, stables, store houses, gardens, etc., giving the streets a very dismal appearance, as nothing but the dead walls are seen with very few openings."⁸⁰ While the streets of El Paso appeared to have a life of their own, expanding and contracting with the comings and goings of pedestrians and cars and the perpetual expansion of streets filling up with houses and buildings, Paso del Norte seemed to meander without purpose

until after the turn of the century, and residents were forced to drink water pumped from wells in the bed of the Rio Grande river or from the river itself. "When the river was high," according to White, "water was muddy and plentiful; when the river was low it was scarce and clear, and at all times, regardless of quantity, the quality was doubtful." Residents complained when they learned that such unpalatable things as old shoes, clothing, tin cans and medicine bottles had been polluting the reservoir. But public patience came to an end "when it was reported that a Chinaman, long dead, had been found contaminating El Paso's supply of drinking water," according to White. The town soon received a new water company and a new supply of water when the International Water Company, a subsidiary concern of the El Paso and Southwestern Railroad, came in and bored deep wells out on the Mesa and abandoned the old reservoir system. *Ibid.*, 212-13.

⁸⁰ Oscar J. Martínez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), 19; Mickle, "El Paso, The Future Immense," *San Antonio Daily Express*, February 4, 1883. See also White, *Out of the Desert*, 123.

“in straggling hamlets and ranches for twelve miles down the river and is said to contain upwards of seven thousand inhabitants, but,” Mickle interjected, “to save the life of me, I couldn’t guess where they keep themselves, unless they inhabit every crook and corner of a wall.”⁸¹ Eickemeyer expressed his curiosity more succinctly when he wrote, “On our side of the Rio Grande, . . . you are continually reminded of the Northern States and their Puritanical notions, and you have to go over to Juarez and leave the horse-car tracks to be transplanted into a new and strange world.” For American boosters and city developers, El Paso shook off “its Mexican appearance,” as White explained in 1923, “and as rapidly as it could, assumed an air and a manner which was consistent with the ideals and ambitions of its citizens,” meaning American citizens.⁸²

Such sentiments dividing the population between “American” modernity, civilization, and progress and “Mexican” primitivism and laziness verging on the pathological, of course, were not original. Rather, they echoed the stereotypes that prevailed throughout the nineteenth-century Southwest, and from Texas to California, that simultaneously romanticized and disparaged Mexicans on *both* sides of the border.⁸³ Indeed, one newcomer observed about southern El Paso in 1894:

Here live the Mexicans in their flat-topped adobe houses. The street scenes here remind one of pictures of the Holy Land. A woman comes along the sidewalk balancing an earthen jar of water on her head. Inside a near-by door another woman grinds corn on a stone metate for making tortillas. Down the street loiters a burro – an exact representation of the animal our Saviour rode into Jerusalem. Up there in the plaza are half a dozen women, each

⁸¹ Mickle, “El Paso, The Future Immense,” *San Antonio Daily Express*, February 4, 1883.

⁸² Eickemeyer, *Letters from the Southwest*, 32; White, *Out of the Desert*, 159-60.

⁸³ See, e.g., Arnaldo De León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes Toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983); Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848-1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 53-78.

with an earthen water jar in her hands, standing round the fountain in neighborhood gossip. A little distance up the street is the church. In front sits a blind beggar imploring with whiny voice for alms. You meet half a dozen women strolling down the street, each wearing a shawl thrown over her head and most of her face hidden.⁸⁴

In contrast to this “old world” image of El Paso’s Mexican population, once the writer crossed to the north side of the city, marked by Overland Street, “Now you hear English spoken and see brick buildings. You see your own kind of people. And you wonder how it can be that the Mexican part of the town is so foreign.”⁸⁵ In 1916, a writer for *The New Republic* also contrasted the racial distance he perceived between the “Americans” and “Mexicans” in the border town, but in more bleak terms:

El Paso wants to attract “the right people,” and the right people, in America, are . . . those who demand evidence of standardized push and progress.

Progressiveness and push El Paso has in abundance. . . . But you would naturally expect buoyancy in such a body of business men as you see in the El Paso offices. They are mostly still young, with their fortunes to make, but yet in sight. They are big, blond, alert, more typically Anglo-Saxon than business men further inland. And their wives and daughters look flamboyantly white and feminine, perhaps in contrast to the little, hard, bronze-colored Mexicans who make up over half the population of the city, and five-sixths of the population visible on the streets.

The “American” face of El Paso lived up to the writer’s image of the industrious, lively Anglo-Saxon ideal. On the other hand, the Mexican population presented a “disquieting” and “somber” image for this visitor; “They speak to one another very little, they laugh scarcely at all. Most of

⁸⁴ Bush, *Gringo Doctor*, 82.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

them are ragged and dirty; crooked bodies and misshapen heads are strikingly common.”⁸⁶ The difference between “American” El Paso and “Mexican” El Paso was visible for all to see.

Many of the city’s white residents similarly held their Mexican neighbors, co-workers, and employees in low esteem, equating them with laziness, carelessness, and inferiority. For example, when John Taylor was injured on the job, he brought suit against the smelting company that had employed him as well as “the Mexican” named Flores, who Taylor faulted for his injuries. Throughout the course of the lawsuit, Taylor’s attorneys repeatedly referred to Flores as “the Mexican,” which the company argued was intended to prejudice the jury by constantly identifying Flores by his race as a Mexican and thereby inferring carelessness or incompetency. A witness for Taylor further testified that Flores “was willing enough, but he was ignorant (and a consumptive, and also drinks more or less), he was willing enough, but not able to do much. As a class Mexican helpers are careless,” he interjected, “and this one was like the others, they are not as competent as Americans are.”⁸⁷

Though there appeared no risk of confusing El Paso and Juárez, or in identifying what made El Paso distinctly “American” in contrast to “Mexican,” El Paso reformers did have one visible problem on their hands: the multiracial “disorder” in the city that threatened to degenerate into a mongrel identity, typically associated with Mexicans and so anathema to the standard of

⁸⁶ “El Paso,” *The New Republic* (June 17, 1916), 166. See also *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Brief for Appellant, p. 62, July 20, 1907, Consolidated Kansas City Smelting and Refining Co. v. John P. Taylor, Case no. 3863, Texas 4th Court of Appeals case files; Deposition of Charles A. Bolton, *ibid.* See also Cross-examination of Dr. Howard Thompson, El Paso Street Ry. Co. et al. v. Jesus Talamantes, Case no. 1172, Texas 4th Court of Appeals case files (where witness testifies in a personal injury case that “[s]ome of the descendants of the Aztec race have pretty good sense in some ways, and in others not so much. Some of them are pretty shrewd”).

pure racial identity cultivated by the majority of nineteenth-century Americans.⁸⁸ As Eickemeyer noted even before he ever landed in El Paso, the possibility of racial intermixture provided a disorienting experience for many Americans. During his visit to New Orleans, he took stock of the “long line of wharves loaded with cotton bales, sugar hogsheads, and other merchandise, piled tier upon tier, look[ing] like an industrious place,” suitable for his northeastern sensibilities. “But,” he continued, “the French market, with the French and Spanish creoles and the negroes of all shades, made a strange picture for an American city.”⁸⁹ If that was his impression of New Orleans, no wonder he was so fascinated, if not necessarily repulsed, by the multiracial tableau of El Paso.

In other parts of the nation, white Americans were busy tightening Jim Crow segregation, expanding anti-miscegenation laws, and enforcing residential exclusion by means of new legal innovations such as racially restrictive covenants. The legitimacy of institutionalizing segregation to keep the races distinct was provided in an influential and often-quoted explanation by a Pennsylvania court judge:

Why the Creator made one black and the other white, we know not; but the fact is apparent, and the races distinct, each producing its own kind, and following the peculiar law of its constitution. Conceding equality, with natures as perfect and rights as sacred, yet God has made them dissimilar, with those natural instincts and feelings which He always imparts to His creatures, when He intends that they shall not overstep the natural boundaries He has assigned to them. The natural law which forbids intermarriage and that social amalgamation which leads to a corruption of races, is as clearly divine as that which imparted to them different natures. The tendency of intimate social intermixture is to amalgamation, contrary to the law of races. The separation of the white and black races upon the surface of the globe is a fact equally apparent. Why this is so, it is not necessary to speculate; but the fact of a distribution

⁸⁸ For derogatory stereotypes about “mongrel” Mexicans, see De León, *They Called Them Greasers*, 14-23.

⁸⁹ Eickemeyer, *Letters from the Southwest*, 6.

of men by race and color is as visible in the providential arrangement of the earth as that of heat and cold. The natural separation of the races is therefore an undeniable fact, and all social organizations which lead to their amalgamation are repugnant to the law of nature. From social amalgamation it is but a step to illicit intercourse, and but another to intermarriage.⁹⁰

Strict segregation, at least in other parts of the country, thus emerged a law of nature, an absolute necessity to avoid the social horror of interracial intimacy and marriage. As Ariela Gross argues, during the postbellum period “[w]hiteness had to be portrayed as clear-cut and unquestionable. . . . Under Reconstruction and Jim Crow, separation became the key to whiteness.”⁹¹

Such separation, however, was not restricted to white and black. Rather, according to Gary Nash, based on purportedly scientific research, the notion of Social Darwinism, and the prompting of emerging eugenicists, turn-of-the-century Americans adopted a “new white orthodoxy depict[ing] mixed-race people as degenerate and racial amalgamation as a prescription for national suicide.” The racial power of whiteness was preserved by the logic of racial separation as universally-applied, such that each racial group needed to be kept distinct, identifiable, and ideally insular, and the nation thereby protected from “hybrid degeneracy” and “mongrelization.”⁹² Towards that end, the modern administrative state of the early twentieth century U.S. held expansive powers over race classification, produced through state projects such as the census, the enforcement of segregation laws, the regulation of immigration, and the establishment of vital statistics bureaus that recorded births, deaths, marriages, and divorces.⁹³ In

⁹⁰ Quoted in Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 70-71.

⁹¹ Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell*, 78.

⁹² Nash, “The Hidden History of Mestizo America,” in Hodes, *Sex, Love, Race*, 22-23. See also Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell*, 223-30.

⁹³ Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 149. See also Anna Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America: Photography and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy* (Berkeley: University of

1911, the ideological pursuit of a scientifically-ordered racial taxonomy culminated in the Dillingham Reports of the Immigration Commission's Dictionary of Races or Peoples, recognizing 45 "races or peoples" among immigrants coming to the United States. The report further divided these groups of immigrant peoples into what the Commission concluded were the "chief divisions or basic races of mankind": "the Caucasian, Ethiopian, Mongolian, Malay, and Americans, or, as familiarly called, the white, black, yellow, brown, and red races."⁹⁴

In many respects, then, El Paso was a late-comer to the national segregation project.⁹⁵ Ironically, white reformer anxieties about racial purity and national identity were perhaps best expressed in an El Paso Herald report from 1889 about a case brought before the local El Paso court by a southern "negro," not one of "your side-board collar darkies, but a plain, regular, every day darky who minds his own business and tries to make an honest living." He was missing a shirt and "finally saw it on the arm of a light-colored coon." When the defendant explained that he found it in the street, and decided to take it home to make a "mop rag fer de ole 'omam," the plaintiff reportedly lashed out at him for turning the shirt "dat my ole mammy made fur me" into a rag. But more than this, he continued, "I can't 'spress my 'tempt uv you. Who is you anyhow, you light cullud trash; you's neder brack ner white, yer got no nashun, you ain't."⁹⁶ The newspaper had published what it no doubt considered an amusing and colorful account of

California Press, 2009) (discussing the Immigration Bureau's control of immigration through the technology of racial photography).

⁹⁴ *Reports of the Immigration Commission: Dictionary of Races of Peoples* (42 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), V, 2-3.

⁹⁵ Indeed, Arizona voided "all marriages of white persons with negroes, mulattoes, Indians, or mongolians [sic]" as early as 1865. See Grace Delgado, "In the Age of Exclusion: Race, Region and Chinese Identity in the Making of the Arizona-Sonora Borderlands, 1863-1943" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2000), 52.

⁹⁶ *El Paso Herald*, February 6, 1889, 1.

conflict within the city's black community. But the plaintiff's scathing words against the "light cullud trash" who "got no nashun" encapsulated the dominant racial ethos of the day. With race and color conflated with nation and belonging, those ambiguous in color and race were left nation-less, or at least not a part of the U.S. nation.

By the turn of the century, most El Paso citizens would agree. When a white prostitute named Minnie Wood showed up at the train depot in the arms of a black man, her outraged fellow-passengers had her removed from the train for drunkenness, disorderly conduct, and foul language. The outraged appellate judge approved of the forced ejection: "Suffice it to say that unless the evidence of the appellee, a self-confessed prostitute who has sunk in degradation even below her class, is to be taken against that of a number of respectable witnesses, her conduct and language while on appellant's train was such as to make it the imperative duty of appellant's employes [sic] to rid the passengers of her presence." Rejecting the arguments of the "maudlin, drunken, depraved wreck of humanity" embodied by Minnie Wood – and implicitly her black companion – the judge deemed it appropriate to throw racially-suspect, "disorderly and vicious" persons off the train.⁹⁷ To combat the "disorderly" multiracial associations that threatened to hold back El Paso's modernization and Americanization, reformers realized that they would have to turn their attention to removing the racially-suspect from the nation altogether.

"Give them a chance to leave the country"

Thus when police focused on the multiracial blocks south of downtown, surrounding Second Street near Stanton and vice-ridden Utah Street, for their raid on "miscegenationists," they were

⁹⁷ Opinion, Dec. 16, 1903, A. T. and S. F. Ry. Co. s. Minnie Woods, Case no. 2865, Texas 4th Court of Appeals case files (emphasis added).

doing more than simply enforcing a statute.⁹⁸ Interracial households were not purely private relationships of interracial intimacy. Instead, these were social arrangements that spilled out into the streets, whose mixed race productions were visible to all passersby, and very much still part of the public space of the community. As Natalia Molina has shown in her study of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Los Angeles, health officials' "efforts to promote the reputation of the city as modern and healthful were interwoven with their role as local arbiters of the meanings of race and racial identities."⁹⁹ Similarly, in the case of El Paso, reformers sought to re-inscribe the modern American borders of proper racial formation and identity by reproducing the powerful ideology that multiracial associations in themselves were suspect. In Barthian fashion, these policemen and the reformers who spurred them on thus targeted the blurry racial boundaries that merged the more white sections of the city not only with non-white sections, but a mixed, non-white populace as well.¹⁰⁰ The harm was not necessarily that such

⁹⁸ Of the eight black men who were arrested during the raid, only three could be located in the 1892-1893 city directory, and only partially. According to the El Paso Daily Times, among the "negro" men arrested were "E Franklin," "J. W. Williams," and "Mr. Oliver." *El Paso Times*, October 8, 1893. In the 1892-1893 city directory, the only Franklin listed was not an "E. Franklin" but rather a "B. J. Franklin," a "colored" porter residing at 400 S. Stanton; instead of a "J. W. Williams," there is a listing for a "colored" waiter named "Frank Williams" rooming at S. Stanton between Overland and Second Streets; and there is one listing for a "colored" resident going by the name of "M. C. Oliver" rooming at the corner of Utah and Third Streets. *El Paso City Directory for 1892-93* (El Paso: R. L. Polk & Co., 1892-93), 65, 105, 140. These three locations are one to three blocks from each other. See 1893 Sanborn Map of El Paso and Juarez.

⁹⁹ Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 2.

¹⁰⁰ Chiding earlier anthropologists for wasting time and effort in exploring and cataloguing the different traits between ethnic groups and cultures, Fredrik Barth locates the formation of identity at the boundaries between groups. "The critical focus of investigation," he claims, "becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses." Fredrik Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1998), 15. To better understand the creation and persistence of ethnic groups, Barth thus insists on shifting the

associations threatened to dilute whiteness by increasing the risks of white-nonwhite mixing. Rather, even where the associations were among primarily non-white groups, the social damage was done – the racial lines had been blurred and distinct group boundaries rendered porous.

To combat the assault on their multiracial associations, however, it appears that the “miscegenationists” resorted to political protest channeled via monoracial group activism. Despite the “osmosis,” as Frederick Barth calls it, of these actors across racial boundaries in the first place, those boundaries could not be ignored or erased altogether.¹⁰¹ Three days following the arrest, “every colored citizen of El Paso” was requested to attend a meeting at city hall, organized by the city’s Colored Protection Club, to protest the anti-miscegenation law, discuss strategies for the best legal defense of those arrested on charges of unlawful marriage, and raise funds.¹⁰² Prominent in the meeting and in leading the fundraising efforts was John Clemmons, a barber shop owner who was likely one of the more respectable leaders of the larger black community in El Paso.¹⁰³ Clemmons and several other black men “made speeches, moderate in tone but earnest, and in some passages instinct with pathos and artlessly eloquent.” Support for the “miscegenationists” also came from a more unlikely source, albeit another socially-marginalized group: twenty-six white “tramps” (as they were called by the newspaper) who had

analytical focus away from the internal features of distinct groups to ethnic boundaries and the processes of boundary maintenance.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 10.

¹⁰² *El Paso Times*, October 8, 1893; *ibid.*, October 10, 1893. Following the meeting at city hall and while still awaiting the outcome of the miscegenation cases, the “colored people” of El Paso held another meeting at city hall to “discuss ‘the rights of the colored people of America.’” *Ibid.*, October 14, 1893.

¹⁰³ John Clemmons is probably the “John Clemons” listed in the 1892-1893 city directory as “(col) prop [proprietor?] barber shop 901 Sheldon bldg res 516 Missouri.” *El Paso Directory, 1892-93*, 49.

just been “suppered” by the city and were in the hall during the meeting. According to The El Paso Daily Times, “the young captain of one of the gangs made a pretty little speech expressing sympathy for the colored men who had gotten into trouble far [sic] marrying women of their own color but not of their own race.”¹⁰⁴

This statement, of course, finally raises questions about the Mexican women themselves, whose presence in the documents are largely silenced. The anti-miscegenation law was an attempt to inscribe the black-white binary traditionally found in the American South onto the more variegated multiracial landscape of the borderlands. But in social practice, although legally “white,” the designation of Mexicans as “non-white” by many Anglo-Americans complicated and undermined the nation’s dominant racial paradigm premised on a distinctly black versus white society. As suggested by the “tramp’s” statement that “color” trumped race, Mexicans and African Americans were the same in the eyes of many white Americans: no matter what, both were ultimately not “white.” It could have been for this reason – because of the common

¹⁰⁴ *El Paso Times*, October 10, 1893. After the purse had been passed around for the defense fund, Clemmons reportedly then encouraged the audience to donate additional funds for “their unfortunate white friends present,” and gathered \$2.40 for the men. The problem of unemployed and itinerant “tramps” evidently plagued El Paso around this same period. For example, on October 8, 1893, the *El Paso Times* reported, immediately following a notice that a “carload of Chinamen” had arrived at Juarez and would soon be in El Paso, that “Sixty-five tramps landed from an incoming train just above the city last night about dark, having been denied the privilege of landing in Tucson. Look to your residences and your stores,” the newspaper warned El Pasoans. *Ibid.*, October 8, 1893. More significantly, on October 17, 1893, the city approved an ordinance penalizing railroad employees “who shall bring, or aid, or abet or assist in bringing into [the city] any vagrant, mendicant, pauper or indigent person.” Vagrants were further defined as any “idle person who lives without any means of support, and makes no exertion to obtain a livelihood by honest employment” or “[a]ny person who strolls idly about the streets of towns or cities, having no local habitation and no honest business or employment,” in addition to prostitutes, gamblers, drunkards, and beggars. “Tramps Must Go By,” *ibid.*, October 18, 1893.

understanding within the community that Mexicans were not white – that the judge threw several of the miscegenation cases out of court by October 18, 1893.¹⁰⁵

An alternative, and possibly more likely, explanation for the cases' dismissal is hinted at in a speech that one of the defendants, M. W. Wiley, offered at the city hall meeting. First, he “scored the selfish and unsympathetic members of his own race who he charged with having said: ‘Let those negroes who have married Mexican women fight it out,’” responding that “Some of these scrubby old stumps of colored men don’t know what freedom is.” Stating that “[h]e would treat all men as gentlemen who deserved to be so treated, whatever their color, poverty or station in life,” he then took to task the government for persecuting black men like himself who had, he explained, married Mexican women whom they had met during their service as soldiers for the U.S. army. “One man who thus married in the army now has a daughter fifteen years old,” he explained, “and several others have large families of children born in honest wedlock, and will this government see such men sent to the pen and not even give them a chance to leave the country?”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., October 18, 1893. No express reason for dismissing the cases was given, and the author could find no further information about the incident or the cases in the newspapers nor court records.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., October 10, 1893; *ibid.*, October 11, 1893. Surprisingly, the *El Paso Times* sympathized with the plight of these black men: “there is certainly a sad side to this prosecution of miscegenationists, when the defendants happen to be ignorant or pioneer negroes. We offer no defense of crime [sic] – for it is a crime against public sentiment and public decency. . . . But it appears to us that while these officers are hunting up these negro cases they might with equal propriety and commendable zeal discover a few of the cases of open and notorious violations of the law in the same line by more respectable people. . . . [T]here are times when the position and intelligence of the offender should be taken into the account.” *Ibid.*, October 11, 1893. It thus appears that there were other examples of multiracial associations in the community that were considered more offensive, by virtue of class and social status. But as Peggy Pascoe explains, “[a] great deal of anecdotal evidence suggests that in practice police enforced miscegenation laws . . . rather sporadically, overlooking a good deal of illicit sexuality, both interracial and same-race, that occurred in private. In the end, the criminal enforcement of miscegenation laws depended heavily on public complaints. In general, arrests were used to make examples of

Migration, in other words, again offered the various “colored” people of El Paso a way out from the increasing stranglehold of white supremacy that spread steadily across the United States in the age of Jim Crow. African Americans, in particular, had used their westward migrations as an expression of freedom and in the search of opportunities following the Civil War and emancipation. Some migrated even further now – across national lines, which admittedly was not a hard thing to do from El Paso. Indeed, The Daily Times reported that “[a] good many colored people . . . engaged in moving their household goods over to Mexico” the day immediately following the raid.¹⁰⁷ Fearing similar persecution against themselves and their families, these “colored” people from El Paso packed their belongings and crossed the Río Grande into Juárez, Mexico. But as these mixed families moved across the border, the reformers obtained their desired goal: that of erasing multiracial associations from El Paso and reproducing the notion that the United States belonged only to those who fit its national model of complete monoracial segregation.

In the end, the episode presented in this chapter relates not only to questions about the nature of race relations in El Paso (and ultimately other border zones) at the turn of the century, but also to questions about the nature of race formation in the United States at the dawn of the twentieth century. In this chapter, I have tried to remember James Clifford’s conceptualization of identity, “not as [a] boundary to be maintained but as a nexus of relations and transactions

particular couples rather than to capture every supposed offender.” Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 135-36.

¹⁰⁷ *El Paso Times*, October 8, 1893.

actively engaging a subject.”¹⁰⁸ As certain elites organized to redraw a thicker border between white and non-white El Paso, their actions and the events that followed laid bare the complex relations and transactions of the multiracial society that El Paso had become. In the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, at the national periphery, the multiracial relations and the challenges such relations posed to white supremacy would be a precursor of things to come at the center.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 344.

¹⁰⁹ Research on early-twentieth century Los Angeles reveals a city that was surprisingly cosmopolitan, multiracial, and multiethnic, where Mexicans, Asians, African Americans, Jews and other ethnic groups often lived and worked side by side, in shared neighborhoods. See George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 74-77; Allison Varzally, *Making a Non-White America: Californians Coloring Outside Ethnic Lines, 1925-1955* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 30-45. Many of the Mexican immigrants who migrated to Los Angeles from 1900 to the 1940s crossed the border at Juárez, often settling in El Paso temporarily before moving on. See Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 48 (Table 6), 65. For many of them, El Paso may have served as an introductory test-case for multiracial relations that would shape their interactions with the diverse community in California.

CHAPTER THREE

“HUNTING FOR CHINAMEN”

On the night of February 17, 1892, U.S. customs inspector George Duval noticed two men crossing the international bridge between El Paso, Texas and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua. Something about these men seemed odd, for Duval left his office to question them. The first man he stopped was Mexican and had nothing to declare. But when Duval questioned his friend, this man – perhaps in a panic – threw open his Mexican blanket instead of answering and Duval saw that he was a “Chinaman.” Both men were arrested, Ah Lee was charged “with being a Chinese person unlawfully within the United States of America,” and his deportation was ordered. What tipped Duval off? “The Chinaman had on the Mexican’s hat, and the Mexican had on the Chinaman’s hat,” he testified.¹

This chapter examines the problems of citizenship and national identity that immigrants such as Ah Lee and his Mexican companion raised by their movements through the U.S.-Mexico borderlands at the turn of the twentieth century. By 1900, alarm bells were ringing in El Paso about the dangers of permitting such a large Chinese population in the city, and critics increasingly pointed to the failure of authorities to enforce the Chinese Exclusion Act effectively at the El Paso-Juárez border. Their concerns about the Chinese within city limits, however, were soon transferred to the border, by means of which some local elites hoped to forestall the presence of Chinese immigrants in El Paso entirely. Ascribing Chinese immigrants, as symbolized by the supposedly ubiquitous Chinese laundryman in town, with social deviancy and

¹ File 2 (24), Equity Case Files from the Western District Court of Texas at El Paso Relating to the Chinese Exclusion Acts, 1892-1915, Records of the District Courts of the United States, Fort Worth, Texas, RG 21, National Archives Microfilm Publications, M1610, National Archives, San Francisco [hereinafter Equity Case Files, RG 21, M1610].

the dangerous transgression of gendered boundaries, local nativists called for the federal government to aid them in policing the Chinese in their midst. During the 1890s and the first decade of 1910, the federal government obliged, sending more resources down to the border.

Chinese immigrants at the border were thus continuously devising new strategies to evade immigration agents, or as they were called by some Chinese immigrants, “men who were hunting for Chinamen.”² As Patrick Ettinger has observed, the “defiance of immigration restrictions was a seemingly natural, almost reflexive response for some aspiring immigrants, and the determination and resourcefulness of those immigrants made border enforcement perennially difficult. The ingenuity of immigrants and smugglers, coupled with the expansive physical geographies of both the northern and southern frontiers, made undocumented entry a feasible alternative for hundreds of thousands of excluded or excludable aliens determined to reach the United States.”³ As Chinese immigrants in the borderlands pushed against the constraints of the Chinese Exclusion Act, they took advantage not only of a poorly guarded border but also the multiracial tableau of the borderlands. Disguising themselves as Mexican immigrants or presenting themselves as Mexican residents and citizens, Chinese immigrants blurred the boundaries of racial identity.

In playing with and trying to manipulate U.S. immigration officials’ racial preconceptions, such Chinese immigrants and their Mexican, black, and white associates also created deep administrative confusion and doubt. For immigration officials stationed on the border, properly enforcing the Chinese Exclusion Act required mastering the racial identities of border-crossers. To do so, U.S. immigration officers inspected persons appearing at the border

² U.S. v. Sam Tong, August 16, 1892, File 9 (49), Equity Case Files, RG 21, M1610.

³ See Patrick Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines: Border Enforcement and the Origins of Undocumented Immigration, 1882-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 2.

more systematically, in order to determine the authentic identity of immigrants and weed out the Chinese from the Mexican. In turn, as U.S. officials worked to stamp out the multiracial strategies of Chinese immigrants, the Chinese resorted to total concealment. Using freight trains and underground tunnels to completely hide themselves from view, the Chinese tried to rub out all physical traces of themselves from the U.S. border.

The give-and-take struggle between turn-of-the-century Chinese and U.S. immigration officials thus began to reinforce thicker racial boundaries in the borderlands, setting apart Chinese immigrants from everyone else. U.S. immigration law not only constructed Chinese immigrants as racially undesirable, but racially different as well. In the ways that local and federal authorities pursued the enforcement of Chinese Exclusion at the border, they began to racially differentiate one immigrant from another, thereby making sense of what they saw as a multiracial mess. In the process, by drawing the attention of the state to the U.S.-Mexico border, Chinese immigrants and those who opposed their presence in El Paso also fused the American state – in all of its incomplete and contingent forms – more closely to the borderlands.

“The Chinese shirt washer must go”

During the 1880s and 1890s, the presence and arrival of Mexicans in El Paso does not appear to have created great distress among the white American population of El Paso. As Mario T. García points out, they still entered in small numbers and in any case provided labor essential to the railroad and mining companies. Many laborers were able to bring their families with them,

and these households contributed to the local economy not only through their labor but also by spending their earnings in town as well, to the benefit of local merchants and business owners.⁴

The early Chinese, on the other hand, were targeted by El Paso newspapers and journalists as a public nuisance and hazard to the city's health and progress. Initial grumblings from the *El Paso Herald*, for example, included complaints in October 1881 of "the noisome smells emitted from some of the Chinese laundries."⁵ Because the Chinese in early El Paso gravitated toward operating laundries, where they presented little threat to white male laborers, the Chinese laundryman became the symbolic focal point for concerns about the growing Chinese population within the city's boundaries.⁶ In 1889, the *Herald* called for "the people of El Paso [to] do a little kicking against the Chinese monopoly." "An indulgent public has permitted the pig tails to completely corner the laundry business of the city," the newspaper complained, "and the result is high prices and poor service. The Chinaman has a lively appreciation of the way he has things fixed, and has developed marked ability for clapping on exorbitant [sic] prices."⁷ The "heathen Mongolian" thus "roll[ed] in comfortable prosperity," while others in El Paso struggled to make a living.⁸

⁴ Mario T. García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 37.

⁵ *El Paso Herald*, October 5, 1881, 2. See also *Lone Star*, September 10, 1884 ("The Chinese laundry near THE LONE STAR office is getting to be an intolerable nuisance, and the stench therefrom is not conducive to either good health or good temper.")

⁶ Anna Louise Fahy, "Chinese Borderland Community Development: A Case Study of El Paso, 1881-1909" (Masters thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 2001), 50-52.

⁷ *El Paso Herald*, February 6, 1889, 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*, February 7, 1889, 2.

One specific group in El Paso that suffered at the monopolistic hands of the Chinese laundryman, according to the *Herald*, was the “American woman.” Continuing to use the parlance of the Gilded Age, and typecasting Chinese laundrymen as akin to corrupt railroad tycoons and “robber barons,” the newspaper voiced concern for the welfare of the “American woman,”

The imported Celestials seem to have completely and permanently Jay Gouled the washing business of the city and the hardy American woman is compelled to subsist in ways of sorrow and gloom. Let us ask if this condition of affairs is to be perpetual.

The Chinese shirt washer must go, should be the tocsin of El Paso. As matters now stand the industrious and needy American woman of the city who wishes to labor for a living is given no chance, while the abhorrent Celestials get along pretty well, thank you.⁹

Two days later, the newspaper again raised the issue: “Let us reduce our patronage of the Chinese a little so that the industrious and needy American woman in our midst will have an opportunity to turn an honest and virtuous penny.”¹⁰ Editorializing even further, the paper claimed,

The people of El Paso, like people of other parts of the country, do a good deal of talking against the Chinese and never lose an opportunity to denounce the Celestials, but their enmity seems to end with wind. The Chinese population of the city has been steadily growing, but all that come seem to find an abundance of work at good pay. They have completely monopolized the laundry business of the city and are fast securing a footing in other directions. This is a peculiar and discreditable condition of things when it is considered that there are dozens of women in the city who are needy and would be willing to work for a living if they could secure employment. These deserving women would be only too glad to do washing at fair rates, and it is a shame that they are not patronized. Let us make up our minds to be a little less liberal to the Chinese and more charitable to the women.¹¹

⁹ Ibid., February 2, 1889, 2.

¹⁰ Ibid., February 4, 1889, 2.

¹¹ Ibid.

With increasing impatience and concern for the “industrious American woman,” the newspaper demanded, “where is the patriotism and manhood of our voters.”¹²

The writers of the *Herald* were no doubt genuinely concerned about the plight of El Paso’s female population, especially those women who had followed their husbands to the borderlands to find new work opportunities. Many men, however, who found employment in the booming railroad and mining industries entered notoriously dangerous working conditions. Indeed, the railroads wreaked havoc on the city landscape in more ways than one, for in addition to the economic boom that it brought with its rails, the rails significantly increased the risk of daily life for company employees, passengers, and people in the streets as well.¹³ Railroad companies routinely left cars standing on tracks that divided residential blocks from the downtown business area, so that “there would be no openings in the cars, and . . . the people would go over said cars and under them any way so as to get across.”¹⁴

¹² *Ibid.*, February 5, 1889, 2.

¹³ As Barbara Young Welke has explained, risk became unavoidable in a modern America increasingly dependent on trains and street cars. Men and women thus daily faced the everyday risks associated with the actions of boarding and alighting the train and street cars, and the constant threat of car derailments and explosions in nineteenth century America. As she explains, “[a] man or woman walking, riding a horse, or driving a buggy or wagon had always faced the risk of accident, but the risk had been of a different order of magnitude in terms of the likelihood of death or life-long disabling injury; of individual ability to avert accident; and of the risk the horse, buggy, or wagon posed to others. . . . The contours of modern life made escape from technology nigh impossible. Industrialization had made travel a concomitant of daily life. . . Risk then had become an unavoidable fact of life for virtually all Americans.” Barbara Young Welke, *Recasting American Liberty: Gender, Race, Law, and the Railroad Revolution, 1865-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 19-20.

¹⁴ *Cruz Flores v. A. T. and S. F. Ry. Co. et al.*, Case no. 2139, Testimony of Jesus Caro and Cornelia Navarez, Statement of Facts, Feb. 24, 1900, Texas 4th Court of Appeals case files (Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission) [hereinafter Texas 4th Court of Appeals].

Not surprisingly, with the abundance of railroads in El Paso and their yards located in the busier downtown area, accidents abounded and became a visible part of every day life. When pedestrians noticed that a switchman had caught his foot in the railroad tracks, and was in the path of an oncoming train, everyone yelled for the train to be stopped. As one passerby testified,

I saw people giving signals of [sic] both side of the track. I made signals myself. These signals were made to the engineer. The people cried to the engineer. They cried out very loud. It was loud enough for the engineer to hear because there were so many people there who came to see what was the matter. On the west side there were many Mexican women. They gave signals by waiving their arms up and down which was a signal to stop.¹⁵

But it was all for naught; the switchman was killed. In contrast to the ordered progress and modernization that city leaders and boosters celebrated with the coming of the railroad, “regular” people who daily came into contact with the trains thus came to tell very different kinds of stories: of toddlers and young children receiving fatal injuries from train engines parked on tracks adjacent to their homes; of men and women losing their footing, falling, and having the wheels mash their limbs; of railroad employees young and old alike falling under the crushing weight of the iron horses; of permanently disabled or forever lost fathers and husbands.¹⁶

Indeed, such accidents were so commonplace that by 1923 the street cars in El Paso all carried

¹⁵ *Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fe Railway Co. v. Earnest Van Belle, et al.*, Case no. 2325, Testimony of Henrique Rodrigues, Texas 4th Court of Appeals.

¹⁶ See, e.g., *Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Rwy Co. v. Rudolph Reiner*, Case no. 125, January 5, 1890, Case files, Texas 3rd Court of Appeals records (Archives and Information Services Division, Texas State Library and Archives Commission) [hereinafter Texas 3rd Court of Appeals] (3 year old boy received fatal injuries from an engine of the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company that sat in front of the boy’s house); *Flores*, Case no. 2139, Case files, Texas 3rd Court of Appeals (6 year old boy injured by train, resulting in amputation of an arm); *Van Belle*, Case no. 2325, Texas 4th Court of Appeals (railroad switchman’s death by oncoming train).

signs assuring passengers, “Yes, we have no accidents today,” and reminding them, “It’s better to be careful than crippled.”¹⁷

As increasing numbers of men engaged in the dangerous work of shifting, switching, coupling, and weighing the cars succumbed to life-taking or permanently disabling accidents, however, it took a particularly heavy toll on families. Not only were surviving family members left to deal with the emotional and traumatic scars of the accident, but they now also had to find a way to support themselves. With the male breadwinner lost or incapacitated, women were thus frequently left with the heavy burden of feeding and housing themselves, their children, and at times their disabled spouse. The *Herald’s* attempt to rally the city in support of the “industrious and needy American woman” reflected the awareness of this reality, and recognized the hard conditions of life for the increasing numbers of women struggling to make ends meet after the loss of the male breadwinner.

At the same time, the newspaper’s insistence that the women be provided an opportunity “to turn an honest and virtuous penny” reinforced the efforts of El Paso reformers to clean up the city and eradicate its reputation as “Sin City.”¹⁸ What El Paso elites feared most were the unintended social consequences of modern life. As revolutionary as the railroads were, and despite the train’s powerful representation of modernity and progress, the constant presence of industrial hazards, the risk of women falling into vice, and the threat to family stability challenged their aspirations for El Paso to emerge from the desert as a progressive, modern American city. By 1917, “Sin City” was significantly a moniker of the past. Instead of gunslingers and cowboys, El Paso was now dominated by men who “live[d] according to the

¹⁷ Owen P. White, *Out of the Desert: The Historical Romance of El Paso* (El Paso, Tex.: McMath Co., 1923), 427.

¹⁸ *El Paso Herald*, February 4, 1889, 2.

rules their wives, who had been taking annual trips back East, brought home and inserted into the family curriculum.” In EL Paso resident Owen White’s words, “These poor men now shaved daily, boasted on the cold plunge every morning, changed their clothes by the clock, and began to play golf. This was the end.”¹⁹ The reform-oriented “wives” of the city had taken the reins in town.

Relying on the power of El Paso’s female reformers, the *Herald* soon dropped the appeal to “manhood” that it previously tried to use to rally the (male) citizens of the city and instead called on the “ladies of El Paso” to fight the battle against the Chinese in the city, pugilistically advocating, “We would like to see the ladies of El Paso take the Chinese in hand. The ladies of the city have remarkable tact for getting there when they take any move under control, and we venture to say that they would down the Chinese in the first round.”²⁰ The emasculation of Chinese immigrant men resonated with constructions of Chinese laundrymen as performing women’s work, and not conforming to American idealizations of white masculinity. In matters of both race and gender, Chinese immigrants were thus seen as deviant.

The need to do something about the dangerous Chinese was urgent. In an ominous tone, the newspaper warned its readers that though “[i]t is not probably that the time is near at hand when we shall have a heathen Chinese for lord mayor, . . . there is little doubt but what our affluent Asiatic neighbors are nurturing sinister designs in that direction. The ease with which they have been permitted to corner certain pursuits and grow rich and populous gives them the

¹⁹ Quoted in W. H. Timmons, *El Paso: A Borderlands History* (El Paso, Tex.: Texas Western Press, 1990), 206.

²⁰ *El Paso Herald*, February 12, 1889, 2.

right to indulge in the most hopeful expectations.”²¹ If El Paso failed to learn from the example of San Francisco and exclude the Chinese, the city would fall to the “heathen Chinese.”

Thus at the same time as it called for the boycott of Chinese laundries, the *Herald* also attempted to contain the growth and mobility of El Paso’s Chinese residents, reporting that “[t]he efforts under way to expand the Chinese colony of the city is not looked upon with favor by our citizens.” Associating Chinese immigrants with “filth and disease, and [that] their presence leads to property depreciation,” the newspaper claimed that “[t]he popular demand is for them to be centered and forced to remain in a given locality.”²² One week later, the *Herald* followed up with the observation that “[w]e have not yet seen any complaint entered against the popular demand for the abrogation of the Chinese. Perhaps some stalwart champion of the imported heathen will rise up Phenix [sic] like, later on.”²³ Whether anyone publically protested the anti-Chinese sentiments is unclear. What is clear is that no such forced segregation occurred in El Paso. Many of the Chinese were densely packed on Oregon and El Paso Streets, as well as in Chihuahuita, because most of the work was in those downtown areas, but many others moved out throughout the city and were never entirely confined to one area.²⁴ Despite all of the inflammatory rhetoric against them, the Chinese in El Paso continued to enjoy relative freedom

²¹ Ibid., February 8, 1889, 2.

²² Ibid., February 5, 1889.; *ibid.*, February 7, 1889, 2. Recent studies of the intersections of public health and immigration law include Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Alexandra Minna Stern, “Buildings, Boundaries, and Blood: Medicalization and Nation-Building on the U.S.-Mexico Border, 1910-1930,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79:1 (1999); John McKiernan-González, *Fevered Measures: Public Health and Race at the Texas-Mexico Border, 1848-1942* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

²³ *El Paso Herald*, February 12, 1889, 2.

²⁴ See Fahy, “Chinese Borderland Community Development,” 74-75.

of movement within the boundaries of the city. Indeed, the newspaper lamented that because of its liberal tolerance of Chinese immigrants, “[t]he pig tails flock here from every direction” and El Paso had become “the Chinese Mecca of the southwest.”²⁵

“In herds and droves”

Whereas economic boycotts and residential segregation plans never fully caught on with the public, federal immigration law and the international border provided a powerful way to curb the growing presence and influence of Chinese immigrants in El Paso. Conflating the problem of the Chinese immigrant in El Paso with Chinese immigration at the U.S.-Mexico border, elites also actively called for the policing of the border against Chinese immigration from Mexico. The political border between the two countries had grown thicker from the 1880s to 1910, fostered by economic policies such as Mexico’s “Zona Libre” (Free Zone) system of free trade in the northern border region, the policing of goods crossing and being smuggled across the border, and cultural representations that depicted the U.S. and Mexican sides of the border as fundamentally different from each other.²⁶ And yet people’s basic ability to travel back and forth across the border remained virtually unhindered – except in the case of the Chinese. As the Chinese within El Paso’s city lines came under increasing scrutiny by local residents, so did the presence of Chinese immigrants at the international line. Whereas Mexican immigrants could cross between Mexico and United States without any regard to the border line, Chinese immigrants found the border increasingly impenetrable.

²⁵ *El Paso Herald*, February 5, 1889, 2.

²⁶ For more details about the zona libre system and its effects on Ciudad Juárez, see Oscar J. Martínez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), 13-26.

Questions about the security of the international border against Chinese immigration began shortly after the railroads arrived at the Pass. The appearance of the railroad in El Paso coincided closely with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and yet the Exclusion Act appeared to many as having no stifling effect on the arrival of Chinese immigrants in El Paso. “The law restricting Chinese immigration is a dead letter in El Paso, and as far as we know, along the whole Mexican border,” the *Lone Star* newspaper editors complained in 1885.²⁷ Concerned that the number of Chinese in El Paso “seems to increase as time rolls on,” it asked, “Have any steps been taken to prevent the wholesale immigration of Chinese to the United States via the Mexican frontier route?” Warning that Chinese immigrants would begin “to come over the Mexican border in herds and droves,” in which case “there will be a howl from the natives in this neck o’ the woods which will be heard distinctly from the ‘Halls of Montezumas’ to Washington,” El Paso nativists demanded something be done to prevent them.²⁸

Indeed, during the last two decades of nineteenth century, the primary success of the Chinese Exclusion Acts appears to have been the redistribution of Chinese immigrants to the two countries neighboring the United States in the north and south. Following on the heels of the United States, however, Canada quickly adopted anti-Chinese immigration measures, and by 1906, U.S. Bureau of Immigration officials noted a steep decline of Chinese immigrants using the northern border to gain illegal entry into the United States.²⁹ Chinese immigration through Mexico fared better, as Mexico retained a fairly liberal immigration policy throughout the years

²⁷ *Lone Star*, August 29, 1885, 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, February 7, 1885, 3.

²⁹ Erika Lee, *At America’s Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 152-57, 175-79; Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 76-84.

of the *Porfiriato*.³⁰ As the United States continued to tighten its laws against Chinese immigration with the Scott Act in 1888 (denying re-entry certificates) and the Geary Act of 1892 (extending the Exclusion Act for another decade and adding new burdensome requirements), more Chinese immigrants were persuaded to remain on the Mexican side of the border, while other Chinese immigrants continued to attempt to cross undetected into the United States. Recognizing a demand for accommodations and services for Chinese immigrants at the border, Chinese merchants opened businesses in Ciudad Juárez and the city's Chinese population grew, feeding the stream of Chinese immigrants into El Paso that worried so many Americans.³¹ Thus even while acknowledging that "[t]he celestial gardeners of Paso del Norte [Ciudad Juárez] keep the residents of this city [El Paso] well supplied with vegetables," critics complained about the Chinese farmers' ability to "cross[] back and forth daily without any restriction whatever." Once the other "almond eyed gentry who are refused admittance on the Pacific coast . . . [discover] that by coming through Mexico they will have no trouble," they warned, El Paso would see Chinese immigrants arrive "in swarms to this side of the Rio Grande unless precautionary steps are taken to prevent it."³²

³⁰ After 1900, the Mexican government began to establish stricter admissions criteria, such as adopting new codes to regulate sanitary conditions on ships arriving in Mexico, screening and quarantining Chinese immigrants suspected of contagious diseases, and requiring steamship companies to disinfect and sterilize baggage and clothing, and bathe each immigrant prior to landing. The immigration law of 1908 also required immigrants to register with the state and carry a passport-like form of identification on their person. Grace Peña Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 101-02. Mexico's changing immigration policies are discussed in further detail in chapter 5 of this dissertation.

³¹ Fahy, "Chinese Borderland Community Development," 65.

³² *Lone Star*, August 29, 1885, 2.

The location of Ciudad Juárez as the last northern stop on the railway from the Mexican interior factored greatly into the El Paso-Juárez border's emergence as a primary crossing point for Chinese immigrants seeking to enter the United States undetected.³³ In 1894, authorities in Ciudad Juárez reported approximately half a dozen or so Chinese in the city who had no visible places of work or residence, and thus appeared "transient." By 1905, T. F. Schmucker, Chief of the Immigration Bureau in El Paso, reported that detention quarters in Juárez constantly held between one hundred fifty to two hundred Chinese.³⁴ The *El Paso Times* claimed in 1909 that "there are a hundred 'Celestials' [in El Paso] where there was one twenty years before." According to the reporter, "[e]very train brings a dozen or two to Juárez, all intent on getting across the border, and in the course of a few years hundreds of them have been taken off trains on the American side."³⁵

Resisting "the Chinese deportment act"

As Patrick Ettinger has observed about the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border in the 1880s and 1890s, "there is little documentation of extensive smuggling there at this early date."³⁶ The lack of such documentation, however, does not necessarily cast doubt on Lawrence Douglas Taylor Hansen's conclusion that the El Paso-Juárez border served as the primary border point of entry for illegal

³³ Lawrence Douglas Taylor Hansen, "El contrabando de chinos a lo largo de la frontera entre México y Estados Unidos, 1882-1931" [The smuggling of Chinese across the border between Mexico and the United States, 1882-1931], *Frontera Norte* 6:11 (1994), 48.

³⁴ Fahy, "Chinese Borderland Community Development," 65-66.

³⁵ *El Paso Times*, January 2, 1909, quoted in C. L. Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North: Four Centuries on the Rio Grande* (El Paso: University of Texas at El Paso, Texas Western Press, 1968), 340.

³⁶ Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 56.

Chinese immigrants in the 1880s and 1890s, as Chinese immigrants arriving at the sea ports of Mexico followed the railroad to Ciudad Juárez.³⁷ Rather, the lack of such documentation may reflect instead that authorities were not yet aware of organized smuggling activities. With only one immigration inspector stationed at El Paso for the entire U.S.-Mexican border in 1893, Chinese immigrants desirous of crossing undetected into the United States could still do so with great ease, and without the kind of extensive underground support network that would later develop.³⁸

The vagaries of the river worked immensely in the Chinese immigrant's favor. During the seasons when the Rio Grande river was low, for example, people regularly waded across the river. Indeed, one visitor to El Paso noted how, instead of paying the usual ten cent fee to cross into Juárez by horse-car, or two and a half cents to walk across one of the bridges, when the water is not very deep or wide, "[t]wo stout, broad-shouldered Mexicans in high boots . . . ferry [people] across the stream. For one and a quarter cents they carry men, women, and children over the river, and I tell you the enterprise pays big."³⁹ But when the river is dry, the visitor remarked, "we go over [the river] as dry-shod as the Jews did when Moses led them across the Red Sea, and it does not cost us a cent. During the past two or three weeks the Rio Grande has actually disappeared . . . [practically leaving] not a drop of water in its wide, sandy bed."⁴⁰

Under such conditions, and with the border poorly patrolled, Chinese immigrants who made their

³⁷ Taylor Hansen, "El contrabando de chinos," 48.

³⁸ Anna Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America: Photography and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 174-75.

³⁹ Rudolf Eickemeyer, *Letters from the Southwest* (Astor Place, New York: J. J. Little & Co., 1894), 32-33.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

way to Ciudad Juárez could easily cross the border under the cover of night and disappear without any trace. In 1908, immigration officer Richard H. Taylor informed the commissioner general of immigration that “the Rio Grande is now perfectly dry, and it [is] impossible to prevent Chinese being smuggled across even by using a greater number of Inspectors than are available for that work.” “At present,” he continued, “the officers are unable to cope with the situation as it now stands,” and the best they could do was transfer some of the inspectors to outlying stations to inspect trains for Chinese immigrants without valid registration papers, hoping thereby to catch up with some of the Chinese who crossed the river undetected.⁴¹

The other way that Chinese could cross without notice from immigration officials was by blending into the crowd, as it were. Some were not so successful. On June 11, 1892, El Paso customs inspector J. C. Clemmons noticed a man crossing the international bridge. “[I] called him to stop,” Clemmons testified, “[but] he paid no attention to me.” Perhaps hoping that his presence would not seem out of the ordinary, and the inspector would lose interest, the man kept walking away toward the center of town. But Clemmons “ran after him and caught him, and then saw that he was a Chinaman.” “When I caught up with him he commenced to cry,” Clemmons noted.⁴² His plan to blend into the ordinary landscape had failed.

At some point, however, other Chinese immigrants had begun to successfully cross the border undetected in broad daylight by racially disguising themselves as Mexicans. By 1895, immigration officials had become aware that “many more Chinamen are slipping across the line into this country than is generally known” by resorting to a variety of schemes, “the method most

⁴¹ Richard H. Taylor to Commissioner-General of Immigration, Oct. 24, 1908, #52212/2 Part 1, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, RG 85, National Archives, D.C. [hereinafter Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.].

⁴² U.S. v. Ah Gong, File 7 (43), Equity Case Files, RG 21, M1610.

in favor being to don Mexican garb, thus concealing their nationality, as those who have resided in the sister republic for any length of time speak the language fluently.”⁴³ When disguised in Mexican costume, the Chinese immigrant proved elusive, leading the *Herald* to report in 1901 that “government agents and line riders along the southern boundaries of this country [at Phoenix] have found themselves unable to cope with the Chinese smuggling situation.”⁴⁴ In 1904, the “wily Chinks,” as the *Herald* called them, were continuing to lead immigration officials on “a merry chase”:

The Chinamen have found that by cutting off their queues and dressing in the native garb of Mexico, including the regular Mexican straw sombrero, they make very good looking Mexicans, and are hard to tell from the original, except by a rigid examination, and it is understood that many of them are now using this method of crossing into the United States and it is said the venture has so far proved successful.⁴⁵

Slipping into “traditional” Mexican garb, as well as the more “modern” westernized outfits of suit and tie, Chinese immigrants confounded the racial assumptions and expectations of American officers.⁴⁶

The polyglot and multiracial U.S.-Mexico borderlands thus rattled immigration inspectors’ ability to rely on a system of “common and clearly visible racial characteristics,” as Anna Pegler-Gordon explains, suspending their ability to perform their duties in enforcing the country’s immigration laws.⁴⁷ Indeed, in December 1893 George A. Scarborough, Deputy U.S.

⁴³ *El Paso Herald*, January 15, 1895, 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, July 22, 1901, 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, August 11, 1904, 5.

⁴⁶ For images of Chinese immigrants “[p]osing as Mexicans” dressed in suit and tie, see Lee, *At America’s Gates*, 163.

⁴⁷ Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America*, 87-88.



Figure 3.1

Photograph attached to the deportation order of Jew Sing.

Source: U.S. v. Jew Sing, November 29, 1905, File 316 (86), Equity Case Files from the Western District of Texas at El Paso relating to the Chinese Exclusion Acts, RG 21 (National Archives Microfilm Publications, M1610)

Marshall for the Western District of Texas, arrested Man Sing at an El Paso laundry for being unlawfully in the United States. When asked why he had believed Man Sing was unlawfully in the country, Scarborough testified that he had been informed by someone that “there was a new man” at the laundry. When pressed about the identity of the informant, all that Scarborough could say was that “[t]he information did not come through a white man”.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ U.S. v. Man Sing, “Minutes of Examination,” February 21, 1894, File 781a (20), Equity Case Files, RG 21, M1610, Reel 18. It should also be noted that when asked under what provision of the Chinese Exclusion Acts he had arrested Man Sing, Scarborough answered, “I don’t know. I just arrested him because I thought he was not entitled to be in the country.”

Q. Did it come from a Chinese person?
A. I don't know.
Q. From a Mexican?
A. I don't know.
Q. From a colored person?
A. I would not say positively.⁴⁹

Scarborough's inability to master the multiracial tableau of the borderlands proved a significant weakness for the state's case against the Chinese immigrant. Man Sing was ultimately discharged by the court.

By 1907, aware of the cross-racial strategies of Chinese immigrants, officials were more vigilant and somewhat more successful in capturing Chinese dressed as Mexicans. Immigration inspector Marcus Braun provided an extensive report to the commissioner general of immigration about his undercover investigation into how the Chinese were being coached to say a few words in Spanish, such as "Yo soy mexicano" ("I am Mexican"), and replaced their queues for suits and ties.⁵⁰ Including in his report several photographs of such Chinese men disguised as Mexicans, Braun lamented that it was "exceedingly difficult to distinguish these Chinamen from Mexicans."⁵¹ As Anna Pegler-Gordon rightly observes, Braun's report represented "a widespread concern within the Immigration Bureau about racial passing . . . [that was] visually based: racial passing disrupted the bureau's understanding that racial identity was visually legible." Though immigration officials could accept that they might not always successfully distinguish between European groups, "the idea that they could not differentiate between Asians, Mexicans, and Europeans caused them great concern." The "somatic distinctiveness" of Chinese

⁴⁹ *Man Sing*, "Minutes of Examination," February 21, 1894, File 781a (20), Equity Case Files, RG 21, M1610, Reel 18.

⁵⁰ Lee, *At America's Gates*, 161-62; Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America*, 178.

⁵¹ Quoted in Lee, *At America's Gates*, 162.

immigrants had become blurred in the borderlands.⁵² The concern of immigration officials, in other words, was not solely limited to their inability to discern the differences between Asians and Mexicans, but also centered on the unsettling realization that racial boundaries could be so easily transgressed in the borderlands.

The transformation of Chinese who dressed like Mexicans into “Chinese Mexicans,” an entirely new ethno-racial group at the border, further complicated the work of U.S. immigration officials. As recent works by historians such as Robert Chao Romero, Grace Peña Delgado, and Julia Schiavone Camacho have documented, in addition to using Mexico as a means of gaining entry into the United States, many Chinese immigrants lived in Mexico for extensive periods, becoming residents, marrying Mexican women, and taking on Mexican citizenship in some cases.⁵³ Rather than arriving at a Mexican port and proceeding directly to the U.S.-Mexico border, in other words, some Chinese spent considerable time in Mexico before appearing at the border. For those Chinese who had established sufficient ties to Mexico, U.S. immigration officials applied slightly revised procedures for deportation.

As Grace Peña Delgado found, Chinese with claims to Mexican citizenship or residency were simply deported to Mexico in the 1880s and 1890s.⁵⁴ The *El Paso Herald* had championed the passage of the Geary Act of 1892 by suggesting that the title of the law be changed from “the Chinese exclusion act” to “the Chinese deportment act.”⁵⁵ However, the newspaper’s reliance on

⁵² Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America*, 178.

⁵³ Robert Chao Romero, *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010); Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*; Julia Maria Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans: Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

⁵⁴ Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 69.

⁵⁵ *El Paso Herald*, May 16, 1893, 2.

deportation to constrain the Chinese presence in El Paso proved unfounded, for once deported to the Mexican side of the border, the Chinese immigrant could easily try again to cross into the United States. As Chinese inspector H. H. Schell reported in 1890, Chinese immigrants at the border “attempt entry [from Mexico] with little effort at disguise or concealment. These are always turned back by customs officers; they return smilingly and, doubtless, seek entrance at some point on the line where no officers are stationed and at a time less favorable to detection.” Or as another agent reported to the assistant secretary of the Treasury Department, “the children on the streets of this city laugh at me when I inform them that the punishment of a Chinaman . . . is to put him across the line into Mexico, as they know full well the Mongolian will be in our Chinatown early next morning for breakfast.”⁵⁶

For Chinese immigrants seeking to gain entry into the United States, then, donning the dress of Mexican immigrants provided another potential layer of protection. First, by disguising themselves as Mexicans, Chinese immigrants could attempt to blend in with other Mexican border crossers and walk into the United States undetected, slipping past the watchful eye of border agents. In addition, because Chinese immigrants with claims to Mexican citizenship or residency were more easily returned to Mexico instead of deported to China, in the case of capture, many no doubt hoped their Mexican dress convinced U.S. immigration officials to simply return them across the border.

By the close of the century, however, Chinese immigrants could no longer assume that they would automatically be returned to Mexico. On the evening of May 30, 1899, Yee Yee Chung stepped off the Mexican Central Railway train at Ciudad Juárez. In search of work, he claimed that he and a companion had come from Torreón, Coahuila to find a Chinese friend of

⁵⁶ Quotes taken from Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 62-63.

his who lived in Juárez. Unable to find his friend, he claimed that the two lost their way in the darkness. Blaming the vagaries of the river and the indeterminacy of the border, Yee Yee Chung claimed to have “unwittingly” wandered across the dry bed of the Rio Grande to the American side, thus being in the United States “by mere accident.” Unfortunately, a customs inspector saw and promptly arrested them. Though Yee Yee Chung argued that he had crossed into the United States by accident, “without any purpose or intention of entering the country and violating its laws,” and that he should thus be permitted to return to Mexico, American authorities were not convinced. District Judge Maxey found it suspicious that “notwithstanding their ignorance of the town and the darkness of night, they discovered, by some inscrutable means . . . the narrow trail which extended across the dry bed of the river from the Mexican to the American side, and, following the trail, they crossed over to El Paso.” He confirmed the deportation order of the commissioner, and Yee Yee Chung was ordered back to China.⁵⁷

The shift to deporting Chinese border-crossers to China, however, raised its own complications. Officials soon suspected that some Chinese already in the United States used the border and the U.S. deportation system to their advantage, letting themselves be caught so that the U.S. government footed the costs of travelling to China. “All they [the Chinese] had to do,” one Chinese inspector explained, “was to go across the border into Mexico then recross at some other point, after which they would be taken up by some federal officer, confined in jail and then sent home.”⁵⁸ Uncle Sam would pay for the entire trip, from the U.S.-Mexico border to San

⁵⁷ Yee Yee Chung v. United States, 95 F. 432 (D.C. 1899). See also U.S. v. Ching Chung, File 8 (48), Equity Case Files, RG 21, M1610 (Chinese immigrant caught in El Paso claimed he crossed into El Paso by accident; “river dry did not know it was river” [sic]).

⁵⁸ “Cost of Sending Chinamen Home; It is a Big Item in Uncle Sam’s Expenditures; The Last Bunch Deported from El Paso Sail for Hong Kong – An Official Talks about the Cost of Arresting, Convicting, and Deporting Celestials,” *El Paso Times*, December 22, 1899, quoted in Fahy, “Chinese Borderland Community Development,” 44. But see “Chinamen Prefer to Pay

Francisco, and then on to Hong Kong. For those who planned to return to the United States after visiting in China, the United States thus paid for half of their travel expenses.

The Chinese in Mexico similarly took advantage of U.S. deportation policy. As U.S. immigration officials stepped up their efforts on the border in the 1900s, making it more difficult for Chinese immigrants to cross undetected into the United States, some apparently gave themselves up, choosing to return to China by deportation rather than stay in Mexico. In August 1905, Lew Kong Hing and Lew King reportedly “came boldly across the bridge and gave up to the officers on this side of the river, evidently preferring deportation back to China, to starving in Juarez while waiting and hoping against hope for a chance to smuggle into this land of the free.” “[C]ontrary to the usual Chinese method of slipping into El Paso,” the *Herald* reported, the two men “ma[de] no attempt to disguise or conceal their identity . . . and the only explanation the two celestials offered was that they are in need of food and were coming here to work.” Believing that “no Chinamen is so ignorant [of the law] as to believe that he can come into the United States unmolested,” the officers concluded that the men were intentionally seeking arrest and deportation. Seeking to avoid the frustration of the immigration laws, the authorities set forward a complicated plan:

The two men will have a hearing before commissioner Howe and if it is proved that they wish to be deported to China, they will be sent back to Mexico, for it is the practice of the bureau to send them back to China if they are really trying to smuggle into the United States and remain, and back to Mexico if it is apparent that deportation is what they are seeking.

Their Fare Over – Rather Than Be Taken at Uncle Sam’s Expense, for it is Looked on as a Disgrace,” *El Paso Herald*, January 21, 1902, 5 (reporting that Chinese Inspector Charles Mehan refuted “that many of the Chinamen who want to go back to their native land allow themselves to be deported to save the expense of paying their fare. This is a mistake and the average Chinaman had much rather pay for his passage than be sent by the government. To be deported is looked upon by the people in the light of a disgrace.”)

It is almost a plain case of seeking transportation home with these two Chinamen and it is quite likely that they will be sent back to Mexico.⁵⁹

How the commissioner determined the intent of the two men and what ultimately became of them is unknown, but it no doubt proved to be a frustrating situation for immigration officials.

In fact, within a week of Lew Kong Hing and Lew King's arrest, some immigration officials in El Paso considered applying a "jail cure" to curb what they saw as a widespread abuse of the deportation system by the Chinese coming from Mexico. As the *Herald* reported,

Many Chinamen who fail to smuggle into the United States, when their funds run out in Mexico, boldly walk over to this side of the river, especially of late, submit to arrest and get a free trip home, and still others who remain in Mexico for years and work, when they decide to go home, come to the border, cross over into the United States and allow themselves to be arrested for being unlawfully in the country. The result is that, if the officers cannot prove that they deliberately come here for the purpose of being sent home, in which case they can be sent back to Mexico, they get a trip home at the expense of the United States. Then if they desire to return to Mexico they simply have to pay their fare back – they get a round trip home for one fare.

To stop this practice, however, the immigration officers are going to hold them in jail on this side for several months before trying their cases. This, it is believed, will put a quietus on the practice of coming over here to be sent home. It is not believed that the prospects would be so roseate if the Chinamen knew they would have to lie in jail for a year before going home.⁶⁰

To keep them in jail for as long as officers desired, the officers planned to have their cases postponed repeatedly until they were ready to deport the Chinese defendant.

Lore Hay Fong, Jung Git, and Yung Yuen were thus set to become the initial test case for the new "jail cure"; "[w]hile the officers are practically certain that the last three captured came over purely for the purpose of being sent home, and could send them back to Mexico," the newspaper reported, "they are about to try the new scheme and see if it will not prove more

⁵⁹ *El Paso Herald*, August 17, 1905, 1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, August 22, 1905, 1.

effective. They are going to hold the China boys in the county jail for several months and give them a good long siege of jail life.”⁶¹ Two days later, however, the creative plan was called off. As the chief inspector, commissioner, and assistant district attorney explained, “[s]uch a proceeding is unwarranted by law, and could not be taken, no matter how feasible it might seem.” Recognizing that such a “cure” violated immigrants’ due process rights to a speedy trial by jury, the authorities waited for word from Washington “as to whether there exists power and authority to order them deported to Mexico instead of to China, in case they are found guilty of violation of the exclusion laws.” After receiving direction from the appropriate federal departments, the authorities guaranteed that “these three persons will be given an immediate hearing.”⁶² Despite their frustration that Chinese immigrants were deliberately flouting U.S. immigration laws and challenging their authority, U.S. officials would need to apply the “deportment act” within the bounds of the law. Immigration officials would now have to decipher the intentions of the “inscrutable” Chinese. Whereas U.S. officials may have initially acknowledged the Chinese as a stock presence south of the border, they began to view the “Chinese Mexican” with increasing suspicion as fraudulent, as improbable.⁶³

After 1900, whether it was to weed out the Chinese from the Mexican or out of growing alarm about the rising numbers of Mexican border crossings into the United States, or some mixture of both, U.S. immigration officials began to stop and inspect more Mexican immigrants. As Pegler-Gordon argues, “ethnic Mexicans on both sides were increasingly constrained . . . and concern about racial passing justified the increasing regulation of all border crossers. Mexicans

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., August 24, 1905, 2.

⁶³ Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 74.

could not be allowed to pass freely, since they might not be Mexican.”⁶⁴ Even if they were Mexican, moreover, changing attitudes toward Mexican immigration resulted in calls for more rigid enforcement of the immigration laws. As noticeably more Mexican immigrants arrived following the turn of the century, alarmists derided the immigrants as diseased “peons” and pushed for more aggressive application of the public health and public charges restrictions.⁶⁵ Although the labor demands of western railroads ultimately kept the border open for most Mexican immigrants seeking admission, Mexicans would encounter more administrative obstructions that hindered their crossing into the United States. As a result, Mexicans themselves would also adopt cross-racial and cross-cultural strategies at the border. In 1907, the *El Paso Times* reported that 400 Mexican laborers had arrived in Ciudad Juárez from the interior, and by the next day had been admitted by local immigration officials into El Paso. According to one official, “[t]hese immigrants appear at the border in sombrero, sarape, and sandals, . . . which, before crossing the river, they usually exchange for a suit of ‘American’ clothing, shoes, and a less conspicuous hat.”⁶⁶ No doubt the cultural and racial exchange of identities eased their admission into the United States.

As U.S. immigration agents began to show more interest in regulating Mexican immigration as well, U.S. officials slowed the blurring of racial boundaries posed by the migrations of Chinese and Mexican immigrants at the border. With officials detaining more Mexicans at the border for inspection, the possibility of being detected and identified as an inadmissible Chinese alien went up, as did the chances of being deported to China rather than to

⁶⁴ Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America*, 180-81.

⁶⁵ García, *Desert Immigrants*, 38-39.

⁶⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 39.

Mexico. It is not surprising, then, that we see a gradual decline in references to Chinese dressed as Mexicans in immigration records after 1900. As Delgado has argued, “by the early 1900s, the importance of Mexican residency, nationality, and citizenship lessened significantly, and . . . [t]he actions that had once ensured deportation of laborers to Mexico and the travel of merchants to the United States became relics of the past.”⁶⁷ By 1905, immigration officials reported that instead of Spanish, “schools are conducted over in Mexico in which these Chinamen are taught English to enable them to come to El Paso, slip in and pretend that they have always lived here.”⁶⁸ Abandoning the disguise of the Chinese Mexican, and coached to memorize the geography and landscape of the American cities that they claimed to have previously lived in, Chinese immigrants sought instead to present themselves at the border as Chinese immigrants that conformed more closely to American understandings of the Chinese in the United States.

The focus of U.S. immigration agents on the border thus shifted again, forced now to reach out to immigration officials spread throughout the country to verify the claims to legal residency made by Chinese immigrants stopped at the U.S.-Mexico border. As El Paso officers corresponded and exchanged paperwork with officers in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Boston, the work of enforcing the Chinese Exclusion Act at the border tied the borderlands to the rest of the country, bringing the center to the periphery and the periphery to the center.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 88.

⁶⁸ *El Paso Herald*, December 16, 1905, 3.

⁶⁹ See, e.g., *U.S. v. Sing Quong*, File 459 (73), Equity Case Files, RG 21, M1610 (involving interrogatories of U.S. Commissioner for the Northern District of New York); *U.S. v. Yee Sing*, File 710 (486), Equity Case Files, RG 21, M1610 (involving depositions of Chinese interpreter and immigration inspector stationed in New York); *U.S. v. Lee Tai Frow*, 796a (114), Equity Case Files, RG 21, M1610 (correspondence with officers in San Francisco); *U.S. v. Wong*

It also generated a growing awareness on the part of the immigration officials that Chinese immigrants were gaining entry into the United States by means of extensively coordinated, well-organized smuggling rings that were working in much more clandestine and dangerous ways than before. Berkshire reported to the commissioner general of immigration in 1908,

The situation is becoming so critical that there are threats being made by some of the parties whom we know to be engaged in smuggling, to the effect that if our officers interfere with their plans, and some of the interested parties come in contact with our officers when they are in the act of placing Chinese in the car, they may be expected to stand the consequences. There is a well founded rumor that the smugglers would not hesitate to use firearms in defense of themselves, and from reports made to me I am satisfied some of them would not hesitate to take an unfair advantage of our officers by shooting them from ambush.⁷⁰

The smuggling of Chinese had taken on a decidedly different, more desperate nature than before.

It also began to depend upon a more varied and multiracial cast of Chinese, Mexican, black, and white co-conspirators. In El Paso, which according to historical archaeologist Edward Staski stood between 1905 and 1915 as “the largest port of entry for illegal Chinese immigrants arriving via Mexico,” the smuggling of Chinese must have been a very lucrative enterprise.⁷¹ Speculating about the fees that attorney William H. Burges must have received for his legal services in representing Chinese claimants, one friend guessed, “let’s see, you had to confer with your client, several times no doubt; probably interviewed several witnesses, tried the case in

Ching, File 164 (100), Equity Case Files, RG 21, M1610 (Los Angeles); U.S. v. Yee Mar Ang, File 138 (18), Equity Case Files, RG 21, M1610 (Boston).

⁷⁰ F. W. Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, Sept. 25, 1908, #52212/2 Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

⁷¹ Edward Staski, “The Overseas Chinese in El Paso: Changing Goals, Changing Realities,” in *Hidden Heritage: Historical Archaeology of the Overseas Chinese*, ed. Priscilla Wegars (Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing Co., 1993), 132.

court to a jury, obtained a verdict for your client, and are now getting a judgment entered. I'd say you ought to be paid at least \$300." In actuality, Burges, who was not only a well-respected attorney in town but also one of the most retained attorneys for Chinese deportation challenges, replied, "you'll be interested to learn I have been paid already \$750, and when I [return] with this judgment, I get another \$750."⁷² If the sum of the moneys paid to the attorney was indicative of anything, it was that there was a great deal of money being generated and circulated in the business of smuggling Chinese. In 1908, immigration officials caught wind of a scheme to smuggle Chinese through San Marcial for one hundred dollars each, to be divided between a railroad freight conductor, two immigration inspectors, and one or two train crew members.⁷³

There were thus a wide and numerous range of participants who were on the payroll of leading smugglers. Not only were there Chinese and Mexican civilians on both sides of the border engaged in the enterprise, but also black and white railroad employees, law officers, and immigration agents.⁷⁴ In 1908, immigration agents were keeping a close watch on Edward M. Fink, formerly chief of police of El Paso, who had now become "practically the leader of one of the gangs of smugglers now operating here."⁷⁵ Despite their conviction that he was a leading smuggler, however, they could not yet legally reach him. The numerosity and variety of actors, immigration officials realized, spread out the aiding and abetting of the illegal entry of Chinese immigrants, distancing the leaders from the crime itself:

⁷² J. F. Hulse, *Texas Lawyer: The Life of William H. Burges* (El Paso: Mangan Books, 1982), 90.

⁷³ Richard H. Taylor to Commissioner-General of Immigration, October 24, 1908, #52212/2 Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*; *El Paso Herald*, August 28, 1899, 5 (regarding a "Mexican who is suspected of being one of the sub-agents of the mammoth Chinese syndicate" located in Juárez).

⁷⁵ Richard H. Taylor to Commissioner-General of Immigration, October 24, 1908, #52212/2 Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

We know practically the leaders of the smuggling operations in El Paso, and it is a well established fact that the persons who are responsible for the smuggling of Chinese at that place do not assist personally in actually bringing Chinese across the river from Mexico. They employ, as a general rule, some Mexican on the Mexican side of the river to convey the Chinese to some point along the river and there direct them to cross. As a general rule no one accompanies them across the river. After they have reached the American side another Mexican usually meets them and conveys them to some particular point agreed upon in El Paso. They may be moved again from this point to another by another party. By this means it is obvious that it is indeed a difficult proposition to reach the real smugglers in El Paso.⁷⁶

Unable to catch anyone in the act of aiding and abetting the illegal entry of the Chinese – in other words, the act of actually accompanying Chinese illegally across the border – the immigration officers could not bring a case charging conspiracy on the part of others, even if they had evidence of smuggling activities elsewhere in the process.⁷⁷ And if they could not show a conspiracy, they could not connect the suspected ringleaders to the crime. By spreading out the smuggling activities across a wide network of actors, smugglers hid themselves in plain sight, and that was no doubt the intention. A side-effect of spreading out the network, however, was the multiracial character of the network. As Erika Lee points out, “[t]he multiracial character of Chinese illegal immigration transformed the borders into ‘contact zones’ where people – mostly men – of different races, classes, and nationalities met and sometimes formed fragile alliances.”⁷⁸

⁷⁶ F. W. Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, September 25, 1908, #52212/2 Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Lee, *At America's Gates*, 162.

The sum activities of all of these multiracial alliances was to vanish Chinese immigrants from view by hiding them, for example, in sealed cargo trains and underground tunnels.⁷⁹ Predictably perhaps, as immigration inspectors intensified their efforts to ferret out the inadmissible Chinese from the cover of Mexicanness, Chinese immigrants intent on entering the United States went undercover even more, resorting now to complete physical concealment. After crossing the river from Ciudad Juárez, Chinese immigrants increasingly resorted to “bonded” freight cars to make their escape, instead of passenger cars where they could more easily be noticed by U.S. officers. Smugglers found a variety of ways to load and unload their Chinese charges onto and from such freight cars without disturbing the U.S. Customs seals placed on the door, which under normal customs procedures were not to be broken until the car reached its destination. As long as the seal remained unbroken, Customs officers had no reason to inspect the car any further, and as long as the smuggled Chinese were unloaded before the car reached its destination, they would completely evade detection. Or so smugglers hoped. On September 25, 1908, supervising inspector Berkshire informed the commissioner general of immigration about the new practice,

Bonded cars in which the Chinese are placed are loaded at the smelter near El Paso with different kinds of valuable ore, and the same is shipped, usually to Galveston, under customs seals. After the cars are loaded and sealed at the smelter they are turned over to the Railway Company, and usually remain in the yards for some hours before shipment from El Paso. It is reported to us that the practice of the smugglers is to loosen the bolts which hold the lower rail upon which the car door slides, thus permitting the rail to drop, leaving the door swinging from the top. By this means one corner can be pulled out without breaking the customs seals, and the

⁷⁹ See Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 75-103 (describing smuggling circuits at Baja and Sonora); Robert Chao Romero, “Transnational Chinese Immigrant Smuggling to the United States Via Mexico and Cuba, 1882-1916,” *Amerasia Journal* 30:3 (2004/2005), 1-16.

Chinamen shoved up into the car. After the Chinese have been loaded the lower rail is put into place again and the bolts tightened.⁸⁰

By closely observing the bolts, an inspector at Toyah, about 190 miles east of El Paso, thus noticed that one had been tampered with. Forcing a slight crack between the door and the side of the car, he glanced inside and “as a result he saw the foot of some person, which, of course, convinced him that somebody was in the same.”⁸¹ At about 6 a.m. on October 20, 1908, Inspector Nielson caught eighteen Chinese hiding in a box car loaded with silver bullion on the Texas and Pacific siding. Upon examination, Chin On made a full confession about the operations of Moy Jung Mow in Mexico City and Ming Wo in Juárez, about their crossing the river and being placed in the car by removing the door without breaking the Customs seal, and how the Chinese then fastened the door back to its former position from the inside.⁸² By methodically inspecting all freight cars, as well as passenger cars, leaving El Paso, Berkshire felt assured that “[t]his at least will prevent Chinese from leaving El Paso, and I am satisfied if this avenue of escape is eliminated, it will only be a matter of time until Chinese will realize that El Paso is not an easy point of ingress into the United States, [and] therefore, will cease coming.”⁸³

⁸⁰ F. W. Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, September 25, 1908, #52212/2 Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Richard H. Taylor to Commissioner-General of Immigration, October 24, 1908, #52212/2 Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C. See also F. W. Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, September 25, 1908, #52212/2 Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

⁸³ F. W. Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, September 25, 1908, #52212/2 Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

Immigration officials hoped to thereby frustrate the ability of “smugglers to successfully carry on their work.”⁸⁴

The Chinese continued to come, however, and smugglers pressed on with their strategies and plans. Despite the successful detections that U.S. immigration officials periodically celebrated, the constant fight against determined Chinese immigrants and their smugglers took its toll. Tired of trying to uncover all of the concealed Chinese illegally on the U.S. side of the border, immigration officials impugned all of the Chinese in El Paso as aiding and abetting in the illegal concealment of Chinese immigrants. In December 1905, the chief of the immigration bureau in El Paso, T. F. Schmucker, released the office’s annual report for the commissioner of immigration, detailing “the difficulties which his force has to meet in its fight against Chinese coolie immigration and . . . [the scheme] to conceal Chinamen illegally in this country.” For Schmucker, one of the greatest impediments in the work of the immigration officials were the Chinese in El Paso themselves: “Chinamen in El Paso, practically all of them anyhow, are engaged in the business of smuggling their countrymen into the United States illegally.” As quantitative proof of this, Schmucker enumerated that “during the past fiscal year 486 Chinese coolies are known to have arrived in Juarez, and probably 46 coolies found employment in Juarez, practically 100 left for other border points, so that approximately 320 coolies have disappeared near the international boundary line in the vicinity of El Paso and doubtless gained unlawful entry.” The only possible explanation for this, according to the official, was that “[t]he Chinese population of El Paso, numbering about 350, is banded together as one man for the purpose of concealing and conveying into the interior of the country those Chinese coolies who have crossed the line.” He estimated that the handling of “Chinese coolies” was the sole

⁸⁴ F. W. Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, October 22, 1908, #52212/2 Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

occupation of perhaps one third of El Paso's Chinese population, and that the rest indirectly aided the smuggling of Chinese through the use of "specially built houses . . . with underground and attic rooms" for concealing Chinese immigrants, all the while defending their own presence by insisting "in good English, that they were born in the United States and are American citizens under the supreme court decision."⁸⁵

Unable to root out the leaders of the smuggling activities, U.S. officials thus lumped all Chinese together – both those legally present and those illegally present – and assigned criminality to all Chinese as a racial group.⁸⁶ Chinese immigrants were not simply to be physically removed from the territorial boundaries of the nation, but were thereby also placed outside the symbolic boundaries of the American body politic. The Chinese and their history in the borderlands were driven underground, as it were. It has been said that when certain Chinese-occupied buildings in downtown El Paso were razed, tunnels were discovered "burrowed in under the dirt floors, making subteraneum [*sic*] passages from one cellar to another." Even as late as the 1990s, El Paso resident and historian Anna Fahy claims, city crews reportedly found "clandestine tunnels dug by the Chinese throughout what is today's downtown area."⁸⁷ But even as the presence of the Chinese in the borderlands has been submerged, they left a lasting impression in the development of U.S. immigration law and the state in the borderlands.

⁸⁵ *El Paso Herald*, December 16, 1905, 3.

⁸⁶ See also Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America*, 36; Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 8.

⁸⁷ "Underground Passages in Chinese Shacks – They Are Brought To Light in Tombstone and Are Said To Exist In This City On Oregon Street," *El Paso Herald*, January 17, 1907, 6; Fahy, "Chinese Borderland Community Development," 40-41.

Building the state at the border

With growing numbers of excludable immigrants attempting to cross the border, U.S. immigration officials were simply outmanned. In 1900, authorities reported that Italian “paupers” and “Chinamen, who are harbored in Juarez, are again making an effort to cross the border into the United States . . . and with the present guard force many are apt to succeed in getting over the lines.” Several Italians unsuccessfully “made a rush” across the border – they were caught by guards and “drilled” back across the river – but one can only guess at how many others were able to cross undetected once those guards were thereby distracted. Informed that “hundreds of both Chinamen and Italians [were] en route here from the southern ports of Mexico,” one official admitted that “when they join the crowds already in Juarez he expects his force will be worked to their capacity.”⁸⁸ Despite requests for more resources on the border, there just was never enough manpower. In January 1907, immigration inspector Fred B. Jack caught sight of a group of Chinese immigrants about to be loaded into a freight train. “Mr. Jack pulled a revolver and commanded the bunch to put up their hands, but instead of this they scampered,” the *Herald* reported the next day. The inspector was able to capture two of them, but the rest got away.⁸⁹

Hoping to efficiently make use of their human resources, immigration officials kept tabs on the comings and goings of Chinese immigrants from the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez border, trying to make seasonal predictions. In May 1901, El Paso Chinese inspector Charles Mehan received “notice of a number of Chinamen headed this way from Mexico” and was thus “on the alert to meet them.” Apparently the news of Chinese heading to Ciudad Juárez was not surprising for

⁸⁸ *El Paso Herald*, October 5, 1900, 2.

⁸⁹ “Big Bunch of Chinamen Smuggle In,” *El Paso Herald*, January 9, 1907, 2.

the inspector, who claimed “that this is not unusual for this time of the year as the Chinamen in Mexico get tired of that country in the summer and attempt to enter the United States.”⁹⁰ Despite their best predictions and expectations, however, immigration officials were fighting an uphill battle. Although the size of the resident Chinese community in El Paso stayed relatively constant in the 1900s, every month over 100 Chinese purchased train tickets to other parts of the United States from El Paso. “When it is recalled that there are no ports of entry on the Mexican border through which Chinese may lawfully be admitted,” El Paso immigration officials concluded in 1907, “the inference that they have entered surreptitiously is irresistible.”⁹¹

Though immigration officials could not totally stem the migration of excludable immigrants into the United States, they expanded their claims of authority over the border, thereby bringing the power of the federal state to the borderlands. Normally, El Paso elites resisted the power of the state and federal governments, asserting the power of the city to regulate its own local affairs without outside intervention.⁹² In 1896, for example, local El Pasoans hosted a widely advertised boxing match in violation of the Texas anti-prizefight law, but were able to keep the Texas Rangers at bay by setting up the ring on the Mexican side of the border. According to C. L. Sonnichsen, “some 300 fans, plus the Ranger force watching from the top of the bluffs, [thus] saw Fitzsimmons knock Maher out in the first round after something less than two minutes of fighting.”⁹³ Pointing to how merchants in the city also resisted other

⁹⁰ *El Paso Herald*, May 9, 1901, 8.

⁹¹ Quoted in Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 100.

⁹² Miguel Antonio Levario, *Militarizing the Border: When Mexicans Became the Enemy* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2012), 23.

⁹³ *Ibid.*; Sonnichsen, *Pass of the North*, 361-62. As Sonnichsen points out, the organizers of the fight were able to push it through despite the efforts of both state authorities as well as local reformers.

externally-imposed progressive reform efforts by moving their gambling halls and saloons across the border, Miguel Levario emphasizes how local residents “use[d] El Paso’s sister city to circumvent American law on a regular basis,” using the jurisdictional limitations of the international border as a way to challenge the state’s intrusion into its own local affairs.⁹⁴

When it came to immigration, however, El Paso elites heartily embraced the state, calling on the power of the state to police the boundaries of the nation, and thereby assist in local efforts to regulate the racial boundaries of the city. Indeed, in January 1895, the city health board called attention to “the number of jacals [sic] erected by poor Mexicans in the lower part of the city and suggesting that steps be taken to prevent pauper immigration to this city in the future as they are a menace to the public health.” “It was suggested,” a city newspaper reported the next day, “that the council call the attention of the United States government to the matter and request that an inspection of that portion of the city occupied by this pauper population be made and all persons found here in violation of the pauper immigration laws be deported.”⁹⁵ Conflating city politics with national immigration regulation, city leaders began to call on authorities in Washington D.C. to help solve their problems.

It was the problem of Chinese immigrants at the city’s doorstep, however, that triggered the increasing flow of federal agents and federal money to El Paso, generating the migration of state power to the borderlands. In September 1892, an announcement was made to all “Chinese laborers residing at El Paso and vicinity ... that an officer will be at El Paso on the 16th inst. to receive applications for certificates of residence, under the [Geary] act of congress, approved

⁹⁴ Levario, *Militarizing the Border*, 23.

⁹⁵ *El Paso Herald*, January 25, 1895, 4.

May 5, 1892.”⁹⁶ The federal officer would find his work stalled, for under the advice of the Chinese Six Companies, El Paso’s Chinese residents initially rejected the legality of the registration law and refused to comply.⁹⁷ But shortly before the Supreme Court upheld the legality of the Geary Act in *Fong Yue Ting v. United States* on May 15, 1893, the *Herald* reported that “not over 1000 Chinamen out of the 150,000 in Oregon and Washington have registered. El Paso seems to be about the only exception where the Chinamen as a body have registered.”⁹⁸ Whether El Paso’s Chinese saw the writing on the wall or felt the pressures of the Exclusion Act more immediately in the borderlands, they more readily complied with the state. By January 1894, “[a]lthough Deputy Coley was kept busy Thursday and Friday there was not an average of thirty Chinamen registered per day,” the newspaper reported. “It looks as if the gentleman will have to have some help to register the large number of celestials here.”⁹⁹

The migration of Chinese to the border, in other words, generated a persistent need for expanding the federal presence in the borderlands. That presence came in the form of inspectors, bureaucrats, prosecutors, and judges, all of whom were kept busy in the work of enforcing the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Commissioner’s Court was constantly in session; the *Herald* reported in 1899 that “Judge Sexton and Assistant Attorney Foster have their hands full of business this week and it is said that court will be running every day until next Sunday.” “Most of the business,” the paper clarified, “is caused by violators of the Chinese exclusion act who are

⁹⁶ Ibid., September 8, 1892, 4.

⁹⁷ See *ibid.*, April 5, 1893, 2. For more on the Chinese Six Companies and Chinese resistance to the Geary Act’s registration requirement, see Lucy E. Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigers: Chinese Immigrants and the Shaping of Modern Immigration Law* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 40-41, 46-58.

⁹⁸ *El Paso Herald*, May 9, 1893, 1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, January 27, 1894, 2.

being arrested nearly every day.¹⁰⁰ The regulation of Chinese immigration thus brought the federal courtroom and the spectacle of federal law to the borderlands. In 1905, it also brought twenty-three immigration inspectors to the entire U.S.-Mexico border – with four of them now stationed in El Paso – in contrast to the one inspector stationed in El Paso for the entire border in 1893.¹⁰¹

The power of the state was imprinted onto the physical landscape in concrete as well as flesh and footwork. On July 31, 1905, workers began excavation for a new immigration building at the El Paso end of the Santa Fe street bridge. Intended to serve as an detention station as well as an office for the immigration force, the designs planned for the construction of a two-story building 120 x 50 feet high. The second story was designated for the offices and was to be level with the Santa Fe street bridge, with a platform leading over to the bridge. The lower floor, although still above ground, held the basement to the building. “The new building will be the headquarters for the entire immigration department in El Paso,” the *Herald* reported, “and will be

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., August 1, 1899, 1. To enable federal district and circuit courts to attend to other matters in addition to Chinese cases, United States commissioners were given power to hear Chinese habeas corpus cases in 1888. The U.S. commissioners tried the cases de novo, meaning that the commissioner gathered evidence, reviewed it, and reached his own decision on the case, regardless of the collector’s ruling. The commissioner then passed his recommendation about whether to discharge or deport the Chinese petitioner to the court. See Salyer, *Laws Harsh as Tigersm* 77.

¹⁰¹ Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America*, 174-75. In 1909, the country was divided into twenty-three districts, each in charge of an officer who was made responsible for the supervision both of general immigration and Chinese exclusion regulations, abolishing previous distinctions in the administration of U.S. immigration laws. The enforcement of both sets of laws along the Mexican border was placed under the control of the Supervising Inspector at El Paso. Darrell Hevenor Smith and H. Guy Herring, *The Bureau of Immigration: Its History, Activities, and Organization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, Institute for Government Research, 1924), 13.

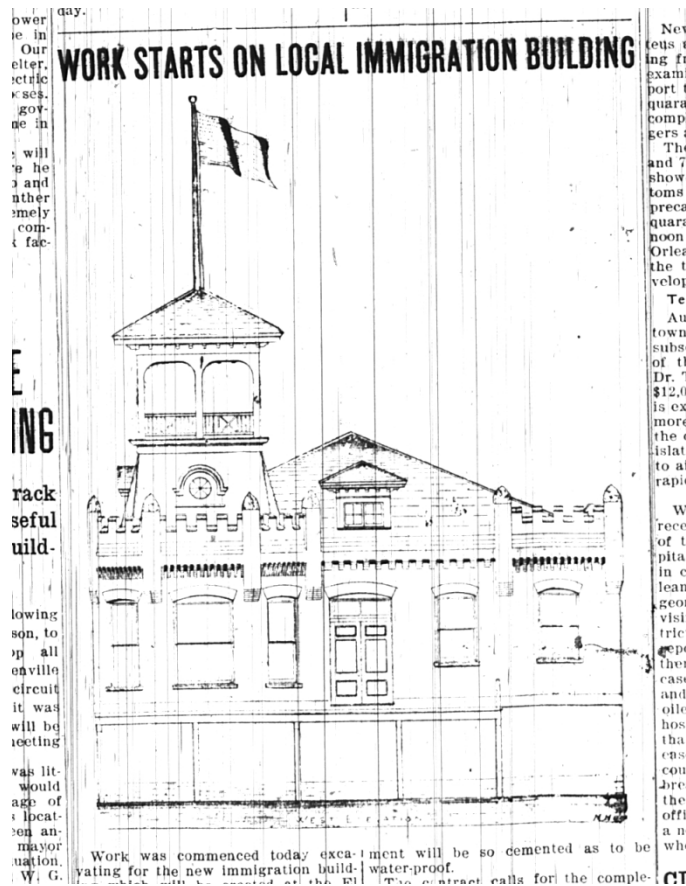


Figure 3.2

Source: *El Paso Herald*, July 31, 1905, 1

ample for the needs of this department for some time to come.” The contractors were set to finish by the end of the year and the immigration officials hoped to occupy it by January 1.¹⁰²

With the completion of the new building, immigration offices would now be located almost directly on the border. As men, women, and children crossed the international bridge, they would do so under the gaze of a looming new presence on the border that physically embodied the state’s power to regulate their movements and exclude them. As U.S. immigration officers peered out through the windows of their offices, they did so from a higher perch that

¹⁰² *El Paso Herald*, July 31, 1905, 1.

broadened the horizon of the borderlands to them. From there, they hoped to better hone their surveillance of the border and those desiring to cross it.

If the immigration station was meant to be an impressive display of state power at the nation's border, however, its shortcomings and weaknesses soon became apparent, at least for immigration officials. As exciting as the construction of a new, modern state building may have seemed, within two years immigration officers found it completely unworkable and El Paso officials were requesting additional funds from Washington D.C. for building improvements. On May 30, 1907, El Paso immigration station officer T. F. Schmucker reported that "certain alterations and enlargements are absolutely necessary for the proper dispatch of the official business of this station." All of the business of the immigration officers took place on the main floor, which held "but two detention rooms, accommodating six persons each, and one of the rooms is not provided with a toilet." Under the current conditions, Schmucker complained that it was impossible to sufficiently detain all of the "Japanese, Syrian and other aliens," predominantly Mexican, who were stopped for inspection at the border.¹⁰³ "[T]he detention in the hall daily of hundreds of Mexicans of the peon class, and other aliens, creates so much confusion and noise that it is almost impossible to properly transact routine office work." Schmucker thus proposed redesigning the basement of the building for the detention of male

¹⁰³ T. F. Schmucker to Commissioner-General of Immigration, May 30, 1907, #51646/1-C Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C. Although Japanese immigrants were not yet excluded as a racial class under U.S. immigration laws, anti-Japanese sentiment along the Pacific Coast contributed to a hostile environment and West Coast immigration inspectors increasingly applied the public health and public charges regulations against Japanese immigrants. As a result, Japanese immigrants also began to use Mexican routes to the United States. Between 1906 and 1907, Japanese immigrants represented the largest non-Mexican group presented for inspection in El Paso. Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 101-02.

aliens and the examination of all Mexicans.¹⁰⁴ In August, supervising inspector Frank Berkshire provided a follow-up report on the “unsatisfactory” conditions of the building, stating that in his opinion the building appeared to have been erected “without any particular plan in mind, and I do not believe I have ever seen a building so poorly arranged and ill-suited for handling the business for which it was intended, . . . without giving a careful thought in advance as to what was actually needed.”¹⁰⁵

Even after having incorporated some of Schmucker’s proposals, the building remained unsanitary and ill-equipped to deal with the work of enforcing the immigration laws. Detained immigrants found ways to escape their detention; in December 1908 four Japanese men were able to break through the bars of the window in their detention quarter, requiring further expenditures for installing better safeguards against escape.¹⁰⁶ Such break-outs, however, were not as great a concern as the routine, daily work of inspecting and detaining ever-increasing numbers of immigrants. By the close of December 1909, Berkshire reported that yet again “[a]lterations and changes have been made to meet the requirements of our Service due to a more rigid enforcement of the immigration laws, causing an increase in the numbers of detentions.” The consulting physician, Dr. J. W. Tappan, also observed that the station had been “overcrowded almost continuously. With facilities for the detention of about twenty, we have had forty and once sixty aliens in detention for weeks at a time.” Shut in airless rooms, detained

¹⁰⁴ T. F. Schmucker to Commissioner-General of Immigration, May 30, 1907, #51646/1-C Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

¹⁰⁵ F. W. Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, August 22, 1907, #51646/1-C Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

¹⁰⁶ F. H. Larned to Supervising Inspector, Immigration Service, San Antonio, TX, December 4, 1908, #51646/1-C Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.; F. W. Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, January 19, 1909, #51646/1-C Part 1, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

immigrants had little access to rest and exercise outdoors “for lack of facilities for so doing and because we have not had watchmen to guard them.” At times, however, some, “especially the women and children during the summer, [were] allowed out on the platform in the rear of the building for one hour every afternoon.” Under such conditions, Berkshire recommended that “the only remedy is the building of separate detention quarters . . . [with] at least two detention rooms for male and two for female aliens, with an additional small room for an occasional insane alien.” In addition, Dr. Tappan pointed out, “[a] matron who speaks Spanish is almost essential in helping me in my examination of alien women and to supervise the womens quarters. Heretofore in making examinations of women which recently have become more frequent, I have had to rely upon a male interpreter as an assistant.”¹⁰⁷

The building, in other words, could not keep up with the demands of immigration restriction. The state’s constant tightening of the immigration laws and their enforcement at the border necessitated continual revisions to the design and infrastructure of the immigration station. The arrival of the state – as represented by the agents and the symbols of Chinese Exclusion and the general immigration laws of the country – thus did not come in a perfectly formed package, but rather it grew and expanded in fits and starts, with the laws and the implementation of them never wholly coherent. And as immigrants continued to devise new strategies and carve new paths across the border in order to better negotiate their encounter with the state, or avoid an encounter altogether, the state found itself scrambling to keep up.

¹⁰⁷ F. W. Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, December 28, 1909, #51646/1-C Part 2, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

CHAPTER FOUR

FORGED IN REVOLUTION

On March 9, 1916, Francisco Villa and several hundred of his men attacked the small town of Columbus, New Mexico, located a few miles from the U.S.-Mexico border and home to about 1,300 residents. After a six hour battle that left much of Columbus in flames, the Villistas were forced to retreat back across the border into Mexico, leaving more than one hundred Mexicans and several Americans dead on U.S. soil. Woodrow Wilson responded by sending General John J. Pershing and the U.S. army across the border with a mission to capture Pancho Villa and break up Villista forces. The Punitive Expedition, as it came to be called, spent ten months canvassing the rough terrain of western Chihuahua, engaging in a few sporadic skirmishes with Villista bands, and constantly on guard against the growing hostility of President Venustiano Carranza's administration and soldiers. Yet Pershing's men ultimately never located Villa, and the soldiers were given the official order to withdraw from Mexico.¹ The expedition broke camp at the end of January 1917, and the American soldiers headed back north, accompanied by a trail of refugees and "two wagons full of painted whores," as a young George Patton wrote in a letter to

¹ For full details of Villa's raid on Columbus and the Punitive Expedition, see Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 550-614; Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution* (2 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), II, 345-54; Friedrich Katz, "Pancho Villa and the Attack on Columbus, New Mexico," *American Historical Review* 83:1 (Feb. 1978), 101-30; James W. Hurst, *Pancho Villa and Black Jack Pershing: The Punitive Expedition in Mexico* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2008); Haldeen Braddy, *Pershing's Mission in Mexico* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1966); Donald Smythe, *Guerilla Warrior: The Early Life of John J. Pershing* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 217-82. Historians have debated the motives of Villa's attack on Columbus, and speculations range from revenge on the Wilson administration for supporting Venustiano Carranza, to personal revenge on local arms speculators who had cheated him, to capturing necessary supplies of food and arms, to collaborating with Germans to keep the U.S. out of the European conflict.

his wife. By February 5, the last American associated with the expedition had quit Mexican soil.²

Most of the historical accounts of this event focus on the military engagements or the diplomatic complications that arose from U.S. military infiltration of Mexican territory while Mexico was still in the throes of civil war. Over the course of nearly four months, from the end of March through June, Pershing's men were engaged in several military operations that embroiled the U.S. Army with revolutionary factions as well as the Carrancista soldiers. On June 21, the soldiers of the all-black 10th Cavalry fought the last battle of the Expedition, the disastrous fight at Carrizal that resulted in twelve casualties, ten wounded, and twenty-four prisoners from the American side.³ Although the Carrancistas eventually released the American prisoners, the battle crystallized the hardening stance of the Carranza government against the continuing U.S. military presence in Mexico. Diplomatic negotiations to avoid outright war between the two nations thereafter shaped the direction of the Punitive Expedition.⁴

² George S. Patton to Beatrice Patton, Jan. 28, 1917, box 6, folder 13, George S. Patton Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.). Patton was Pershing's aid during the Punitive Expedition.

³ On the African American cavalrymen who fought at Carrizal and issues of race and citizenship, see James N. Leiker, *Racial Borders: Black Soldiers Along the Rio Grande* (College Station, Tex.: Texas A&M University Press, 2002), 163-71; Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 145-55.

⁴ Following the Carrizal episode, the United States and Mexico formed the American and Mexican Joint Commission to negotiate a mutually-satisfactory program for dealing with problems emerging at the border. But in order to maintain the legitimacy of Carranza as Mexico's leader, the Mexican Commissioners were instructed to obtain, before all else, the "[w]ithdrawal of the American forces from Mexican territory." See "Mexican Files," box 108, Papers of Albert B. Fall, 1887-1941 (Manuscripts Division, Huntington Library) [hereinafter Fall Papers]. See also Joseph A. Stout, Jr., *Border Conflict: Villistas, Carrancistas and the Punitive Expedition, 1915-1920* (Fort Worth, Tex.: Texas Christian University Press, 1999), 93-102. In the meantime, Wilson refused to withdraw the expedition, fearing the public's perception of failure and the repercussions that would have on his re-election campaign.

Begging further exploration, meanwhile, are the multiracial intersections of the campaign, and the notions of citizenship and state power that converged in the borderlands, as significant numbers of African-American soldiers, Apache Indians working for the U.S. as military scouts, Mormons, Mexicans, and Chinese all became part of the expedition. As some historians have already pointed out, black soldiers and Indian scouts policing the borderlands walked a fine line between the advancement of their own citizenship rights and the subordination of other non-white people. As they donned the garb of the United States, their military service became a compelling vehicle by means of which they asserted their claims as equal citizens. In the process of accepting their civic obligation to protect the nation, however, black soldiers “played an instrumental role in extending American hegemony by engaging in open conflict with native populations” south of the Rio Grande, as James Leiker points out. They did so as state actors entrusted not only with national security but with the broader agenda of nation-building.⁵

At the other end of the nation-building spectrum remain the civilian actors who flocked to American lines – both the geopolitical border as well as the perimeters of the Punitive Expedition – for aid and shelter. Although Patton only mentioned “two wagons full of painted whores,” in actuality several thousand Mexican, American, and Chinese men, women, and children trailed the U.S. army back to the border in late January 1917. As reported by the press: “Following the troops were hundreds of refugees. Prosperous Mormon families rode in comfortable farm wagons or in small motor cars. Some Mexicans rode in carriages, on horses, mules, burros and on the motor lorries of the expeditionary forces while hundreds of them and Chinese residents from the evacuated region walked through the deep dust which had been made

⁵ See Leiker, *Racial Borders*, 16; Horne, *Black and Brown*, 46-68, 88-155. See also Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., “Black Americans and the Quest for Empire, 1898-1903,” *Journal of Southern History* 38 (November 1972), 545-66.

by the feet of hundreds of troops.”⁶ In the end, close to 2,800 refugees accompanied the expedition back to Columbus with the expectation of gaining asylum in the United States.

This chapter approaches the Punitive Expedition by following Eric Hobsbawm’s suggestion to take the “view from below,” emphasizing the role of “ordinary,” civilian refugees (as opposed to governments or their spokesmen) as central actors in the processes of border construction and state formation. In doing so, it presents a story of foreign relations and behaviors “on the ground” that reveal “the complexity of intergroup relations carried on beneath the radar of state policy,” and which can often be neglected when focusing only on official diplomacy at the presidential or even ambassadorial level. In highlighting the “collateral damage” of refugees that emerged across the U.S.-Mexico borderlands as the violence of the Mexican Revolution and the U.S. immigration exclusion laws came to a head in 1917, I bring historical attention to the more civilian, human dimensions of that story, and the conflicts and tensions that emerged even in non-combat. More specifically, I argue that some of these refugees were able to negotiate, in effect, a style of “diplomacy from below,” using their migration and claims of asylum to pressure an open-door policy on the United States where there was none.⁷

⁶ “Fight on Border as Pershing Army Moves North,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, Jan. 29, 1917, in Scrapbooks, 1900-1949 (microfilm: frame 84, reel 2), John J. Pershing Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.) [hereinafter Pershing Papers].

⁷ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 11; Jonathan Soffer, “Oral History and the History of American Foreign Relations,” *Journal of American History* 82:2 (1995), 613; Nathan J. Citino, “The Global Frontier: Comparative History and the Frontier-Borderlands Approach in American Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 25:4 (2001), 688. The idea of “diplomacy from below” is borrowed from Renaud Morieux, “Diplomacy from Below and Belonging: Fishermen and Cross-Channel Relations in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* 202 (2009), 85. For surveys on recent trends in diplomatic history, including the “cultural turn” and growing attention on non-governmental actors, see Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Michael J. Hogan, ed., *The Ambiguous Legacy: U.S. Foreign Relations in the “American Century”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Brenda Gayle Plummer, “The Changing Face of Diplomatic History: A Literature Review,” *History Teacher* 38:3 (2005), 385-400. For examples of studies that highlight the roles of non-governmental actors in matters of

Most of the refugees who returned to Columbus with Pershing were Mexican, numbering 2,030 men, women, and children. 197 Americans were also registered, comprised mostly of Mormon families that had established colonies in northern Mexico during the Porfiriato (1876-1911). The remaining 522 refugees were Chinese men – merchants and laborers who had migrated to Mexico following the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act in the U.S., which happened to coincide in turn with Mexico’s active recruitment of Chinese immigrants to its less-developed northern frontier lands.⁸ By all accounts, these Chinese refugees should not have been allowed to enter the United States under the existing Chinese exclusion laws, since the majority fell into the inadmissible “laborer” category. Indeed, for immigration officials on the border, the disposition of the Chinese refugees presented “a problem the most difficult of solution yet encountered.” And yet, not only were they allowed to cross the border and enter the United States, they were then permitted to remain in the United States indefinitely, and in late 1921 they were ultimately given the right of permanent residence by a special congressional act known as

international relations, such as the press, NGO’s, merchants, missionaries, and scientists, see Michael H. Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and China to 1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anti-Colonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999); Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria’s Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); Masuda Hajimu, “Rumors of War: Immigration Disputes and the Social Construction of American-Japanese Relations, 1905-1913,” *Diplomatic History* 33:1 (2009), 1-37.

⁸ Funston to Adjutant General, Feb. 6, 1917, #54152/79-A, Subject and Policy Files, 1893-1957, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, RG 85 (National Archives, Washington D.C.) [hereafter Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.].

Public Law No. 29.⁹ Thus although scholars of U.S. refugee policies would argue that the federal government did not recognize “refugees” as a specific category distinct from “immigrant” until the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, the special accommodations that immigration, military, and congressional officials made for these Chinese – not to mention the constant reference to “refugee Chinese” or the “Chinese refugees” in official documents – suggest a need for a more expansive understanding of U.S. refugee history that includes the experiences of the refugees of the Mexican Revolution.¹⁰

The story of Pershing’s Chinese refugees is not widely-known, even within Asian American historiography. If mentioned at all, it is only briefly raised in passing, often in studies about the anti-Chinese campaigns that emerged in northern Mexico, and particularly Sonora, during Mexico’s revolutionary and post-revolutionary years.¹¹ The historical neglect has been a result of several factors: the limited class of Chinese immigrants involved in the episode, their attachment to a military expedition, the transnational nature of their migrations, and their unique legalization by congressional action – all exceptional features that did not fit neatly into previous frameworks for the study of Chinese immigration to the United States. This chapter builds on

⁹ Telegram of F. W. Berkshire to Immigration Bureau, Feb. 14, 1917, #54152/79-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.; *Joint Resolution Permitting certain Chinese to register under certain provisions and conditions*, 67 Cong. Ch. 148, 42 Stat. 325 (1921).

¹⁰ For these same reasons, Andrew Urban also suggests that Pershing’s Chinese may provide an early case study of asylum that should expand historians’ understanding of U.S. refugee history prior to the 1940s. Andrew Theodore Urban, “An Intimate World: Race, Migration, and Chinese and Irish Domestic Servants in the United States, 1850-1920” (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 2009), 237-41.

¹¹ See, e.g., Philip A. Dennis, “The Anti-Chinese Campaigns in Sonora, Mexico,” *Ethnohistory* 26:1 (1979), 67; Robert H. Duncan, “The Chinese and the Economic Development of Northern Baja California, 1889-1929,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 74:4 (1994), 626-27. The only major historical treatment of Pershing’s Chinese remains Edward Eugene Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees: An Odyssey of the Southwest” (Masters thesis, Saint Mary’s University, 1947). More recently, however, a chapter in Andrew Urban’s dissertation addresses the refugees in relation to racial characterizations of Chinese immigrants as domestic servants (this time to the nation). See Urban, “An Intimate World,” 233-84.

more recent scholarship that has been bridging the gap between Asian-American history and that of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, taking a more “hemispheric approach to Asian American history,” to quote Erika Lee, to highlight the transnational agency of Chinese immigrants of the laboring class in the borderlands.¹² Previous studies of Chinese immigrants who exercised the

¹² Erika Lee, “Orientalisms in the Americas: A Hemispheric Approach to Asian American History,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 8:3 (2005), 238. Recent English-language works on the Chinese in Mexico and the borderlands include Robert Chao Romero, *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010); Grace Peña Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Grace Peña Delgado, “At Exclusion’s Southern Gate: Changing Categories of Race and Class Among Chinese Fronterizos, 1882-1904,” in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, ed. Samuel Truett and Elliott Young (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 183-207; Erika Lee, “Enforcing the Borders: Chinese Exclusion along the U.S. Borders with Canada and Mexico, 1882-1924,” *Journal of American History* 89:1 (2002), 54-86; Lee, “Orientalisms in the Americas,” 235-56; Gerardo Rénique, “Anti-Chinese Racism, Nationalism and State Formation in Post-Revolutionary Mexico, 1920s-1930s,” *Political Power and Social Theory* 14 (2000), 91-140; Gerardo Rénique, “Race, Region, and Nation: Sonora’s Anti-Chinese Racism and Mexico’s Postrevolutionary Nationalism, 1920s-1930s,” in *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*, ed. Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Roseblatt (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 211-36; Julia Maria Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans: Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Julia Maria Schiavone Camacho, “Crossing Boundaries, Claiming a Homeland: The Mexican Chinese Transpacific Journey to Becoming Mexican, 1930s-1960s,” *Pacific Historical Review* 78:4 (2009), 545-77. Spanish-language studies of the Chinese in Mexico include José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo, *El movimiento antichino en México: Problemas del racismo y del nacimiento durante la Revolución Mexicana* [The anti-Chinese movement in Mexico: Problems of racism and its origins during the Mexican Revolution] (México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1991); Juan Puig, *Entre el río Perla y el Nazas: La China decimonónica y sus braceros emigrantes, la colonia china de Torreón y la matanza de 1911* [Between the Perla river and the Nazas: Nineteenth-century China and its emigrant laborers, the Chinese colony of Torreón and the massacre of 1911] (México, D.F.: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 1993); Roberto Ham Chande, “La migración china hacia México a través del Registro Nacional de Extranjeros” [Chinese migration to Mexico through the National Register of Foreigners], in *Destino México: Un estudio de las migraciones asiáticas a México, siglos XIX y XX* [Destination Mexico: A study of Asian migrations to Mexico, 19th and 20th centuries], ed. María Elena Ota Mishima (México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1997), 167-88; Rosario Cardiel Marín, “La migración china en el norte de Baja California, 1877-1949 [Chinese migration to the north of Baja California, 1877-1949],” in Ota Mishima, *Destino México*, 189-253; Maricela González Félix, *El proceso de aculturación de la población de origen chino en la ciudad de Mexicali* [The process of acculturation of the Chinese-origin population in the city of Mexicali] (Mexicali, México: Universidad Autónoma de

flexibility of transnational movement often focus on immigrants who were already exempted to some extent from the restrictions of the Chinese Exclusion laws, such as merchants and students. By focusing on a group of laborers, however, who overcame the hurdle of exclusion strictly required for them by the immigration laws, this article further demonstrates the malleability of the legal regime, the loopholes in U.S. immigration policy, and the porousness of the U.S.-Mexico border despite the U.S. government's attempts to more strictly police the border against "undesirable" immigrants.

At the same time, in exploring the various strategies that Chinese immigrants used to negotiate state power in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands – whether such power came in the form of anti-Chinese revolutionary violence in Mexico or immigration restriction in the United States – the essay takes seriously Lee and Naoko Shibusawa's reminder that "there is a danger . . . in eschewing the salience of the nation and of national borders altogether." Despite the tendency in transnational studies to celebrate the waning significance of nation-states, the history presented below illustrates the on-going potency and active presence of nation-states in shaping, circumscribing, and propelling human subjects. The story of Pershing's Chinese – and the Punitive Expedition more generally – offers us, then, a lesson in state construction at the nation's margins. The chapter goes "beyond the nation" in order to illustrate the on-going struggle between the hegemony of the nation-state and the multiracial human subjects that fall within its territorial and jurisdictional parameters. It begins by focusing on some of the experiences of the more obvious agents of U.S. nation-building: the Indian scouts and black soldiers. But in examining the experiences of Mexican and Chinese refugees as well, and the ways in which "ordinary" immigrants were able to harness the power of the state for their own interests, the chapter analyzes the more subtle ways in which these actors also contributed to state building,

Baja California, 1990); Lawrence Douglas Taylor Hansen, "El contrabando de chinos a lo largo de la frontera entre México y Estados Unidos, 1882-1931" [The smuggling of Chinese across the border between Mexico and the United States, 1882-1931], *Frontera Norte* 6:11 (1994), 48.

even if it ultimately meant legitimizing the sovereign authority of the U.S. government to continue to exclude others like them.¹³

Protecting the racial borders

When the Punitive Expedition crossed the border into Mexico on March 15, 1916, the soldiers went equipped with the latest in twentieth-century military technology and weaponry, employing motorized machinery including motorcycles, tanks, and the first military use of airplanes.¹⁴ The harsh desert conditions of Chihuahua, however, quickly stripped the soldiers of any sheen of military might and technological superiority, and the expedition experienced difficulties from the outset. For one, the army went in blind with regards to Chihuahua's

¹³ Erika Lee and Naoko Shibusawa, "What is Transnational Asian American History? Recent Trends and Challenges," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 8:3 (2005), xiii. My position on state formation and the role of popular, "everyday" people in nation-building is closely informed by the works of scholars in Mexican history, including Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, "Popular Culture and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico," in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 3-23; Emilio Kourí, *A Pueblo Divided: Business, Property, and Community in Papantla, Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995); Michael T. Ducey, "Village, Nation, and Constitution: Insurgent politics in Papantla, Veracruz, 1810-1821," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79:3 (1999), 463-93; Peter Guardino, "Barbarism or Republican Law? Guerrero's Peasants and National Politics, 1820-1846," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 75:2 (1995), 185-213; Daniel Nugent, *Spent Cartridges of Revolution: An Anthropological History of Namiquipa, Chihuahua* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, I, 78-150.

¹⁴ Horne, *Black and Brown*, 146. It was also among the first military events to be caught on picture, as it occurred during the rising popularity of motion pictures. According to David Dorado Romo, "[h]ordes of professional photographers and filmmakers swarmed the border to shoot the Battle of Juárez in 1911." The business of capturing the Revolution on film would continue throughout the decade. David Dorado Romo, *Ringside Seat to a Revolution: An Underground Cultural History of El Paso and Juárez, 1893-1923* (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2005), 155-79. See also Paul J. Vanderwood and Frank N. Samponaro, *Border Fury: A Picture Postcard Record of Mexico's Revolution and U.S. War Preparedness, 1910-1917* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988).

geography and terrain; as one high-ranking officer in the army reported, “[t]here is no part of Mexico which is more poorly mapped than the northwest section of Chihuahua.” Supplying the forces across the border proved equally challenging. Denied permission to use the Mexican railroads, the expedition was forced to rely on their truck trains to relay supplies and rations. But as Pershing reported, “[t]rucks of various makes were hurriedly sent to Columbus in every conceivable state of unreadiness, with no adequate equipment for assembling them, and no organization for their management.” Hastily pieced together by crews in Columbus, the trucks then literally broke down before reaching their destinations, falling apart along the rough mountain passes and sandy desert plains.¹⁵

Thus while supplies could reach troops stationed along the lines of communications during the early days of the campaign, the troops operating at the extreme front lines of the campaign “literally lived off the country” during the first month, forced to exist on a limited amount of corn and “Mexican beans” as could be procured by locals.¹⁶ Newspapers reported of “U.S. Troops at Front in Rags and Shoeless,” describing how the men of the Seventh Cavalry improvised footwear and adopted native clothing after their own shoes and uniforms were destroyed by the sharp mountain rocks and brush. When one of the army’s supply truck drivers finally located them, he saw men wearing “large Mexican sombreros . . . others were clad in the

¹⁵ Major General Frederick Funston quoted in Smythe, *Guerilla Warrior*, 222; “Report by Major General John J. Pershing, Commanding, of the The Punitive Expedition, Colonia Dublan, Mexico,” October 10, 1916, box 372, folder 1, p. 34, Pershing Papers; Clarence C. Clendenen, *Blood on the Border: The United States Army and the Mexican Irregulars* (London: Macmillan Co., 1969), 322-25. In addition, Pershing found the airplanes to be “of no material benefit . . . either in scouting or as a means of communication.” Quoted in Smythe, *Guerilla Warrior*, 232. See also Braddy, *Pershing’s Mission in Mexico*, 61-62. The rickety vessels were ill-suited for the climate, winds, and altitudes demanded by the mountainous region.

¹⁶ “Report by Major General John J. Pershing, Commanding, of the The Punitive Expedition, Colonia Dublan, Mexico,” October 10, 1916, box 372, folder 1, pp. 34-35, Pershing Papers.

loose jacket of the Mexican laborer.” At first thinking that he had mistakenly entered a Mexican camp, he confessed, “If it had not been for the American equipment and the bits of slang coming through the alkali caked lips, I doubt it I should have recognized our boys, for only a few were clad in the same uniform in which they left the United States.”¹⁷

If the image of white American “boys” clothed in the garb of the common Mexican laborer rattled the patriotic sensibilities of the American public, that of black soldiers and Native American scouts dressed in the uniform of the U.S. army stirred up other complicated questions about national identity and citizenship.¹⁸ While soldiers belonging to these racially subordinated groups used their military service as a gateway to civil rights as well as personal advancement, the idea of relying on armed black and brown subjects remained unfathomable for many white Americans who still refused to see them as persons belonging to the American body politic.¹⁹

¹⁷ “U.S. Troops at Front in Rags and Shoeless,” *N.Y.C. American*, April 4, 1916, in Scrapbooks, 1900-1949 (microfilm: frame 327, reel 1), Pershing Papers.

¹⁸ Twenty famous Indian trailers led the American army in Mexico, including John Cas-en-day who had helped to capture Geronimo. “Noted Apache Scouts Will Trail Villa,” *New York Tribune*, May 11, 1916, in Scrapbooks, 1900-1949, #380 (microfilm: frame 366, reel 1), Pershing Papers. The expedition’s all-black troops included the Tenth Cavalry and companies of the 24th Infantry. Leiker, *Racial Borders*, 147. Pershing had previously served several different times with black soldiers. Unlike other white officers who complained about leading black troops, however, Pershing’s higher level of respect for his men earned him the nickname “Nigger Jack,” later softened to “Black Jack.” Quintard Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998), 167-68.

¹⁹ On black military service and struggles for full citizenship rights, see, e.g., Adriane Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Chad Louis Williams, “Torchbearers of Democracy: The First World War and the Figure of the African-American Soldier” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2004); Steven Reich, “Soldiers of Democracy: Black Texans and the Fight for Citizenship, 1917-1921,” *Journal of American History* 82 (1996), 1478-504. On domestic racial hostility to African American military service, see Garna L. Christian, *Black Soldiers in Jim Crow Texas, 1899-1917* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1995). For a more nuanced discussion of civil-military conflicts on the border involving black soldiers, and how race, civil-military relations,

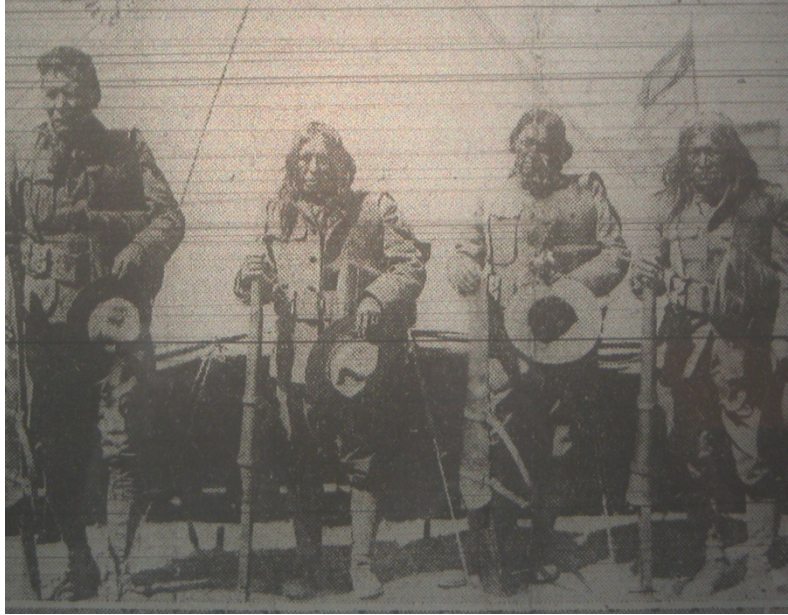


Figure 4.1. “Noted Apache Scouts Will Trail Villa.” Such photos offered a striking contrast to the images of barely clothed Yaqui Indians who were photographed as Mexican revolutionaries.²⁰

Source: New York Tribune, May 11, 1916, in Scrapbooks, 1900-1949, #380 (microfilm: frame 366, reel 1), Pershing Papers.

And yet here they were presented with printed images of Indian scouts dressed in modern U.S. military outfits, prominently displayed in American newspapers as agents of American patriotism and military power.

The prospect of becoming subordinated to Apache Indians in American garb generated special tensions for certain northern Mexicans, who had a long history of hostile relations with the Apaches and had shared with the United States in the brutal cleansing of the Indians from the borderlands during the nineteenth century.²¹ In June, the Carranza government submitted a

and a history of Mexican resistance to American authorities factored into such conflicts, see Leiker, *Racial Borders*, 118-45.

²⁰ See Romo, *Ringside Seat to a Revolution*, 155.

²¹ See Nugent, *Spent Cartridges of Revolution*, 39-56; Alonso, *Thread of Blood*, 21-111. On the shared U.S. and Mexican wars against Indian peoples at the border, see, e.g., Karl Jacoby,

protest to the U.S. State Department reporting “outrages against Mexican citizens alleged to have been committed” by Pershing’s men, including arrests and mistreatment of 300 civilians at La Cruz, and in particular charging the Apache scouts with “brutal treatment of the people in their path.”²² To what extent the charges were fabricated or real is unknown – the War Department denied any knowledge of difficulties with or the arrest of any civilians. But as Leiker points out, Indian scouts served the United States for various reasons in addition to regular pay, including the opportunity to use the Army as a weapon against their traditional enemies.²³ At the very least, the allegations in themselves suggest the discomfort some Mexicans may have experienced in being placed into a subordinate position to Apache Indians, against whom the Mexican state had launched a vicious extermination campaign only a few decades earlier.

The African American soldiers, on the other hand, and their dark skin apparently piqued the curiosity of many local Mexicans. As one black cavalryman explained to a reporter of the black newspaper, the *New York Age*, “‘For a while [the local Mexicans] just stood around gawking at us,’ he said. ‘Then they began talking excitedly among themselves.’ ‘These are not Americanos,’ said one, ‘they are devils.’” For the black soldiers, however, their national

Shadows at Dawn: A Borderlands Massacre and the Violence of History (New York: Penguin Press, 2008); Rachel C. St. John, “Line in the Sand: The Desert Border Between the United States and Mexico, 1848 - 1934” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 2005), 60-73. See also James B. Gillett, *Six Years with the Texas Rangers, 1875-1881* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1976), 151-69, 80-89, which provides a Texas Ranger’s account of cooperation between Mexicans and American forces in fighting Apache Indians. For a history of northern Mexico that closely analyzes Mexican-Indian relations and places Indians at the center of the U.S.-Mexican War, see Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the U.S.-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

²² “Another Mexican Protest: Gen. Pershing’s Men Charged with Brutal Treatment of Civilians,” *Washington Post*, June 29, 1916, in Scrapbooks, 1900-1949 (microfilm: frame 385, reel 1), Pershing Papers.

²³ Leiker, *Racial Borders*, 31.

identities were clear: “Presently a trooper who could speak Spanish came up and said: ‘Yes, we are Americans, and you should keep it in mind, too.’”²⁴ In asserting their national identities, African American soldiers could also emphasize their own superiority over Mexicans. As one black soldier who had fought at San Juan Hill in Cuba and had apparently served in several military campaigns indignantly stated, “No man named Villa will ever put my light out.”²⁵

The disastrous strike at Carrizal and the taking of black soldiers as prisoners apparently convinced the minds of many Americans as well, for it generated one of the most public outpouring of indignant and nationalistic sympathy for the black soldiers. “Though the captured men were negroes,” commented one newspaper, “they were United States soldiers and had gallantly upheld the honor of their nation on a foreign battlefield.”²⁶ When each prisoner was finally returned by Carrancistas across the border to the U.S. army, the cavalymen “were cheered again and again by a great crowd of Americans who had gathered at the bridge approach to see the survivors of the battle.”²⁷ African American civilians also used the occasion to bolster their national identity as Americans, though sometimes in racial terms; the *New York Times* reported that immediately following the battle of Carrizal, “[a] delegation of negroes called on the officials here today and said the negroes of this region were incensed as a result of the attack and were eager to enlist to ‘go in after the Greasers.’”²⁸ For a brief period during the Punitive Expedition, black soldiers saw their national loyalties confirmed, and were embraced by the

²⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 156. See also Horne, *Black and Brown*, 154.

²⁵ “How Pershing Sped Far into Chihuahua: Mexicans Amazed by Speed of Columns with Their Heavy Trains,” *New York Times*, March 24, 1916.

²⁶ Quoted in Leiker, *Racial Borders*, 167-68.

²⁷ “No Quarter at Carrizal,” *New York Times*, June 30, 1916. See also Leiker, *Racial Borders*, 166-68.

²⁸ “Eight Stragglers Return,” *New York Times*, June 24, 1916.

American public and press for their abilities during their campaign in Mexico, earning them the reputation of “being among the best trailers in the army.”²⁹

Ironically, while the black soldiers were painted as patriotic and brave heroes while on Mexican soil, they were portrayed in less-than-dignified terms once they were within the boundaries of the United States again. The returned soldiers from Carrizal were immediately rushed to the immigration detention station for kerosene baths and delousing. After receiving clean blue denim overalls and jumpers to wear, they filed out of the bathroom where William Coleman, Superintendent of the black school in El Paso, “gave each negro a bouquet of flowers, which they carried, giggling, in their hands as they marched to the ambulances which carried them to the fort. All their clothes were burned. These were few, for two of the negroes crossed the bridge without trousers, having old towels tied around them, while not a single prisoner had a complete outfit of clothing.”³⁰ The infantilized and emasculated image constructed by newspaper reports such as this one expose the continuing unease with which many white

²⁹ “Pershing Plans Quick Cavalry Drive to Capture Villa; 1800 Negro Troops Cross Border,” *N.Y. World*, March 29, 1916, in Scrapbooks, 1900-1949 (microfilm: frame 316, reel 1), Pershing Papers; “Victory of Negro Troops. How Brown’s Cavalry Routed a Band of Villa Outlaws,” *Evening Post*, April 6, 1916, in Scrapbooks, 1900-1949 (microfilm: frame 332, reel 1), Pershing Papers.

³⁰ “No Quarter at Carrizal,” *New York Times*, June 30, 1916. Although the practice of quarantining and disinfecting immigrants was rapidly becoming institutionalized on the border, it was a humiliating and intrusive procedure closely associated with stereotypes of diseased Mexican immigrants. See Alexandra Minna Stern, “Buildings, Boundaries, and Blood: Medicalization and Nation-Building on the U.S.-Mexico Border, 1910-1930,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79:1 (1999), 41-81.



Figure 4.2. The caption underneath read: “Captive negro trooper arriving in a blanket, his trousers having disappeared in the Carrizal fight.”
Source: New York Times, July 9, 1916.

Americans regarded black soldiers even as they celebrated them, complicating the claims to equal standing and citizenship that African American soldiers demanded through their military service.

Indeed, even as they worked to protect various American colonies while in Mexico, the African American soldiers were subject to criticism that echoed back to stereotypes of the oversexualized black male figure that emerged with particular force following Reconstruction in the late-nineteenth century. The problem was that following the battle at Carrizal, and for the remaining six months of the Punitive Expedition’s stationing in Mexico, Pershing and his officers were confined to a zone not to extend beyond 150 miles south of the border in Chihuahua, with strict orders to avoid any confrontation with Carrancistas and to table any

further plans to pursue Villa.³¹ For the greater part of the expedition, then, Pershing's greatest enemy came in the form of thousands of idle soldiers and their flagging morale. Although Pershing attempted to stave off ennui and boredom with military drills and exercises, the men found other diversions to keep themselves occupied, especially when stationed at the expedition's headquarters at the American Mormon colony at Colonia Dublán. More specifically, as Pershing himself reported:

The woman question has given a lot of trouble since activities ceased. In June this camp [Dublán] was occupied by colored troops only and they had been without access to women since the Expedition started. Mexican prostitutes soon flocked into Nueva Casas Grande, Dublan and other barrios. The men would meet these women out in the brush and around the towns in native shacks and venereal disease rapidly increased.

In addition to the health concerns, however, the white Mormon bishop of Colonia Dublán hinted at the white community's discomfort with the prospect of black male sexual behavior in the vicinity of white women, complaining that "their women were afraid." The bishop thus proposed to Pershing the establishment of a "restricted district" well beyond camp limits for the purpose of managing and regulating the situation more closely.³² Arrangements were made for the women and men to be regularly inspected and treated for disease, alcohol was forbidden, and each customer was restricted to thirty minutes. "[V]ery soon we had the traffic under perfect control," Pershing reported, "with a resulting low rate of venereal disease. Everybody was satisfied, as the towns have been kept absolutely clear of that sort of thing. . . . The establishment was necessary and has proved the best way to handle a difficult problem." Indeed, Pershing's

³¹ Braddy, *Pershing's Mission in Mexico*, 59-60.

³² Pershing to Major General Hugh L. Scott, January 21, 1917, box 372, folder 2, part 2, Pershing Papers.

policies on regulating prostitution were so successful that the expedition's venereal disease rate remained one-third less than the army as a whole.³³

Although the procedures were immediately applied equally to black and white soldiers, the prospect of black sexual behavior in the vicinity of white women remained intolerable for certain white Americans, whether within the boundaries of the United States or outside. Back in Columbus, the army established a district limited to five blocks that were separated into two sections for segregated prostitution: the larger section to the east were for white prostitutes only, and black soldiers and civilians were forbidden to enter; to the southeast was a smaller section for black prostitutes and all whites were prohibited.³⁴ If the black and white soldiers were united by the expedition in their campaign against Villa, they still remained divided by the social dictates of race in the United States. Indeed, once the 10,000 men were released from their ten months of service in Mexico, it was deemed necessary to strengthen the numbers of military police at Columbus in order to prevent "the enlargement of some small disorders that were started between colored and white soldiers."³⁵ Despite their work and sacrifices as agents of the nation, fighting at the front lines of American border defense and state construction, the black

³³ Pershing to Scott, January 21, 1917, box 372, folder 2, part 2, Pershing Papers; Hurst, *Pancho Villa and Black Jack Pershing*, 113-15. To be sure, Pershing's plan was controversial and generated some measure of protest from skeptical officers and soldiers. For more about Pershing's program to regulate prostitution within the military, see James A. Sandos, "Prostitution and Drugs: The United States Army on the Mexican-American Border, 1916-1917," *Pacific Historical Review* 49:4 (1980), 621-45; James R. Curtis and Daniel D. Arreola, "Zonas de Tolerancia on the Northern Mexican Border," *Geographical Review* 81:3 (1991), 342.

³⁴ Sandos, "Prostitution and Drugs," 629-30.

³⁵ "Report of Operations, Base of Communications, Mexican Punitive Expedition, From June 19th, 1916 to February 5th, 1917," Lieut. Colonel C. S. Farnsworth, February 12, 1917, box 372, folder 3, Pershing Papers. In addition, the all-black 24th Infantry occupied Camp Furlong, located near Columbus, New Mexico, from 1916 to 1922 with racial segregation in force. Leiker, *Racial Borders*, 151.

soldiers' standing as Americans remained compromised and oftentimes fragile, tethering them to the status of second-class citizenship. Thus W.E.B. DuBois sarcastically expressed his dismay after the Carrizal disaster, and to highly publicized reports that the black troopers laughed and sang as they entered battle, that "Negroes sang for a country that despises, cheats and lynches them. . . . Why should they not laugh at death for a country which honors them dying and kicks and buffets them living? God laughed. It was a joke."³⁶

A moving stage: the borderlands in motion

Although historians continue to debate various defining features of the Mexican Revolution, one thing is certain. After Francisco Madero challenged and toppled Porfirio Díaz's regime, the violent and turbulent years of the Revolution sparked the mass dislocation of communities and people as never before in the borderlands, sending men, women, and children fleeing on foot, wagon, and railroad to safety in other parts of the country and across the border. The arrival of the railroad and industrialization in the American Southwest and northern Mexico's frontier during the late-nineteenth century had introduced significant migratory streams to the region, but nothing like the spectacular migration of desperate laborers and civilian refugees that the Revolution sparked. When Pershing and his soldiers advanced across the border and scoured the northern Chihuahuan *frontera* for Villa in 1916, they entered a landscape that had been in constant motion and where population densities were repeatedly being recalibrated.

On the one hand, Mexico was being reshaped by the fluctuations of internal migration. The modernization programs and the massive land expropriations of the Porfiriato, combined with intense U.S. capital penetration into mining and railroads in the northern regions, had

³⁶ Quoted in Horne, *Black and Brown*, 151.

already stimulated significant rural-to-urban and south-to-north movements from 1880 to 1910. During the last decade of the Porfiriato, approximately 300,000 persons left the south to find work in northern cities, where population growth rates outpaced all other areas of Mexico.³⁷ The northward migration only intensified during the Revolution. With agricultural production disrupted by the political turmoil, food shipments interrupted by the destruction of many of the railroad lines, and the fall in value of the Mexican peso, many in Mexico's interior fell on devastating times, suffering destitution and starvation. But relief could be found by moving closer to the border; U.S. immigration inspectors at the border reported that it had received "reports of much suffering and destitution at interior points in Mexico, but it is not thought that any of the inhabitants within sixty or seventy miles of the Border are in a starving condition for the reason that . . . when conditions become such that food cannot be obtained they invariably leave the vicinity and make their way to the border of the United States."³⁸ Indeed, as the Revolution "pushed" many Mexicans toward the U.S. border, the heavy demand for labor in southwestern industries continued to "pull" many of them across the border into seasonal, migratory work.³⁹ With U.S. markets nearby, there was less occasion for the devastating poverty

³⁷ Gilbert G. González and Raúl Fernandez, "Empire and the Origins of Twentieth-Century Migration from Mexico to the United States," *Pacific Historical Review* 71:1 (2002), 37-42.

³⁸ Frank W. Heath to Supervising Inspector, Immigration Service, El Paso, June 17, 1915, #53108/71N, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

³⁹ Patrick Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines: Border Enforcement and the Origins of Undocumented Immigration, 1882-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 140-42; Mario T. García, *Desert Immigrants: The Mexicans of El Paso, 1880-1920* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 43-64. For more on Mexican migration northward, the labor needs of the American Southwest, and the role of labor recruitment agencies (*enganchadores*), see also George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 38-62.

and starvation that was reported from the interior of Mexico.⁴⁰ Thus, between 1910 and 1920, over 890,000 Mexicans entered the United States through legal channels.⁴¹

The Revolution, moreover, marked a new spectacular form of migration, as the stream of bodies crossing the border included not only traditional immigrants and migratory laborers, but also political exiles as well as short- and long-term refugees from all cross-sections of Mexican society.⁴² In particular, the sudden prospect of violence created dramatic exodus movements by large bodies of refugees to the border, numbering at times into the several thousands. When supervising immigration inspector Frank Berkshire arrived at Eagle Pass in October 1913, he

⁴⁰ In turn, border cities such as El Paso thrived on the business that accompanied an expanding population and market for consumer goods. “El Paso’s business district thrived, as the Chihuahua refugees expanded the purchasing power of the city. . . . The Chamber of Commerce valued this trade so much that it decided to present El Paso as ‘a haven of refuge.’ A committee was organized to assist the refugees in crossing the border, in arranging for transportation to El Paso (many were coming through Presidio), and in securing accommodations.” Hotels, restaurants, and general stores as well as those specializing in arms and munitions were kept in good business by Mexican revolutionary and federal soldiers, as well as by the additional refugee population. Oscar J. Martínez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), 46-47. El Paso continued to thrive from the refugee business, as a journalist for *The New Republic* noted in 1916, “Progressiveness and push El Paso has in abundance. Another city, with its market territory shot to pieces by revolution, would have fallen flat. El Paso has succeeded in developing new territory, to the north and west, and has known how to turn many an honest penny – and some not so honest – in its dealings with the endless stream of refugees. It is prospering as it never prospered before the revolution.” “El Paso,” *The New Republic*, June 17, 1916, 166.

⁴¹ Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver, *Revolution on the Border: The United States and Mexico, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 126-27. This figure includes both legal immigrants as well as temporary workers, also referred to at the time as “non-statistical aliens.” In addition, based on census data it has been estimated that over 100,000 Mexicans entered the United States illegally during the revolutionary decade. Louis Bloch, “Facts About Mexican Immigration Before and Since the Quota Restriction Laws,” *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 24:165 (1929), 51.

⁴² Migration to the U.S. border more generally increased significantly during the years of the Mexican Revolution, as Mexican, American, Chinese, and other immigrant exiles and refugees mounted wagons, loaded trains, and set off on foot for protection under the American flag. See, e.g., “Americans Flee From Chihuahua, Hundreds Reach El Paso, Driven by Threats of Slaughter by Rebel Leaders,” *New York Times*, July 30, 1912.

found the international bridge “crowded with aliens frantic to reach American soil,” but barred from doing so by Eagle Pass authorities who had declared a quarantine against the larger city of Piedras Negras across the border. “[A]s it was apparent to anyone familiar with the situation,” Berkshire explained however, “a great loss of life would occur if the congestion was not relieved on the bridge, not perhaps that there was danger to most of them from the bullets of the Federals [sic], but that there was grave danger of women and children being trampled to death in their frantic efforts to flee from what they appeared to believe to be death at the hands of the Federals [sic].” Berkshire thus made arrangements to provide the Mexican refugees with temporary refuge in the outskirts of Eagle Pass. An estimated five to six thousand people waited at the bridge to be admitted, and in the course of two days, over eight thousand people crossed the border before Federal soldiers took charge of Piedras Negras and stopped traffic over the bridge.⁴³ Shortly thereafter, the United States again hosted a massive refugee crisis; when Villa took Chihuahua City in late 1913, thousands of federal soldiers and civilian refugees fled for eight days and 185 miles to the U.S. border at Ojinaga, comprising a frantic procession described by *The El Paso Herald* as a “spectacle of despair.” When Villa then came north to Ojinaga and drove the federal forces across the border, the United States acquired, as Alan Knight explains,

⁴³ Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, October 21, 1913, #53108/71G, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C. Although the cost of feeding so many refugees immediately generated official encouragement for refugees to return to Mexico, “[t]he almost universal answer was that if they were given arms and ammunition, they would gladly return, but in the absence of arms they preferred to die of starvation on American soil rather than return to Piedras Negras and be shot.” When the Immigration Bureau discontinued feeding the refugees in camp, Mr. Arturo Carranza (a nephew of General Carranza) offered to feed them and did so for two days until he had no more funds to purchase provisions for the refugees. Berkshire made it a point to report that he “was extremely careful not to have any dealings with Mr. Carranza which would in any way indicate that this Service was favorable or unfavorable to his cause, but only dealt with him as a private citizen who expressed a desire to help his people in the name of humanity.”

“5,000 costly and embarrassing guests” that the government then temporarily interned at a refugee camp at Fort Bliss.⁴⁴

The solution of temporary refuge had, in fact, become the preferred form of managing refugee crises since the outbreak of revolutionary violence in 1911, when under threat of attack by Maderista leader General Pascual Orozco, the “citizens of [Ciudad] Juarez were greatly excited and practically the entire population of the place refugeed [sic] to El Paso.” Berkshire then reported that “[s]imilar incidents have occurred at various other points along the border, and in all cases many aliens have been permitted to enter the country temporarily for refuge, the writer believing this to be the only reasonable and humane course to adopt under the unusual circumstances.”⁴⁵ All those eligible for entry as determined by immigration and medical inspectors over the ensuing few days were immediately admitted into the United States, free to leave the camp and secure work for themselves, while others could be categorized as belonging to excludable classes and deported. Overall, Berkshire reported that “[e]xperience on this border has demonstrated that the most practicable way of handling a situation such as described is to give refugees temporary asylum in the border towns, and on all previous occasions it has been possible to turn the tide within a day or two, and induce the refugees to return to their homes, and in most instances they have returned about as rapidly as they came.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 42-43; Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, II, 117-18. After crossing the border at Presidio, a group of wealthy civilian refugees, among them General Luis Terrazas and his family, made their way to El Paso. For a description of the mixed reactions of residents in nearby El Paso to the presence of so many Mexican refugees from Ojinaga at Fort Bliss, see García, *Desert Immigrants*, 41-43.

⁴⁵ Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, March 9, 1911, #53108/71, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

⁴⁶ Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, October 21, 1913, #53108/71G, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C. See also Department of Labor, “Memorandum for the President,” April 3, 1916, #54152/79, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

Repeatedly, then, U.S. immigration inspectors stood at the border, facing the constant pressures of mass refugee exodus across the border as thousands of desperate civilians clamored for safety and relief from whichever warring faction was threateningly nearby. In June 1915, the immigration inspector in charge at Douglas, Arizona worried that “there are a large number of Mexicans coming to the Border who are being forced out of their own country, as only an imaginary line separates that country from the United States, and that it is a very easy matter for those who desire to do so to cross into the United States, mingle with the Mexicans on this side of the international line and thus lose their identity.” He later continued, “It is beyond question that in the event an attack is made on Agua Prieta [across the border from Douglas], as is rumored, the entire population of that place, probably including the army as well, will stampede to the United States.”⁴⁷

By January, 1916, the general refugee situation on the border was reaching such intense proportions that the U.S. Census Bureau undertook a special census of El Paso, which remained one of the most active border ports of entry for Mexican immigrants. The transcontinental center of the railroad and mining industries had grown tremendously during the previous four decades, and the population of a few hundred in 1880 had swelled to nearly 40,000 by the 1910 census. The Mexican Revolution, however, and the migration that it generated suddenly packed the city with several more thousands of men and women. According to El Paso’s 1916 special census, in addition to the 61,898 residents were 7,051 refugees and 1,762 soldiers who the enumerators also found residing within city limits.⁴⁸ 11 of the refugees were designated as “Negro” by

⁴⁷ Frank W. Heath to Supervising Inspector, Immigration Service, El Paso, June 17, 1915, #53108/71N, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

⁴⁸ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Special census of the population of El Paso, Tex., January 15, 1916* (Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1916), 2.

enumerators, 485 as “White (excluding Mexican),” and the remaining 6,555 refugees that were packed into El Paso were labeled as “Mexican.”⁴⁹

Seeking refuge

The special census, however, failed to capture another significant racial class of refugees that was propelled to the U.S.-Mexico border during the revolutionary years: the Chinese in Mexico. While approximately 1,000 Chinese were documented in Mexico in 1895, by 1910 the Chinese population in Mexico had grown to 13,200, still concentrated mainly in the northern frontier states.⁵⁰ Mexico’s northern regions, of course, continued to hold a great attraction for many Chinese immigrants during the ongoing exclusion years of the twentieth-century – that is, it presented miles and miles of unguarded border lands and the tempting prospect of crossing illegally into the United States. Immigration officials worked to strengthen their hawkish surveillance of the border, but Chinese immigrants intent on entering the United States continued to devise a variety of strategies for crossing it: some found points along the lengthy and

⁴⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁰ Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*, 52-62; Raymond B. Craib, “Chinese Immigrants in Porfirian Mexico: A Preliminary Study of Settlement, Economic Activity and Anti-Chinese Sentiment,” *The Latin American Institute Research Paper Series* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1996), 7-9; Ham Chande, “La migración china hacia México a través del Registro Nacional de Extranjeros,” in Ota Mishima, *Destino México*, 179-80. Baja California, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Sinaloa, Sonora, and Tamaulipas had the highest concentration of Chinese immigrants in Mexico. The 1910 census reported 1,325 Chinese immigrants in Chihuahua. By 1921, the figure had dropped to 504. This latter count, however, may not accurately represent the Chinese population at the time, for as pointed out by demographic historian Robert McCaa, undercounting, fraud, and revolutionary chaos rendered the 1921 census notoriously unreliable, “without doubt the worst Mexican census of the twentieth century.” Moreover, although there is a loss amounting to a million people between the 1910 and 1921 census, this figure fails to reflect the rates of births, deaths, and emigration that fluctuated during this period. Robert McCaa, “Missing Millions: The Demographic Costs of the Mexican Revolution,” *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 19 (Summer 2003), 367-400.

unguarded boundary and crossed undetected; others tried to sneak past officers masked in Mexican garb; and still others paid to be smuggled into the country by a syndicate that included Mexican guides, black and white railroad employees, and at times even American immigration officials.⁵¹ Attempts by Chinese immigrants to cross illegally into the United States continued during the revolutionary years as well; Calexico immigration officers in 1916 reported an “excessive number of Chinese residents in Mexicali, Mexico, and surrounding country, some three thousand in number, a large proportion of whom are usually out of employment, and who can find no steady labor at a fair remuneration. . . . This, with the high cost of living necessities, makes it extremely difficult for the Chinese to make more than a bare existence, and forces many of them to enter the United States illegally to get relief.”⁵²

Although the threat of illegal Chinese entry across the border did not disappear altogether after 1910, the stream of Chinese immigration to the U.S.-Mexico border seems to have slowed down during the revolutionary years. This was partly a consequence of the political and civil unrest in Mexico as well as the outbreak of World War I, both of which disrupted and deterred immigration broadly to the republic’s shores.⁵³ It also reflected, however, the deterrent effects of an increasingly militarized border, and the expansion of border surveillance and control made

⁵¹ See, e.g., Erika Lee, *At America’s Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 161-64; Robert Chao Romero, “Transnational Chinese Immigrant Smuggling to the United States via Mexico and Cuba, 1882-1916,” *Amerasia Journal* 30:3 (2004/2005), 1-16; Clifford Alan Perkins, *Border Patrol: With the U.S. Immigration Service on the Mexican Boundary, 1910-54* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1978), 12, 44-46; Grace Delgado, “In the Age of Exclusion: Race, Region and Chinese Identity in the Making of the Arizona-Sonora Borderlands, 1863–1943” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2000), 207; Delgado, “At Exclusion’s Southern Gate,” 198; Lee, “Enforcing the Borders,” 59-63.

⁵² A. A. Musgrave to Supervising Inspector, Immigration Service, El Paso, June 17, 1916, #53108/71N, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

⁵³ Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 136; Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*, 53-55.

possible by the enlarged American military presence on the border. To better enforce American neutrality laws during the Mexican Revolution, as well as prevent cross-border raiding and contraband arms trafficking, the Wilson administration ordered more and more federal troops to patrol the border. The Columbus attack and the Punitive Expedition “heightened the militarization of the border,” as Patrick Ettinger points out, so that “upwards of 110,000 national guardsmen ultimately saw duty on the border before a de-escalation began later that year [1916].”⁵⁴ In addition to protecting the international boundary and preventing any revolutionary activities from spilling across the border, however, these federalized troops also served a variety of functions that U.S. immigration officials found very helpful. As Berkshire explained, “The United States military authorities, United States marshals and customs officers have been constantly patrolling [sic] the border for several weeks past in order to prevent, so far as possible, violations of the neutrality laws, and this office has co-operated with said officials and rendered them every assistance possible, at the same time requesting their co-operation in the enforcement of our laws; and unquestionably they are, and have been, rendering valuable assistance to this service. Because of the extraordinary number of officers and employees now performing duty on this border, I am confident that our efforts in the enforcement of the Immigration and Chinese laws have been strengthened to a degree never before equalled.”⁵⁵ By 1915, some immigration officials were feeling confident that they had the border under their control; the Brownsville immigration office reported that “we feel that we have handled the recent influx of refugees in splendid shape so far, and we believe that most of the admissible residents of Matamoros have

⁵⁴ Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 136-37. For a broader survey of the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border, see generally Miguel Antonio Levario, *Militarizing the Border: When Mexicans Became the Enemy* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2012).

⁵⁵ Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, March 9, 1911, #53108/71, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

already been admitted and carded. Most of the non-combatants now in Matamoros belong to the excluded classes, among which are the Chinese, Japanese, Syrians, prostitutes, pimps, diseased, beggars, paupers, insane, feeble-minded, criminals, etc.”⁵⁶ The Chinese were stuck at the border.

In other words, by the time Pershing and his soldiers marched through the northern Mexican desert lands of Chihuahua during the spring and summer of 1916, they occupied a territory that hosted a significant Chinese population. Indeed, for the weary American soldiers in frustrated pursuit of Villa, struggling over unfamiliar terrain and through extreme weather conditions, the Chinese peddlers and merchants that they encountered during the early months of the expedition provided a welcomed sight. As already mentioned, the troops suffered from lack of reliable transportation facilities and resultantly poor ration supplies, as well as an embattled Mexican population that could offer only little help. Information was hard to get, and in some places so were basic goods even though the American soldiers were willing to pay, so exploited were the population by both revolutionary and federal factions. Pershing reported that “[w]hen our troops enter a new district, some [Mexicans] regard us much as they do the revolutionists, but when they find we pay our way, they bring out their eggs and chickens, their burros loaded with wood hastily collected, some corn, a few beans and what little else they have cached away to sell. . . . Others meet us and say we have come too late, that there is now nothing left to save.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ E. P. Reynolds to Supervising Inspector, Immigration Service, El Paso, March 25, 1915, #53108/71N, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

⁵⁷ Hurst, *Pancho Villa and Black Jack Pershing*, 101-02; “Report of the General Situation,” Pershing to the Commanding General, April 14, 1916, box 372, folder 1, p. 4, Pershing Papers. Some of the Americans they encountered with interests in Mexico were equally unhelpful, expressing hope that the expedition fail in its attempt to capture Villa, “believing that the expedition would be withdrawn if we should succeed, and consequently no assistance came from that source” either. “Report by Major General John J. Pershing, Commanding, of *The Punitive Expedition*, Colonia Dublan, Mexico, October 10, 1916,” box 372, folder 1, p. 11, *ibid*.

At the same time, the seeming inhospitality that soldiers received from many Mexicans was frequently based on a justifiable fear that the Americans' stay in the area was only temporary and that any cooperation with them would bring vicious reprisal by either Villistas or Carrancistas when the Americans left. For example, although there seemed many willing and eager to get the "dollar a day gold" pay and rations by the U.S. Army for smoothing out wagon trails and road construction, suddenly in May 1916, "[a]ll along the line of communication," reported a Major of the Engineering Corps, "Mexican laborers employed by the expedition have been quitting their work. Their pay was good and the hours were reasonably short, but of late they have been dropping their tools with a suddenness that bespeaks something under the surface." An investigation into the matter revealed widespread fears tied to rumors of Villista forces in the vicinity. "Villa was coming again. To work longer for Los Americanos meant death," according to the Major.⁵⁸ And possibly a gruesome death; atrocity stories surrounding the legendary "bandit" and his lieutenants were widely circulated, as was his anti-Americanism. In one letter to his wife, Patton relayed rumors that Villa had "caught a mother and young baby whom he said were spies and after tying [sic] them together he soaked them with kerosene and then lit them laughing as they ran around burning up." Patton had a particular interest in this woman, for he knew her: "she gave Gen. P [Pershing] and myself coffee when we were coming back from Sativo."⁵⁹ No doubt, news of such horrific reprisals – exaggerated or not – acted as a cautionary tale against associating in any way with the American expeditionary force.

⁵⁸ "Blanco Chinos," *Chicago Tribune*, December 2, 1916, in Scrapbooks, 1900-1949 (microfilm: frame 40, reel 2), Pershing Papers; "Mexicans Desert Pershing at Cry 'Villa is Coming!,'" *New York Times*, May 16, 1916.

⁵⁹ Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, II, 341-45; Patton to Beatrice Patton, January 28, 1917, box 6, folder 13, Patton Papers. Although Friedrich Katz argues in his very detailed and nuanced biography of Villa that Villista violence towards civilians was no more violent than Carranza's, he also shows that Villa underwent a period of "moral decline" after 1915, expressed in

On the other hand, it seems there was always at least one Chinese merchant or peddler who tracked down and offered the ragged soldiers a variety of scarce supplies, from pies and doughnuts to tobacco and matches to soap, items in high demand in the remote and harsh desert land. Unlike the U.S. army, which had been denied railroad access by the Mexican government to transport soldiers and supplies, the Chinese in Mexico could haul in merchandise over the rails from El Paso and Ciudad Juárez, in addition to carting in merchandise by wagon and mule. Thereby constantly supplied, the Chinese followed the troops from camp to camp, in wagons and on foot, as they marched across Chihuahua in pursuit of the ever-elusive Villa. By May, when the U.S. army had made its headquarters near Colonia Dublán, a large number of Chinese had set up eating houses, merchandising stands, and laundries near their camps, attaching themselves to the expeditionary force not only as small merchants, but as laborers, cooks, and laundrymen as well.⁶⁰ A so-called Chinatown was started with permission just inside the southwest boundary of the camp, and Chinese-run establishments cropped up in the so-called “sanitary village” that the army built to monitor prostitution and keep the 11,000 men entertained during their deployment.⁶¹

Why did so many of the Chinese in Chihuahua migrate toward U.S. military lines? Pecuniary interests must have played a significant role; here they had a large, captive market of consumers who could pay, and in U.S. currency, no less. This was no small matter during these

particularly savage violence that eroded the massive popular support that he had sustained in earlier years. Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 622-36.

⁶⁰ “Chinese on Army’s Hands. 300 with Pershing Fear Mexicans if Americans Withdraw,” *New York Times*, July 18, 1916; Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees,” 7-9.

⁶¹ James E. Klover, “Chasing the Greatest Bandido of All: First-hand account of a trooper on the trail of big game -- Pancho Villa!,” *Old West* 7:3 (1971), 40, 42; Smythe, *Guerilla Warrior*, 273 (for figure of 11,000 troops).



Figure 4.3. “Chinese refugees.”

Source: Paul J. Vanderwood and Frank N. Samponaro, *Border Fury: A Picture Postcard Record of Mexico's Revolution and U.S. War Preparedness, 1910-1917* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 211.

difficult years of the revolution when money was scarce and confiscation or mass looting by insurrectionists, federal soldiers, and civilians alike was a constant threat. In the countryside, where almost 90 percent of the population resided in 1910, the economic destabilization and continual crop shortages that accompanied the destruction and war resulted in widespread poverty and hunger, and so-called “bread riots” and food lines became all-too-common occurrences after 1914.⁶² During the summer of 1916, lines of starving women and children were reported in all the principal cities receiving small portions of ground corn for making tortillas. In San Luis Potosi, women even reportedly gathered outside of the Governor’s palace

⁶² Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 40-41.

and shouted, “May God send the gringos to save us . . . may the gringos come.”⁶³ Although such food riots and lines were more common in the interior, they also occurred in the northern sections of the country as well. In 1915 immigration officials at Nogales, Arizona, reported “a number of bread riots, so called, throughout Sonora, the most of them in Hermosillo where there was plenty of food, and brought on entirely because of the fact that the people had no money or had money without purchasing power, and not because of food shortage.”⁶⁴ Or as U.S. newspapers reported, “hungry women in Hermosillo . . . [were] raiding stores, principally chinese [sic].”⁶⁵ Starvation and poverty thus led many to desperate acts against Chinese merchants and grocers, especially those perceived as hoarding their provisions to the detriment of the broader community. Chinese businesses were not only vulnerable to popular expropriations, they were also “cleaned out” by government officials who used the confiscated resources to feed the poor and hungry.⁶⁶

At the same time, economic distress heightened racial and ethnic differences between Mexicans and Chinese immigrants in Mexico. By the start of the Revolution, many Chinese immigrants had successfully incorporated themselves into Mexico’s growing economy as

⁶³ “Hungry Women Riot for Food in Mexico: Pray that ‘Gringos’ May Save Them from Starvation at San Luis Potosi,” *N.Y. City Times*, July 7, 1916, in Scrapbooks, 1900-1949, #380 (microfilm: frame 457, reel 1), Pershing Papers.

⁶⁴ A. J. Milliken to Supervising Inspector, Immigration Service, El Paso, June 16, 1915, #53108/71N, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

⁶⁵ Gordon Campbell White Diary, May 26, 1915, vol 7, p. 174, Campbell W. Pennington Papers, 1872 - (Benson Latin American Collection, General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin).

⁶⁶ For example, the stocks of thirty Chinese stores in Nogales, Sonora were reportedly “cleaned out” by government officials and shipped south to feed the “multitude” of hungry Mexicans who had been removed from the border to the interior in June, 1916, following rumors of increased tension on the border between “Gringoes” and Mexicans. Milliken to Supervising Inspector, Immigration Service, El Paso, June 23, 1916, #54152/79-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C. See also Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*, 147-48.

laborers, cooks, shopkeepers, and farmers, while others established boardinghouses, canteens, laundries, and small manufacturing concerns. In places like Sonora, the Chinese commanded the local economy to the extent that Evelyn Hu-DeHart has referred to them as the “regional petite bourgeoisie.” Due to the perceived economic disparity between the majority of Mexican laborers and the entrepreneurial Chinese immigrant, anti-Chinese sentiments that echoed the virulent racist and xenophobic campaigns in the United States began to circulate among certain sectors of the Mexican population.⁶⁷ Indeed, when famed anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón published the platform of the Partido Liberal Mexicano (Liberal Party of Mexico) in 1906, flaring the intellectual revolution in opposition to Díaz, among the changes that the radical exile called for was the prohibition of Chinese immigration.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Evelyn Hu-DeHart, “*Huagong and Huashang: The Chinese as Laborers and Merchants in Latin America and the Caribbean*,” *Amerasia Journal* 28:2 (2002), 69; Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*, 145-90; Evelyn Hu-DeHart, “Racism and Anti-Chinese Persecution in Sonora, Mexico, 1876-1932,” *Amerasia Journal* 9:2 (1982), 10-24. Complaints that characterized the Chinese as “sojourners” taking all of the Mexican jobs without investing in Mexico began to proliferate, especially in Sonora where local merchants acutely felt their market share shrink after the arrival of the railroad and the significant influx of economic competitors. For comparisons of anti-Chinese campaigns in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, see Lee, “Enforcing the Borders,” 54-86; Kornel Chang, “Circulating Race and Empire: Transnational Labor Activism and the Politics of Anti-Asian Agitation in the Anglo-American Pacific World, 1880-1910,” *Journal of American History* 96:3 (2009), 678-701; Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 37-92. José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo asserts that the anti-Chinese arguments and ideas that emerged during Mexico’s revolution were directly taken from the working-class campaigns in the United States during the 1870s and 1880s that resulted in Chinese Exclusion. Gómez Izquierdo, *El movimiento antichino en México*, 87-88 (“Otro element en la formación de sentimientos racistas fue lo que José Vasconcelos denominó la influencia del movimiento sindicalista norteamericano en la desarrollo de la ideología de la Revolución Mexicana, afirmación que resultará muy molesto a los patriotas defensores de la ‘originalidad’ del nacionalismo revolucionario mexicano. Para el caso que nos ocupa, resulta claro que las ideas y argumentos utilizados contra los chinos, que eventualmente formarían el arsenal ideológico de los organismos nacionalistas antichinos, se tomaron literalmente de las consignas del movimiento obrero norteamericano, que de los años sesenta a los ochenta del siglo pasado luchó por la exclusion de los chinos de la nación estadounidense.”)

⁶⁸ “Programa del Partido Liberal Mexicano,” Art. 16, from Felipe Tena Ramírez, *Leyes fundamentales de Mexico, 1808-1994*, 18th ed. (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1994).

These prejudices only intensified with the coming of the Mexican Revolution, its new brand of nationalism, and the exclusionary discourses of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* that began to shape the new national culture.⁶⁹ Revolutionary leaders pit the “foreigner” against the “national,” equating foreigners with Porfirio Díaz’s dictatorship and the economic and social inequities that the Porfiriato had brought to the majority of rural Mexicans. As José Jorge Gómez Izquierdo explains, such revolutionary xenophobia unified an otherwise fractious society, creating thereby “one national community, a necessary condition for political elites to successfully impose their project of domination with social acceptance (consensus).”⁷⁰

Tragically, not unlike the outbreaks of Chinese-targeted violence in the late-nineteenth century United States, the nationalist project of the Revolution also introduced a dramatically new phase of anti-Chinese violence as well, as verbal attacks soon turned into physical assaults,

⁶⁹ In rejecting the “scientific” theories of the Porfiriato that defined Indians as backward and mestizos as degenerate, revolutionary and post-revolutionary elites promoted *indigenismo* [an idealization of Native peoples and cultures], *mestizaje* [an idealization of mixed-race people and their culture], and the mestizo as the icon of racial and social integration of the “new” Mexican nation. See Gómez Izquierdo, *El movimiento antichino en México*, 71-72; Alexandra Minna Stern, “From Mestizophilia to Biotypology: Racialization and Science in Mexico, 1920-1960,” in Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Roseblatt, *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*, 189-93. But as Gerardo Rénique points out, there also developed a parallel preference for the *blanco-criollo* [white Creole] racial ideal of the Mexican northerner and *anti-chinismo*, which through a succession of several Sonoran presidents came to dominate Mexican politics and state formation. Rénique, “Race, Region, and Nation,” 211-36; Rénique, “Anti-Chinese Racism, Nationalism and State Formation,” 101-04, 115-16.

⁷⁰ Gómez Izquierdo, *El movimiento antichino en México*, 84-85 (“De esta situación surgió un antagonismo entre lo ‘extranjero’ y lo ‘nacional,’ que fue utilizado por los líderes del movimiento armado, en sus diversas facciones, para ganarse una más amplia clientele, presentándose como los verdaderos nacionalistas en contraposición con los rivales, quienes eran descalificados como ‘agentes’ del extranjero. . . . Con [los *slogans* de xenofobia] se homogeneizó la ideología, los valores e incluso la moral de una comunidad nacional, condición necesaria para que las élites lograran imponer su proyecto de dominación contando con la aceptación social (consenso).”)

robberies, and traumatic killings.⁷¹ In 1911, one of the most prosperous Chinese communities in Mexico came under one of the worst anti-Chinese attacks during the Revolution, when a mob of 4,000 men and women from neighboring towns and villages pillaged Torreón's commercial establishments. Several Mexicans attempted to help many of their Chinese neighbors and associates, thus earning themselves the pejorative nickname "*chineros*" by anti-Chinese crusaders. But by the end of the day, over 300 Chinese had been killed, including women and children.⁷² News of the massacre traveled far, reaching not only Chinese diplomats and officials in Washington, D.C. and China, but also civilian Chinese across Mexico. The Chinese in Mexicali (across the California border in Baja) were known to talk about Torreón for several years after and how "everything ended in the killing of the *paisanos*," their countrymen. Though no other such devastating massacres occurred again, documented Chinese murders throughout the decade of the Revolution reached close to 900 dead.⁷³

⁷¹ Although most of the anti-Chinese violence occurred in the American West, such as at Denver, Seattle, Tacoma, San Francisco, and Rock Springs, Wyoming, mob violence also threatened Chinese in Midwestern cities such as Milwaukee during the late nineteenth century. See Peter N. Stearns, "'Chinese Demons': The Violent Articulation of Chinese Otherness and Interracial Sexuality in the U.S. Midwest, 1885-1889," *Journal of Social History* 37:2 (2003), 389-410.

⁷² The most comprehensive examination of the Torreón massacre remains Puig, *Entre el río Perla y el Nazas*, 147-310. See also Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*, 148-55; Tulitas Jamieson, *Tulitas of Torreón: Reminiscences of Life in Mexico* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1969), 116-21; Leo M. Dambourges Jacques, "The Chinese Massacre in Torreon (Coahuila) in 1911," *Arizona and the West* 16:3 (Autumn 1974), 233-46. On Chinese-Mexican cooperation, see Puig, *Entre el río Perla y el Nazas*, 192; Moisés González Navarro, *Los extranjeros en México y los mexicanos en el extranjero, 1821-1970* [Foreigners in Mexico and Mexicans Abroad, 1821-1970] (3 vols., México, D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1993), III, 87; Julian Lim, "*Chinos and Paisanos: Chinese-Mexican Relations in the Borderlands*," *Pacific Historical Review* 79:1 (2010), 69-74.

⁷³ On memories of Torreón by the Chinese-Mexican community in Mexicali, see Manuel Lee Mancilla, *Viaje al corazón de la península: Testimonio de Manuel Lee Mancilla* [Journey to the heart of the peninsula: the *testimonio* of Manuel Lee Mancilla] (Mexicali: Instituto de Cultura de Baja California, 2000), 34. For figures on documented killings of Chinese, see Robert Chao

The Chinese in Mexico, for their part, immediately appealed to Mexican government authorities for protection. La Asociación de Comercio China (The Association of Chinese Commerce) and the Chinese Legation complained to the Minister of Foreign Relations in February 1912 of attacks on Chinese subjects and their properties in Chihuahua, while La Cámara de Comercio é Industria China (The Chamber of Chinese Commerce and Industry) in Ciudad Juárez reported that the houses and businesses of resident Chinese in town had been attacked and robbed, leaving them without homes and in distressing circumstances; the Chinese requested that the government protect them “with the energy and efficiency” demanded by the situation.⁷⁴ And when an individual named Antonio H. Galindo began circulating anti-Chinese material in Chihuahua City, Chinese residents sought judicial relief to prevent the distribution of the inflammatory messages that they feared would ignite violence against the Chinese in town.⁷⁵

While Mexican authorities assured the Chinese Ministry that the loss of Chinese life and

Romero, “The Dragon in Big Lusong: Chinese Immigration and Settlement in Mexico, 1882-1940” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2003), 231.

⁷⁴ Woo Chung Ben to Señor. Lic. Manuel Calero, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, February 7, 1912, Exp. 13-2-50, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Mexico City [hereafter SRE] (“La Asociación de Comercio China, en Chihuahua me comunica que en diversas partes de este Estado, han sido robadas propiedades de súbditos Chinos y lesionados algunos de ellos; y me pide solicite de las autoridades las garantías necesarias. Ruego á Vuestra Excelencia que con la energía y eficacia que requiere el caso, se sirva dar sus instrucciones á fin de que se procure evitar se repitan estos atentados.”); Woo Chung to Calero, February 12, 1912, Exp. 13-2-50, SRE (“La Cámara de Comercio é Industria China, en Ciudad Juárez, me comunica que el día 30 del mes próximo pasado fueron asaltados los establecimientos y casas de los nacionales Chinos ahí residentes; encontrándose estos sin hogar y en circunstancias angustiosas. Rogaría á Vuestra Excelencia se sirviera dar sus instrucciones á fin de que con la energía y eficacia que el caso demanda, se dictaran medidas para mejorar la condición dichos nacionales y se repriman semejantes atentados.”)

⁷⁵ Woo Chung to Pedro Lascaráin, August 27, 1912, Exp. 13-2-50, SRE (“La Colonia China residente en Chihuahua, se dirige á este Legación manifestando que un individuo llamado Antonio H. Galindo, ha hecho circular unos versos en los que insulta á los chinos; que ya presentaron su querrela ante el Juez correspondiente, y solicitan que se les haga justicia, y se evite dicha circulación que previene al pueblo en contra de los chinos, lo que podría acarrear mayores delitos.”)

property were “natural consequences that follow all revolutions and were not the manifestation of personal antipathy by the Mexican people towards [Chinese nationals],” they also provided express guarantees of protection for the Chinese in Mexico.⁷⁶

Meanwhile, the Chinese were also seeking out American protection, which the U.S. Department of State provided through consular offices in various parts of the country.⁷⁷ In fact, before Juárez fell to Maderista forces in early May 1911, the Chinese residents of Juárez called upon the U.S. consul for protection. With the State Department and the Department of Commerce and Labor working in concert, El Paso immigration officers were directed to waive the Exclusion Act and permit Chinese persons to cross into El Paso if Juárez came under attack, hold those Chinese in the immigration detention quarters, and then promptly return them to Juárez once it appeared safe to do so.⁷⁸ The Department of Labor thus extended the harbor of temporary refuge to Chinese laborers as well. The exclusion acts were waived on an ad hoc basis whenever violence threatened towns immediately across the border, and Chinese refugees, whether of the merchant class or not, were repeatedly allowed to cross temporarily into

⁷⁶ B. Cabajal y Rosas to Chang Ying Tang, August 18, 1911, Exp. 16-4-54, SRE (“Asímismo me es grato manifestarle que en opinión de esta Secretaría el Gobierno de Vuestra Excelencia debe considerar los casos de muerte de súbditos chinos á que se refiere, como la consecuencia natural que trae consigo todarevolución [sic] y nunca como la manifestació de antipatía personal de pueblo mexicano hácia los nacionales de Vuestra Excelencia.”). See also Gómez Izquierdo, *El movimiento antichino en México*, 93.

⁷⁷ See, e.g., Telegram from Wilson, Acting Secretary of State to the American Ambassador, March 24, 1911, U.S. Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 7, 1911* (1911), 615, online at <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS>, last accessed 8/17/2010; Alvey A. Ader to the American Consul at Ensenada, July 15, 1911, *ibid.*, 618.

⁷⁸ Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, April 17, 1911, #53108/71, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.; Telegram from Knox, The Secretary of State to the American Ambassador, May 9, 1911, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, 1911*, 615-16.

American territory. Once quiet was restored across the border, the Chinese were marched back to the Mexican side “in columns of two under guard of immigration officers.”⁷⁹

It should be noted that although the Department of Labor approved the de facto policy of temporary refuge for both Mexican and Chinese refugees, the practice held special significance as applied to Chinese laborers. This is because, in many respects, the Department of Labor and local immigration officials had long-established a practice of maintaining a more porous border for Mexicans. Without question, Mexican immigrants were increasingly targeted for immigration exclusion after 1900, with rejection rates steadily climbing over the course of the revolutionary decade.⁸⁰ As a Del Rio inspector observed in March 1915, the “aliens” who came from Mexico were increasingly coming with little money, poorly clothed, showing lack of nourishment, and with more illnesses. “For these reasons,” he concluded, “it seems that the quality of arrivals is below the average of Mexican immigrants, compared with those arrivals before the Revolutionary period in that country.” Or as a Laredo inspector put it, “In normal times we had many of the laboring class who were in the prime of life and fine specimens of physical manhood. This class has almost entirely disappeared, and only the ordinary laborer and a few women and children are now coming.”⁸¹ Such Mexican immigrants and refugees could have been turned away and excluded at the border as “persons likely to become public charges” or for health reasons. Instead, local immigration officials on the border continued to apply

⁷⁹ Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, March 18, 1913, #53108/71-F, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

⁸⁰ Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 132-41.

⁸¹ E. J. Blaine to Supervising Inspector, Immigration Service, El Paso, March 23, 1915, #53108/71N, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.; James E. Trout to Supervising Inspector, Immigration Service, El Paso, March 23, 1915, #53108/71N, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

immigration restrictions more flexibly to accommodate the demand for Mexican labor in the Southwest, in line with what the Immigration Service admitted was a practice that “always existed on our southern boundary,” and not necessarily a new response to the revolutionary unrest along the border. As long as industries in the American Southwest needed laborers, Mexican immigrants who possessed no funds and “only the clothes upon their backs” were nevertheless admitted into the United States because “as has been demonstrated by experience, they secure employment at self supporting wages almost immediately upon stepping across the line.”⁸² Thus Patrick Ettinger argues that, “[a]ccommodating immigration laws to the waxing and waning demand for Mexican workers, border authorities became implicated in the construction of a permeable border during this period.”⁸³

The demand for labor on the American side of the border could thus redefine a migrant at the border from a potential pauper into an admissible immigrant.⁸⁴ In fact, it seemed to work in the Mexican immigrant’s favor to present himself as a potential laborer as opposed to a political refugee. As one Douglas, Arizona immigration inspector explained in 1915, “During the

⁸² Department of Labor, “Memorandum for the President,” April 3, 1916, #54152/79, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C. See also Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 123-44.

⁸³ Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 124. This does not mean, however, that the process and meanings of crossing the border did not change over time. In fact, although Mexican immigrants were still crossing the border in large numbers, they faced increasingly intrusive and invasive surveillance and inspection processes. See Stern, “Buildings, Boundaries, and Blood,” 63-73. Moreover, when labor demand was low or nonexistent, U.S. immigration officials would effectively close the border to Mexican immigration by applying the exclusion categories more actively, leading to overcrowding in Mexican border towns such as Ciudad Juárez, since laborers continued to arrive from the interior. Martínez, *Border Boom Town*, 35. In addition, the problem of human crowding in Juárez was exacerbated as seasonal laborers returned to the Mexican side of the border when their services were no longer needed and found themselves stranded in Juárez, having exhausted their funds but without any other available means of employment close at hand. *Ibid.*, 35-36.

⁸⁴ Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 130.

revolution a very large number of Mexican aliens who were admissible under the immigration law came from Mexico to Douglas, Arizona, and who are termed political refugees.”

Complaining that the refugees had “no interest in the United States or its institutions,” the inspector complained that although “[t]hey are still residing here and although being admissible under the immigration law, they cannot be properly termed desirable immigrants.”⁸⁵ Or as the Dillingham Immigration Commission put it more clearly, “In the case of the Mexican, he is less desirable as a citizen than as a laborer.”⁸⁶

In contrast, there was no such preference nor flexibility built into the exclusion policy as applied to Chinese laborers. Unlike Mexican immigrants, for whom it worked in their favor to be identified as laborers, Chinese immigrants had to redefine their identities from laborer to refugee if they were going to get across the border. As the violence of the revolution continued, more and more Chinese attempted to seek asylum as refugees across the border. On November 9, 1916, the U.S. consul at Juárez reported to the Secretary of State that “[t]here are in Juarez fully two hundred Chinese refugees that have come from Villa territory and daily arriving.” The majority were in destitute circumstances, but still, the consul reported, “[i]t being known that these people cannot leave [Mexico, meaning “enter the U.S.”] bandits regardless of faction anticipating that they have money concealed often abuse them and frequently they are killed.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Frank W. Heath to Supervising Inspector, Immigration Service, El Paso, March 22, 1915, #53108/71N, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

⁸⁶ *Reports of the Immigration Commission: Abstracts of Reports of the Immigration Commission with Conclusions and Recommendations and Views of the Minority* (42 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), I, 690.

⁸⁷ Consul Edwards to the Secretary of State, November 9, 1916, U.S. Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States with the address of the president to Congress December 5, 1916* (1916), 796, online at <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS>, last accessed on 12/01/2009.

Indeed, violence against Chinese persons in Mexico was not abating. That November, Villa preceded his attack on Chihuahua City with a promise to the city's residents that he would spare all foreigners "excepting from the same the Chinamen and the white Chinamen, that is the Americans, as these ones are the only ones responsible for all the misfortunes of this country." Soon thereafter, Villistas attacked Parral and Jiminez in southern Chihuahua and killed over 80 Chinese as well as other foreigners and natives, throwing bodies down mine shafts and burning one "American tramp" alive.⁸⁸ As news spread that the American flag was now in Mexico with the U.S. expeditionary force occupying northern Chihuahua, it is not surprising that many Chinese sought out Uncle Sam's protection where they could.

Becoming "refugees"

As the last case above reminds us again, the Chinese were by no means the only group subject to revolutionary violence in Mexico; the Spanish and other immigrants including Americans were targeted, and Mexicans as a whole were indiscriminately attacked and killed during the civil war. Fear of an attack by Villa created a panicked exodus from the state of Chihuahua during November, 1916, and Mexicans and foreigners packed every train leaving Chihuahua City,

⁸⁸ Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 626; Telegrams of Vice Consul Blocker to the Secretary of State, December 9, 14, and 19, 1916, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, 1916*, 680. It should be noted that Carrancistas were equally responsible for attacks and killings of Chinese. See, e.g., Telegram of Consul Letcher to the Secretary of State, February 28, 1916, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, 1916*, 795. Moreover, as Katz points out, Villa may have personally shared the xenophobic sentiments of many northern Mexicans against Chinese immigrants, but his *anti-chinismo* may have also have been motivated by a desire to appeal to the xenophobia of certain Chihuahuans, especially once his popularity began to wane after 1914. See Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 597, 630. Indeed, Villa has been portrayed as adept at public relations and in negotiating his public image. According to the black-owned, Los Angeles-based *California Eagle*, Villa reportedly proclaimed to his men, "hereafter when you meet a Chinaman, respect him; when you meet a Negro or Japanese respect them; respect burros." He advised no such respect for "gringos," however, advocating punishment instead. Quoted in Horne, *Black and Brown*, 147.

“jamming the car platforms, crowding the roofs and invading the locomotive tender.” Lack of housing in Juárez caused many Mexican refugees to dig caves for their families, as Mexican military officials would not let them cross to El Paso.⁸⁹

The dislocation of the revolution provided the context, then, for another motive that Chinese persons might have had for attaching themselves to Pershing’s expedition: that of entry into the United States when the army inevitably withdrew from Mexico. Indeed, *The New York Times* reported that Charley Tien, who claimed American citizenship, had little intention to remain in Mexico if the troops withdrew and that his fellow countrymen with him at Camp Dublán were also determined to go north with Pershing, stopping at the border on the Mexican side, from where, Tien explained, they “expect to be able to flee across the line for temporary refuge in case they are threatened.” Rationalizing that they had jeopardized their lives in assisting the expeditionary force, the Chinese appealed to notions of humanity to secure promises from Pershing that he would evacuate them along with his forces.⁹⁰

Ironically, the vehement anti-Chinese rhetoric that accompanied much of the revolutionary violence resonated with another equally important discourse for the Chinese, that of humanitarianism. Just as American expansionists called on the racist but supposedly altruistic notion of the “white man’s burden” to justify the United State’s expanding imperial reach at the turn of the century, capitalists advocating U.S. intervention in Mexico similarly appealed to conscience, using the language of humane principles to mask what were otherwise economic and

⁸⁹ “Scramble to Get Out of the State of Chihuahua,” *N.Y. World*, November 21, 1916, in Scrapbooks, 1900-1949 (microfilm: frame 31, reel 2), Pershing Papers.

⁹⁰ “Chinese on Army’s Hands. 300 with Pershing Fear Mexicans if Americans Withdraw,” *New York Times*, July 18, 1916; Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees,” 21. The issue of whether the Chinese refugees had initially attached themselves to the expedition for business purposes or with the ulterior motives of gaining entry into the U.S. raised concerns for some of the congressional representatives debating the legal admission of the Chinese refugees later in 1921. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese, Hearings on S. J. Res. 33 Permitting Chinese to Register Under Certain Provisions and Conditions*, 67 Cong., 1 sess., November 8, 1921, 945-46.

political agendas. Indeed, in an otherwise bellicose and financially-driven letter in support of intervention, an El Pasoan named O. P. Brown wrote in 1912 to Senator Albert Fall, chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Mexican Affairs and an ardent advocate for U.S. intervention, “It is not alone for the [foreign businessman] that I am pleading for some action to be taken, because I think in the sense of humanity their possessions and numbers and sufferings are few, compared with the great masses of enslaved and abused people who are living in that unhappy land, and in the name of humanity and for the cause of justice and right, I am making this plea that the United States Government, who is the foster mother of Mexico, [intervene].”⁹¹ By 1915, government officials publically considered intervention in similar tones, suggesting “that what might have previously been considered by some Mexicans as an aggressive intervention has now changed on account of the famine conditions to a humanitarian expedition, designed to save the Mexican people, helpless in the hands of military bands.”⁹²

⁹¹ O. P. Brown to Senator A. B. Fall, October 7, 1912, “Mexican Files,” box 73(29), Fall Papers. As chairman of the Subcommittee on Mexican Affairs, Senator Fall gathered testimony about conditions in Mexico and the treatment of Americans there, particularly as they involved American capitalist interests. In May 1917, he was also among the first to request from the Department of Labor and the Secretary of War an arrangement to employ Pershing’s Chinese refugees on his ranch in New Mexico. Claiming that it would be in the best interest of the Chinese refugees to “be allowed their freedom within the State of New Mexico, where they could immediately be placed in the fields and gardens at work,” Fall offered to “cheerfully give \$100 bond each for the Chinamen whom I might secure for work upon my ranch.” Fall to Newton D. Baker, May 2, 1917, #54152/79-B, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C. On American economic interests in Mexico, see John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁹² “Seek to Save Mexico: Humanitarian Reasons May Force U.S. Intervention,” *Washington Post*, May 30, 1915, 1, 5. In the place of outright military intervention, the U.S. State Department asked the American Red Cross to aid in Mexico in June 1915. Suspecting that the U.S. was using the relief program as a pretext for intervention, Carranza protested and demanded the removal of the Red Cross, insisting that his government could adequately meet the needs of the hungry. In September, the State Department directed the Red Cross to terminate its relief activities. See George E. Paulsen, “Helping Hand or Intervention? Red Cross Relief in Mexico, 1915,” *Pacific Historical Review* 57:3 (1988), 305-25. For a critical account of the Red Cross that complicates the organization’s image as champion of humanitarian charity and peacemaking, and shows how the organization became instead an ardent promoter of nationalist military projects, see John F. Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity: War and the Rise of the Red Cross* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

Whether humanitarian interests served as pretext for American imperialistic intervention or not, the language of humanitarianism also provided Chinese immigrants a rhetorical lifeline out of Mexico and into the United States. As early as May 1912, the American consul at Mazatlán reported that “the Chinese colony, consisting of four hundred residents . . . asks whether permission could be granted for temporary residence, as an act of humanity, at San Francisco or San Diego.”⁹³ For American agents as well as Chinese persons interested in U.S. intervention or aid, the infamous 1911 massacre of Torreón emerged as a compelling call to conscience. Thus when the president of the Chinese colony at Tapachula, Chiapas requested asylum at the American consulate for himself, an American citizen, as well as the 500 other Chinese residents of the city, the American Embassy reassured the Chinese that “on humanitarian grounds such action as is possible should be taken in behalf of the Chinese, in order to prevent a recurrence of so regrettable an incident as that recently taking place at Torreón.”⁹⁴

The rising specter of violence thus provided space for the alignment of Chinese immigrants with U.S. state power in the name of humanitarianism, but not without some desperate scrambling by the Chinese on their own behalf. Two weeks before the American forces began their march back to the border, Chinese residents of western Chihuahua reportedly appealed to the Chinese government for protection in the case of the U.S. army’s evacuation.⁹⁵ Indeed, despite Tien’s reported confidence in the U.S. army, Pershing had not automatically

⁹³ Dye, American Consul at Nogales to the Secretary of State, May 2, 1912, U.S. Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States with the annual message of the president transmitted to Congress December 3, 1912* (1912), 928, online at <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS>, last accessed 12/01/2009.

⁹⁴ Henry Lane Wilson to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, June 2, 1911, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, 1911*, 617. See also a letter written in 1916 by an American civilian invoking the Torreón massacre as justification for U.S. intervention. W. E. Barnes to Albert B. Fall, January 12, 1916, “Mexican Files,” box 72(13), Fall Papers.

⁹⁵ See, e.g., *Star Indianapolis*, January 17, 1917, in Scrapbooks, 1900-1949 (microfilm: frame 73, reel 2), Pershing Papers.

decided to evacuate all the Chinese with his troops, at least not yet; on January 21, 1917, he wrote to Major General Hugh L. Scott from Colonia Dublán that, “[a]s to Chinamen of whom there are over 100 here, as laundrymen, they will probably be in danger too, but those who are American citizens will go with us and the rest will drift back into Juarez and take their chances.” With the prospect of abandonment looming close ahead, Chinese civilians – particularly the majority who did not hold American citizenship – had few options but to reach out to a weakened Chinese state.⁹⁶

The precise details of how the Chinese refugees negotiated the diplomatic morass they confronted – a Mexican state thrown in revolutionary chaos, a weak Chinese government with little power to protect their nationals abroad, and harsh American laws which prohibited their entry into the United States – is not documented. What is clear is that the Punitive Expedition opened a unique door into the United States, one that allowed these Chinese immigrants a way to avoid dealing with the hostile Bureau of Immigration. In fact, the Immigration Bureau denied any responsibility for the refugees, insisting that,

Nothing that has been presented makes any of these people in any sense immigrants or people desiring to enter the United States *under the immigration law*. So far as the Bureau is aware, no request has been made upon the Government *or to this Department for protection or the right of asylum* to any of these people now accompanying Gen. Pershing’s column. . . . Hence, the matter of taking care of and protecting these people should be at the expense of the War Department. [emphasis added]⁹⁷

Although this memo was largely about inter-departmental relations, and how the expenses of managing the Chinese refugee situation would ultimately be assigned, at the same time it

⁹⁶ Pershing to Scott, January 21, 1917, box 372, folder 2, part 2, Pershing Papers. On China’s internal revolutionary strife and embattlements with foreign imperial powers, see John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China: A New History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 235-78; Hunt, *Making of a Special Relationship*, 188-226.

⁹⁷ Memorandum of A. Caminetti, Commissioner-General to the Secretary, February 1, 1917, #54152/79-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

suggests that these Chinese immigrants were actively putting their refuge in other hands, intentionally avoiding the reach of the immigration laws. As Kitty Calavita explains, “the state” is not monolithic, and inter-agency conflict can be “a central component of the state policymaking process.”⁹⁸ In this instance, the Chinese were able to exploit the divisions between the different bureaucratic agencies of the government. They had good reason to do so; the supervising immigration inspector at El Paso, Frank Berkshire, had been the one urging Pershing to “discourage or prohibit . . . all Chinese from following the expedition to [Columbus] and so far as may be possible encourage all Chinese who plan to come to the border to proceed through Mexico to the border at Juarez, where this service has better facilities for preventing their surreptitious entry into the United States which authentic advices already received indicate it is the plan of many of them to attempt.”⁹⁹ However, if they had been sent to Juárez, most likely they would have simply joined the other hundreds of Chinese immigrants waiting to gain entry into El Paso, under the usual temporary conditions of detention, to be returned immediately to Mexico once the threat of violence was gone.

Fortunately for the Chinese, Pershing came to their aid, proposing a modified plan of evacuation for the Chinese. Pershing’s relationship with the Chinese was, to be sure, a bit contradictory. “Being ignorant coolies,” he explained, “they are as likely to be robbed by the Carrancistas as by the Villistas.” And yet that vulnerability provided the basis for his final insistence that all the Chinese should be evacuated with his troops, even if only to be granted temporary asylum. As he explained to Berkshire, he had promised the Chinese his protection and preferred to evacuate them with his troops rather than “have them run the risk of the journey by train and then be turned loose in Juarez.” His superior, General Funston, agreed; in his January 27, 1917 order for Pershing to evacuate all troops and refugees, he deemed that “the

⁹⁸ Kitty Calavita, *Inside the State: The Bracero Program, Immigration, and the I.N.S.* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 181.

⁹⁹ Berkshire to Pershing, January 20, 1917, #54152/79-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

laws of humanity demand” the evacuation of all those Chinese refugees who had “served or befriended” the expeditionary forces in Mexico as well.¹⁰⁰

Outlying stations were thus abandoned, oftentimes in flames so as to leave nothing for waiting Villistas and Carrancistas to salvage, and the entire U.S. army concentrated at Colonia Dublán with a caravan of refugees, all of whom were registered, organized into bands, and assigned camping places close to military lines. As soon as a registered band became full, they were then directed to start the march northward with an assigned cavalry escort, protected overhead as well by two “aeroplanes.” As the column moved slowly northward, its numbers were augmented even further by latecomers and others waiting to join the evacuation under the U.S. army’s protective guise. The cloud of dust “strung out for 5 miles” across the desert and Casa Grande Valley, stirred up by the thousands of soldiers and the “refugees’ caravan” of civilians following Pershing by wagon and foot. By the 30th, all refugees had left Dublán, heading for the border and then another few miles to Columbus where they were to be temporarily interned.¹⁰¹ Pershing evacuated the Chinese refugees in a body, rationalizing that “[a]s long as they are kept together there will be little chance of their getting across the line, without our knowing it.” The very last refugee crossed the border on February 5th; somewhere

¹⁰⁰ Pershing to Berkshire, January 25, 1917, #54152/79-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.; U.S. Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States with the address of the president to Congress December 4, 1917* (1917), 1088, online at <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS>, last accessed on 12/01/2009. The military’s language of humanitarian assistance and friendship reflected the popular and official rhetoric of Sino-American relationships carried over from the nineteenth century. As Michael Hunt explains, “Americans held to the reassuring myth of a golden age of friendship engendered by altruistic American aid and rewarded by ample Chinese gratitude,” despite the actual conflicts and tensions that emerged from Chinese-American contact. Hunt, *Making of a Special Relationship*, 299.

¹⁰¹ “Pershing Retiring; Villistas Advance,” *New York Times*, January 28, 1917; “Refugees’ Caravan Follows Pershing,” *New York Times*, January 30, 1917; Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees,” 25-32.

close to 3,000 refugees were now in Columbus, 527 of them Chinese.¹⁰² When immigration officials then attempted to move the Chinese refugees from Columbus back across the border to Juárez, the Chinese “strenuously objected,” demanding to remain within the military’s jurisdiction in Columbus until the arrival of the Chinese consul general from San Francisco.¹⁰³ The Chinese strategy, such as it was, of casting their lot with Pershing would pay off.

Becoming “good Americans”

Of the refugees who came out of Chihuahua with Pershing’s expedition, the Americans moved on to other parts of the United States while Mexican refugees either returned to Mexico or accepted employment in Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. A few of the Chinese refugees voluntarily returned to China, while a handful voluntarily returned to Mexico. Some forty met the definition of merchant and were thus allowed legal entry into the United States as an exempted class of Chinese immigrants.¹⁰⁴ For the rest, however, Washington’s hands were

¹⁰² Pershing to Berkshire, January 25, 1917, #54152/79-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

¹⁰³ Telegram of Berkshire to Immigration Bureau, February 6, 1917, #54152/79-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C. The Chinese consul general, T. K. Fong, and the Chinese minister at Washington, V. K. Wellington Koo, did in fact immediately come to the aid of the Columbus refugees. Fong personally visited the camp and acted as legal adviser to the interned Chinese, while the Chinese Benevolent Association (also known as “the Six Companies,” based in San Francisco) began to raise funds for the relief of destitute Chinese refugees at Columbus as well as some 500 other Chinese encamped at Juárez. See V. K. Wellington Koo, Chinese Minister to the Secretary of State, February 14, 1917, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, 1917*, 1089. On Juárez refugees, see Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees,” 37-38. Briscoe claims that these refugees had been denied permission to cross into the United States. But in a February 14, 1917 telegram, the El Paso immigration office reported that “between six and seven hundred Chinese reported in Juarez about four hundred of whom are recent arrivals period. . . . Chinese in Juarez have been repeatedly advised that asylum will be granted their expense whenever they ask for it period. No applications as yet period.” Telegram of Harris to Immigration Bureau, February 14, 1917, #54152/79-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

¹⁰⁴ Pershing to the Adjutant General of the Army, April 12, 1917, #54152/79-B, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.; Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees,” 2, 43-45. And then there were two refugees who were sent to El Paso, where they waited for official permission from the immigration office to go to Cuba by way of Galveston, Texas; ultimately permission was refused

seemingly tied by the immigration laws. Thus Chinese officials scrambled to find a workable solution in Mexico again, including a plan to send them to Mexicali in Baja California, where revolutionary hostilities were less of a threat, there was a significant Chinese community, and certain parties were already seeking to import two to three thousand Chinese laborers from China to work in their cotton industries. U.S. immigration officials favored this arrangement, for not only did it solve the problem of the Columbus refugees but it would also decrease the “additional embarrassments [to the Bureau] likely to arise from bringing large number[s of] new Chinese to lower California,” so close to their border.¹⁰⁵ But for unclear reasons, the plan was dropped and by May it became evident that the Columbus refugees would not be returning en masse to any part of Mexico.¹⁰⁶ Four months after crossing the border, there still remained over 425 Chinese refugees at Columbus who continued to wait for some agreeable outcome.¹⁰⁷ And as Berkshire

as Cuba was viewed by immigration officials as a concentration point for the smuggling of Chinese into the United States. Lee Lim and Lee Nguey thereafter joined the remaining Chinese refugees who were moved to San Antonio. Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees,” 45 n. 30, 50 n. 39.

¹⁰⁵ Caminetti, Commissioner-General to Supervising Inspector, Immigration Service, Columbus, New Mexico, February 15, 1917, #54152/79-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C. ; Wellington Koo to Mr. Fung Tsiang Kwang, February 7, 1917, #54152/79-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

¹⁰⁶ Despite the best efforts of U.S. immigration officials and the Chinese consul general, Governor Cantú of Baja California refused to permit the entry of the Columbus refugees without the payment of a \$100 head tax. It appears that the needed Chinese labor of 2500 men had already been furnished by this point and presumably there were not enough funds either by the Benevolent Association or individuals refugees to cover the tax. Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, April 21, 1917, #54152/79-B, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C. The idea of sending the refugees to Sonora was also entertained, but Sonoran officials ultimately refused entry to the Chinese refugees, reflecting the anti-Chinese political climate that was sweeping the state and would continue to do so well into the 1920s and 30s.

¹⁰⁷ Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, April 21, 1917, #54152/79-B, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.; Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees,” 46. Briscoe attributes the Chinese being allowed as refugees for such an indefinite duration to 1) the Chinese’s “state of extreme necessity,” meaning the anti-Chinese violence that threatened them if they were to be returned to Mexico; and 2) the entrance of the United States into World War I and the resultant labor shortage. Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees,” 35. By the time Congress reviewed the matter in November 1921, deaths and deportations had reduced the number of Chinese refugees

noted, there were still some “several thousand Chinese in Mexico, at least a thousand of whom are now in Juarez . . . awaiting the outcome of action on the Columbus refugees,” hoping that their admission into the U.S. would provide precedent for future Chinese refugees from Mexico.¹⁰⁸

The negotiations that ultimately led to the 1921 registration and legalization of Pershing’s Chinese could fill another chapter.¹⁰⁹ Suffice it to say, the War Department and its need for labor again shifted the course of events for these Chinese: it offered a temporary program which kept the Chinese at work under military supervision at Fort Sam Houston, near San Antonio, where troops were being organized and trained for fighting the war in Europe. The Chinese refugees themselves voted almost unanimously to move to San Antonio. On June 6th, each Chinese received his certificate of admission from an El Paso immigration inspector, loaded four baggage cars and six day coaches on a special Southern Pacific railway run (dubbed “the Southern Pacific Chinese Special”) and left Columbus, moving on to San Antonio “to serve in the Quartermaster’s department of the army, having offered themselves to the country.” They worked as laborers and laundrymen, carpenters and blacksmiths, cooks and domestic servants for certain officers and their families, and at times as clerical help.¹¹⁰

remaining in the U.S. to 365. Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese*, 948.

¹⁰⁸ The costs of feeding and taking care of the Chinese refugees at Columbus as well as 600 “destitute” Chinese refugees in Juárez (\$180/day) were not insignificant and limited. Berkshire thus advocated that the U.S. government hand over the responsibility for the Chinese refugees to the Chinese government. Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, April 21, 1917, #54152/79-B, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

¹⁰⁹ I provide more detailed analysis of the legalization of Pershing’s Chinese refugees, and their transformation from undesirable Chinese laborers into deserving refugees, in Julian Lim, “Immigration, Asylum, and Citizenship: A More Holistic Approach,” *California Law Review* (forthcoming 2013).

¹¹⁰ Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees,” 47-69; *San Antonio Daily Express*, June 8, 1917. Paid, housed, and taken care of at government expense, the Chinese were to be employed until conditions in Mexico improved for the Chinese’ return. The Chinese Minister, Wellington Koo, was first to approve the program but was also to give positive assurances that if any Chinese

The recognition of Chinese service to the U.S. army carried heavy weight with authorities, sufficient to offset the exclusionary mandates of the immigration laws. In fact, the humanistic justifications for granting asylum to Pershing's Chinese were matched at the same time by fairness claims on behalf of the Chinese; not only were the Chinese labeled "persona non grata" in Mexico, thus justifying humanitarian intervention in the first place, but the Chinese attached to the expedition had, perhaps more importantly for some in the army, "performed extensive services and rendered valuable assistance" that obligated the U.S. government to some form of just compensation, or as Pershing himself put it, "the strongest kind of equities in their behalf." Indeed, Berkshire was surprised to find that "[t]he military officers almost without exception seem to consider that the United States Government is obligated to the Chinese because of the assistance they rendered the military while the expedition was in Mexico, and further, that the obligation is of sufficient moment to justify their unconditional admission into this country." That the Chinese continued to provide "services being valuable, unusual, and in some instances of a hazardous nature," such as working in tuberculosis hospitals or sanitariums, for the U.S. government during World War I strengthened the case for admission.¹¹¹

abandoned employment at Fort Sam Houston the Minister would guarantee to turn that person over to the immigration officials for deportation; thus Briscoe claims that the Chinese refugees were effectively "paroled" to the Chinese Minister, whose protection they could lose if they left camp without permission. The Chinese were thereby transferred from the custody of the Department of Labor to the War Department. Consul General Fong stayed in San Antonio until about June 18th; representatives of the Chinese Benevolent Association remained until January 1918. The welfare of the Chinese camp was thereafter left entirely in the hands of the War Department and the civilian official in charge, William Tracy Page. Although for the rest of their internment they remained under the direction of the military department based at San Antonio, the Chinese refugees worked at various camps scattered throughout the South and Southwest. Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese*, 964, 970.

¹¹¹ Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese*, 943-44, 946; Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, April 21, 1917, #54152/79-B, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C. International relations with China may have also played a role in the admission of the Chinese. See Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese*, 956. On U.S.-China relations at this time, see Hunt, *Making of a Special Relationship*, 304-05.

Like other racially-marginalized groups who served the nation during times of war, the Chinese refugees were able to transform their semi-military service during the Punitive Expedition and World War I into broader claims for inclusion in the United States. As Lucy Salyer has explained, military service carried with it a “liberating potential”; the U.S. government infused such service with “such importance that it became a path to citizenship for those, whatever their race, who were willing to play for high stakes.” In fact, one of the Chinese refugees gained citizenship by enlisting himself in the army and following the Seventh Field Artillery regiment, with whom he had been employed, to the battlefield in France. When officers realized that he had broken the regulations in force for the Chinese refugees and had enlisted without permission, he was returned to the Chinese camp, but not before he had received wounds in action. Rather than being punished, however, Jung Hoy was “admired for his patriotic desire to follow his employers to the fields of battle,” and was eventually rewarded with naturalization, making him the only refugee to receive the “Inestimable heritage of American citizenship” while still living in the camps. Although still denied the right of naturalization and full citizenship, the other Chinese refugees also established relationships of service with the U.S. Army – both at the personal as well as the symbolic level – through which they redefined their status vis-à-vis the nation: from excludable laborer to helpless refugee, invaluable servant, and ultimately legal resident in November 1921.¹¹² During their last days in camp in January 1922, as they made

¹¹² Lucy E. Salyer, “Baptism by Fire: Race, Military Service, and U.S. Citizenship Policy, 1918-1935,” *Journal of American History* 91:3 (2004), 850. See also Urban, “An Intimate World,” 233-84. On military service by other racial minority groups and struggles for full citizenship rights during World War I, see also Williams, “Torchbearers of Democracy”; Reich, “Soldiers of Democracy,” 1478-504. On Jung Hoy, see Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese*, 954-55, 965, 972, 978; Urban, “An Intimate World,” 267. To a great extent, what precipitated the legislation of Public Law No. 29 was the end of World War I, which reduced the military establishment at San Antonio and the demand for Chinese skills and labor. Now, again, appeared the old dilemma: what to do with these Chinese immigrants? Returning them to Mexico was not an option, for violence against the Chinese had not decreased but rather seemed to be on the rise, as northern Mexican states were now engaging in widespread, organized public campaigns to marginalize and expel the Chinese from Mexico. When Washington began to take action to appropriate funds for deporting the refugees to China in August of 1921, military and civilian friends to the Chinese refugees came to their aid,

preparations to be registered and released, General Pershing made a visit and spoke to them, bidding them to “learn the American language” after leaving military custody and become “good Americans.”¹¹³

After all those years of struggle, and after engaging a variety of identities in relation to both the Mexican and U.S. nation-states, these Chinese immigrants finally realized their right to belong in the United States. Theirs may be a unique story, but it is part of a larger history of migration, borderlands relations, transnational movements, and nation-state formation. In the ways that they negotiated revolutionary nationalism and immigration exclusion in the borderlands, Chinese immigrants were at times able to redefine the limits of state power and use the porous border to their advantage. In doing so, they redefined the notions of their belonging in Mexico and the United States. The irony is, however, that in calling on the power of the American flag to protect them, they also helped to redraw the lines of state power that would continue to try to exclude them.

pushing for the legislative aid that would eventually materialize as Public Law No. 29. Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees,” 130. In the end, approximately 50 percent of the Chinese refugees remained and settled permanently in San Antonio. Edward Eugene Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees in Texas,” *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 62:4 (1959), 488.

¹¹³ Briscoe, “Pershing’s Chinese Refugees,” 133-34.

CHAPTER FIVE

“RAZAS NO GRATAS” AND THE COLOR BAR AT THE BORDER

In a letter dated May 15, 1935, U.S.-born poet and novelist Langston Hughes wrote from Mexico City:

For the past four or five years now, . . . Negroes, tourists or otherwise, have been having difficulties about visiting Mexico, and in several cases have not been permitted to pass, or have had to put up a bond – which is never required of white tourists. Now that the new Laredo-Mexico City road is about to be opened, and thousands of American tourists will be visiting the country in their cars, I think it very important that some definite understanding be arrived at regarding American Negro tourists, and they be granted the same privileges as any others.¹

Hughes directed this letter to none other than Walter White, national secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The pressing concern, as Hughes explained, was the ongoing difficulty that African Americans faced in crossing the U.S.-Mexican border. During this era of Jim Crow, however, the difficulty came not from the U.S. side of the border, but from the Mexican side. Mexico had enacted a “color bar” against the migration of African Americans, in addition to other racial and ethnic groups such as the Chinese.

As demonstrated by this letter, the pressures of immigration law, national identity, and race-based nation-building began to take even more exclusionary form at the U.S.-Mexico border during the first half of the twentieth century. Earlier, the United States had taken the more

¹ Langston Hughes to Walter White, May 15, 1935, Box C-283, Folder 15, “Records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People” (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.) [hereinafter NAACP papers]. Following his father’s death in 1934, Hughes had travelled to Mexico City to settle his father’s estate, and remained in Mexico for several months thereafter. Langston Hughes, *I Wonder As I Wander* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1956), 285-300.

aggressive position in regulating the nation's borders. However, after the 1910s, regulatory controls intensified on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. During the 1920s and 1930s, both the United States and Mexico developed stricter border control policies and immigration exclusion programs based on race. As the United States shifted its focus from excluding Chinese immigrants to targeting Mexicans, Mexico enacted its own set of immigration policies to marginalize and restrict Chinese and African-American movement to Mexico.

This chapter examines the experiences of people who felt the double blow of exclusion at the U.S.-Mexico border – Mexicans and Mexican Americans at the crossroads of a slow postrevolutionary recovery and a volatile labor market in the United States, Chinese immigrants caught between *anti-chinismo* and the U.S. Exclusion Act, and African Americans who felt the double blow of *indigenismo* and Jim Crow. Reeling from the political and social upheavals of the Revolution, Mexican elites focused on reconstructing the nation not only through economic modernization and state consolidation, but also by constructing a powerful new national identity around the ideologies of “*indigenismo*” and “*mestizaje*” – ideologies that had no place for Chinese and black persons in Mexico. Although the history of Mexico's anti-Chinese campaigns has received some scholarly attention, the topic of African American exclusion from Mexico has remained largely under-explored.

The chapter thus brings the various strands of immigration together. In addition to more closely exploring how the exclusion and deportations of Mexican immigrants from the United States coincided almost immediately with the exclusions and expulsions of Chinese immigrants from northern Mexico, the chapter also examines the shifting notions of citizenship that emerged for some African Americans as they used the freedom of movement to critique the U.S. nation under Jim Crow, only to find the border increasingly closed to them by Mexican officials. To

some extent, this chapter takes its cue from borderlands historians who have emphasized the fluidity of national boundaries and identities, and elements of choice in constructing citizenship at the border. Late-nineteenth and twentieth-century African Americans were like other borderlanders who, as Ben Johnson and Andrew Graybill explain, “used national states and their boundaries for their own purposes and sought to forge nations that reflected their own identities” and values.² They tried to use their migrations to critique the “nation,” voting with their feet, as it were.

However, as demonstrated by the experiences of these diverse groups in the 1920s and 1930s, when Mexico joined the United States in more aggressively controlling the border, choice became much more constrained. This chapter thus emphasizes that with the emergence of the transborder immigration regime in the 1920s, the cross-border mobility of racially marginalized men and women became much more severely curtailed. In showing this, the chapter also illuminates the shared venture between the Mexican and U.S. nation-states in controlling race, immigration, and the border during the first half of the twentieth century. Detailing how U.S. and Mexican immigration policies coincided to shape the migratory flows and race relations of the borderlands, I argue that, to borrow from Rachel St. John, a form of “negotiated sovereignty” emerged here, as both countries exercised state power and immigration restrictions in dialogue.³ U.S. and Mexican immigration policies worked in tandem – as a more unified system – to channel migration in certain ways at certain times. As Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp and Robert

² Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill, “Introduction: Borders and Their Historians in North America,” in *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories*, ed. Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 23. See also Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

³ Rachel St. John, *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 7.

McLaughlin recently observed, the United States and Mexico concurrently developed “techniques of governance” to regulate immigration during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, resulting in parallel “movements that [were] sometimes coordinated, sometimes competitive, sometimes fluid, and sometimes disjointed.”⁴ The end result: as racial ideologies migrated across national boundaries in the exercise of state dialogue, it became more difficult for racialized bodies to do the same. More than this, however, when seen as a unified system that barred the entry of some and pushed others out, the immigration laws of both the United States and Mexico worked to turn immigrants into emigrants. Citizenship and belonging thus came to be defined “not just with regard to those who seek to enter the body politic,” Nancy Green explains, “but also with regard to those who leave.”⁵

Revolutionary Dreams

In September 1916, the Wilson and Carranza administrations established the American and Mexican Joint Commission, comprised of three representatives from each country, to negotiate a mutually-satisfactory program for dealing with border control. While the American delegates asked the Mexican government to consider issues relating to the protection of American interests

⁴ Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp and Robert H. McLaughlin, “Immigration and Techniques of Governance in Mexico and the United States: Recalibrating National Narratives through Comparative Immigration Histories,” *Law and History Review* 29:2 (2011), 574, 583. The authors compare how the United States and Mexico both developed three similar “techniques of governance” to control immigration: “the assignment of nationality, the use of demonstrable and documentable criteria in the admission of immigrants, and the systematic registration of immigrants.”

⁵ Nancy L. Green, “The Politics of Exit: Reversing the Immigration Paradigm,” *Journal of Modern History* 77:2 (2005), 264. See also Nancy L. Green and François Weil, “Introduction,” in *Citizenship and Those Who Leave: The Politics of Emigration and Expatriation*, ed. Nancy L. Green and François Weil (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 1 (“Citizenship is conceptualized not just through entry but through exit as well.”).

from revolutionary damage – the “Protection to life and property of foreigners in Mexico,” the “Establishment of a claims commission,” and “Religious tolerance” – the agenda for the Mexican Commissioners was primarily driven by a demand for the removal of the Expeditionary forces from Mexico.⁶ The Mexican delegates insisted that the program for the Joint Commission proceed by tackling the following matters in order: “FIRST:- Withdrawal of the American forces from Mexican territory. SECOND:- Safeguarding and patrolling of the border. THIRD:- Agreement in regard to the pursuit of outlaws at the border.” As they explained in their Reply to the American Commissioners, “[w]hile the American forces remain on Mexican territory the Mexican delegates consider[ed] it their duty not to take up any subject other than those which are immediately connected with the border situation,” which at the moment involved the presence of Pershing’s troops in Chihuahua, the enforcement of neutrality agreements at the border, and the cross-border pursuit of Mexican “outlaws” by Americans.⁷ Desperate to retain its position as the legitimate wielder of state power in Mexico, the Carranza government insisted that the United States rein back its forces in Mexico, and refused to give Americans a blank check to pursue Mexican “outlaws” – even Carranza opponents such as Villa – across the border into Mexico. Ultimately unable to agree on the scope and priorities of the commission, the joint commission adjourned its last meeting on January 15, 1917, having failed to come to a mutual agreement on

⁶ “Memorandum submitted to the Mexican Commissioners by the American Commissioners,” September 22, 1916, Box 108(1)(a), Papers of Albert B. Fall, 1887-1941 (Manuscripts Division, Huntington Library) [hereinafter Fall Papers]; “The Reply of the Mexican Commissioners to the Proposal of the American Commissioners of September 22, 1916,” October 6, 1916, Box 108(1)(a), Fall Papers. See also James Brown Scott, “The American-Mexican Joint Commission of 1916,” *American Journal of International Law* 10:4 (1916), 890-96.

⁷ “The Reply of the Mexican Commissioners to the Proposal of the American Commissioners of September 22, 1916,” October 6, 1916, Box 108(1)(a), Fall Papers.

border control. With the removal of the American forces two weeks later, the joint commission was permanently shelved.⁸

The failure to mutually agree about what should happen at the border, however, did not mean that the border would remain unregulated. Rather, over the following two decades, the two nations would implement new policies affecting foreigners and immigration in ways that would radically reshape the border and, at the same time, the nation. Indeed, within a few weeks, both the United States and Mexico announced new legal regimes that drastically curtailed the rights of immigrants both at the border and within.

As the final members of Pershing's Expedition and the trailing refugees marched out of northern Chihuahua, across the international border, and into New Mexico in early February, 1917, the U.S. Congress finalized and passed the Immigration Act of 1917, signaling another major turning point in U.S. immigration policy.⁹ Previous U.S. legislation regulating immigration targeted different classes for exclusion, with the barring of Chinese laborers the most infamous.¹⁰ The Immigration Act of 1917, on the other hand, was more comprehensive and

⁸ Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver, *Revolution on the Border: The United States and Mexico, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988); Don M. Coerver, "American-Mexican Joint Commission," in *The War of 1898 and U.S. Interventions, 1898-1934: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Benjamin R. Beede (New York: Routledge, 1994), 21-22.

⁹ Immigration Act of 1917, ch. 29, 39 Stat. 874, 874-98 (repealed 1952). A leading authority on immigration legislation describes the period from 1913-1929 as the moment that U.S. immigration law went "From Regulation to Restriction." Edward P. Hutchinson, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy, 1798-1965* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 159.

¹⁰ See Act of March 3, 1875, ch. 141, 18 Stat. 477 (prohibiting the immigration of alien convicts and prostitutes, and prohibiting the contracting of "coolie" labor); Act of March 3, 1891, ch. 551, 26 Stat. 1084 (expanding excludable classes to include "idiots, insane persons, paupers or persons likely to become a public charge, persons suffering from a loathsome or a dangerous contagious disease, persons who have been convicted of a felony or other infamous crime or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude, [and] polygamists"); Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, ch. 126, 22 Stat. 58, 58-61, repealed by ch. 344, § 1, 57 Stat. 600 (1943).

sweeping in its declarations for exclusion. It introduced a literacy requirement, an increase in head tax to a substantial \$8, the addition of several new classes of excludables, and the creation of an entire Asiatic barred zone, thereby stretching the racial policies of the Chinese Exclusion Act to other Asian immigrants (except for Japanese and Filipinos). In another significant departure from previous immigration policy, which rarely restricted Mexican migration across the U.S.-Mexico border, the 1917 Immigration Act also sparked the more widespread application of U.S. immigration laws on Mexican immigrants crossing at the border. As historian Anna Pegler-Gordon has thus observed, “The 1917 Immigration Act transformed both Mexican and Asian immigration.”¹¹ The act brought new scrutiny to the nation’s borders, with the effects to be felt most sharply by immigrants deemed racially undesirable: Asians, Mexicans, and (as will soon be seen) southern and eastern Europeans.

While the U.S. Immigration Act of 1917 reflected concerns about unregulated immigration at the border, it was also a response to national security issues that had been heightened by the Mexican Revolution, the political turbulence overseas in Europe and Asia, and the United States’ impending entrance into World War I.¹² American officials were well aware of the forced dislocations and displacements of populations around the globe, having witnessed great numbers of refugees crossing the country’s very own southern border. And yet the Immigration Act of 1917 largely failed to include provisions for handling refugee crises generated by the changing world order during the early 1900s. The law made one small concession for religious refugees by exempting persons fleeing religious persecution from the

¹¹ Anna Pegler-Gordon, *In Sight of America: Photography and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 176.

¹² *Ibid.*, 177.

literacy requirement, thereby allowing illiterate Russian Jews to enter the United States.¹³ For the most part, however, the law signaled the closing of America's gates to innumerable numbers of aspiring immigrants seeking not merely a new start, but respite from civil strife, political unrest, crushing poverty, and racial and political persecution.¹⁴

South of the border, Mexico also began to shift away from the more liberal immigration policies of the Porfiriato. The very same day that the U.S. Congress passed the 1917 Immigration Act, President Carranza announced Mexico's new visionary Constitution of 1917.¹⁵ As some contemporary Americans observed, "the breath of mind and deep insight into present-day problem . . . are especially worthy of note. It embodies reforms which many students of modern social progress deem essential in any comprehensive scheme for social welfare."¹⁶ Purporting to capture the aspirations of the Revolution, delegates of the constitutional convention incorporated provisions for secular public education (Article 3), promises of agrarian reform

¹³ Immigration Act of 1917, ch. 29, 39 Stat. 874, 877; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 203.

¹⁴ Indeed, shortly after the passage of the Act, President Woodrow Wilson submitted a request in 1918 to Congress asking that the "public charges" barrier to immigration be waived for 1,800 destitute Serbian refugees from Russia. The request appears to have fallen on deaf ears – no action was taken by Congress on the "humane project" despite the president's advocacy. *Admission into the United States of Alien Refugees*, House Doc. 1262, 65th Cong., 2d Sess., August 22, 1918. Officials were also very much aware of the genocide occurring in Turkey, and the mass dislocation of Armenians fleeing persecution by the Turkish state and civilians. In the early 1920s, several proposals were submitted before Congress to admit Armenian refugees, all to no effect.

¹⁵ The Constitution of 1917 was officially promulgated on February 5, 1917, sixty years to the day after the declaration of the 1857 Constitution. Eberhardt V. Niemeyer Jr., *Revolution at Querétaro: The Mexican Constitutional Convention of 1916-1917* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974), 222.

¹⁶ N. Andrew and N. Cleven, "Some Social Aspects of the Mexican Constitution of 1917," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 4:3 (1921), 474.

(Article 27), and expansive labor and social welfare programs (Article 123).¹⁷ For historian John Hart, the Constitution became the instrumental basis for “eliminating most of the vestiges of caste and archaic social relations . . . and opening society for public education and individual mobility.”¹⁸ But reflecting the nationalist momentum of the Revolution, and responding to the economic and political disruptions that Mexico had suffered from foreign interests, the delegates also infused the Constitution of 1917 with a renewed commitment to its nationals and citizens.¹⁹ Indeed, the constitutional packaging of what otherwise seemed an expansive, universalist vision of social and individual rights also included very close attention to the classification of Mexico’s population, and to the legal boundaries between Mexican nationals, citizens, and foreigners.

The Mexican Constitution first delineated nationality from citizenship, providing under Article 30 that Mexican nationality could be acquired by birth or by naturalization.²⁰ Article 34,

¹⁷ See Niemeyer Jr., *Revolution at Querétaro*, 62-79, 101-65. For a more critical appraisals of the success of these reforms during the postrevolutionary period, see e.g., Daniel Nugent and Ana María Alonso, “Multiple Selective Traditions in Agrarian Reform and Agrarian Struggle: Popular Culture and State Formation in the *Ejido* of Namiquipa, Chihuahua,” in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 209-46.

¹⁸ John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 16.

¹⁹ For details on how U.S. capitalist interests were thereby affected, see, e.g., John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico since the Civil War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 371-99.

²⁰ Those who acquired Mexican nationality by birth included those born on Mexican territory (regardless of the parents’ nationality), as well as those born abroad to “Mexican parents; to a Mexican father and foreign mother, or to a Mexican mother and an unknown father.” Others could acquire Mexican nationality by obtaining naturalization cards from the Secretaría de Relaciones, or for foreign women, by marrying a Mexican and establishing domicile in Mexico. *Constitucion de 1917*, reprinted in Felipe Tena Ramirez, *Leyes Fundamentales de Mexico, 1808-1994* [Fundamental Laws of Mexico, 1808-1994] (México, D. F.: Editorial Porrúa, S. A., 1994), 835. The referenced section in Spanish:

Art. 30. La nacionalidad Mexicana se adquiere por nacimiento or por naturalización.

however, limited citizenship to include only those Mexican men and women who were over 18 years old if married, or over 21 years if unmarried and “liv[ing] an honest life.”²¹ Citizens enjoyed and exercised a variety of political privileges and obligations, such as voting, running for office, and joining the armed forces.

Foreigners, on the other hand, were defined by Article 33 as those who did not possess Mexican nationality as determined by Article 30. As non-nationals, and thus non-citizens, foreigners were to be extended the same individual rights guaranteed under Chapter I of the Constitution, but were absolutely prohibited from getting involved in Mexican politics in any way. Perhaps more significantly, Article 33 gave the Executive office exclusive power to remove from the country, without trial, any foreigner whose presence was deemed “inconvenient.”²² As historian Pablo Yankelevich explains, “[t]he absence of precision about the

A) Son mexicanos por nacimiento:

- I. Los que nazcan en territorio de la República, sea cual fuere la nacionalidad de sus padres;
- II. Los que nazcan en el extranjero de padres mexicanos; de padre mexicano y madre extranjera, o de madre Mexicana y padre desconocido, y
- III. Los que nazcan a bordo de embarcaciones o aeronaves mexicanas, sean de guerra o mercantes.

B) Son mexicanos por naturalización:

- I. Los extranjeros que obtengan de la Secretaría de Relaciones carta de naturalización, y
- II. La mujer extranjera que contraiga matrimonio con mexicano y tenga o establezca su domicilio dentro del territorio nacional.

²¹ Constitución de 1917, reprinted in Tena Ramirez, *Leyes Fundamentales de Mexico*, 836 (“Art. 34. Son ciudadanos de la República los varones y las mujeres que, teniendo la calidad de mexicanos, reúnan, además, los siguientes requisitos: I. Haber cumplido dieciocho años, siendo casados, o veintiuno, si no lo son, y II. Tener un modo honesto de vivir.”)

²² Tena Ramirez, *Leyes Fundamentales de Mexico*, 836 (“Art. 33. Son extranjeros los que no posean las calidades determinadas en el artículo 30. Tienen derecho a las garantías que otorga el Capítulo I, Título Primero, de la presente Constitución; pero el Ejecutivo de la Unión tundra la facultad exclusiva de hacer abandonar el territorio nacional, inmediatamente y sin necesidad de juicio previo, a todo extranjero cuya permanencia juzgue inconveniente. Los extranjeros no podrán, de ninguna manera, inmiscuirse en los asuntos políticos del país.”)

activities and procedures for determining the undesirability of a foreigner opened an enormous margin of arbitrariness in the application of [the law], providing the Executive with a power that some . . . came to describe as ‘despotic.’”²³ Under Article 33 powers, Mexico’s presidents signed 1185 expulsion orders between 1911-1940, with 60.8% of the expelled comprised of Spanish (31.8%), Chinese (19%), and Americans (10%).²⁴

The Constitution thus marked a turning point in Mexico’s treatment of immigrants and the formulation of its immigration laws. The Mexican government had adopted a much more open-door stance towards immigrants during the Porfiriato when President Díaz enthusiastically invited immigration to Mexico, instituting the Ley de Colonización de 1893 in hopes to thereby modernize Mexico’s economy and transform its indigenous past. Mexico did pass its first exclusionary immigration law in 1908, providing for the regulation of immigration on the basis of public health and morality concerns.²⁵ But the law remained too vague for officials to apply and they never had the opportunity to fully put the law to use before revolution erupted.²⁶

Following the installation of the 1917 Constitution and Article 33, postrevolutionary leaders

²³ Pablo Yankelevich, “Extranjeros indeseables en México (1911-1940). Una aproximación cuantitativa a la aplicación del artículo 33 constitucional” [Undesirable foreigners in Mexico (1911-1940). A quantitative approach to the application of the constitutional Article 33], *Historia Mexicana* 53:3 (2004), 694 (“La ausencia de precisiones en torno a las actividades y procedimientos para calificar la indeseabilidad de un extranjero abre un enorme margen de arbitrariedad en la aplicación del mencionado precepto, dotando al Ejecutivo de un poder que algunos constituyentes llegaron a calificar de ‘despótico.’”).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 707, 710 (“Entre 1911-1940, los presidentes mexicanos firmaron 1185 órdenes de expulsión apelando al artículo 33.”). See also Gilberto Loyo, *La Política Demográfica de México* [The demographic politics of Mexico] (México, D.F.: Talleres tipográficos de S. Turanzas del Valle, “La Impresora”, 1935), 351-63.

²⁵ See Instituto Nacional de Migración, *Compilación histórica de la legislación migratoria en México, 1909-1996* (México: Secretaría de Gobernación, 1996), iv, 5.

²⁶ Robert Chao Romero, *The Chinese in Mexico, 1882-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2010), 185.

proceeded with more caution and the 1920s witnessed a marked shift in the treatment of immigrants. In the place of the Porfiriato's open-door policy, Mexican officials began to adopt more restrictive policies, more aggressively screening immigrants for exclusion and deporting others already within the country.

In other words, by 1917, the immigration law systems of the United States and Mexico began to converge in significant ways. Exclusion began to define both systems, with issues of racial and national identity driving the move to exclude. As both countries continued to expand their administrative power over immigration and sharpen their regulatory control of the border, Mexican, Chinese, and African American immigrants would pave new migratory circuits across the borderlands. In the process, they found their sense of belonging, national identity, and citizenship challenged and redefined in new, more segregated, and racially distinct terms.

Northern closures

Despite the 1917 Immigration Act's re-assertion of Chinese exclusion and the expansion of that exclusionary policy to all Asian groups, the matter of Asian immigration was not completely settled. Though many Americans, especially labor unions, remained vehemently opposed to the admission of Chinese laborers, there was enough agitation in support of Asian immigration that opponents felt compelled to continue pressing politicians and officials to continue excluding Asians. "Keep the Chinese out!" wrote one Pennsylvania man to the Department of Labor. "They belong to an alien race," he went on, "[and to] swamp the United States with Chinese laborers under the guise of a 'scarcity of labor' would be a disaster second only in magnitude to a

Prussian victory, and, in fact might prove in the very long run even more disastrous.”²⁷ With the United States’ entry into World War I, however, and the depletion of available laborers as workers became soldiers, employers in various industries looked beyond the borders again for their workforce. Southwestern and southern agricultural employers in particular urged U.S. immigration officials to allow exceptions to Asian exclusion as a matter of exigency, as even Mexican and African American laborers were unavailable to them, drawn away by other opportunities in railroad work, in northern industries, and in the army.²⁸

For some, the admission of Asian laborers from the United States only promised to protect white supremacy. In patriotic tones, one Herbert S. Giesy insisted that “to protect our liberties, won for us by Washington and his fellow patriots of the American Revolution,” the U.S. government needed to make other arrangements to increase production at home. The solution, he proposed in a letter to the President, involved Japanese immigration. But his rationale came in ominous and racist tones: “The white man is not only destroying himself [in war] but destroying his seed, because of the Kaiser’s wickedness and insane ambition. . . . The yellow man is not killing himself off at the present time and if this great destruction of the white race and its seed is to continue long, the yellow race will have a man power which will have to be reckoned with. . . . [W]hat may not the yellow man do to us if the destruction of the white man and his seed goes on much longer?”²⁹ As a matter of racial self-preservation, Giesy urged

²⁷ William LaFontaine to Dept. of Labor, July 13, 1918, #54261/158, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

²⁸ E. V. Berrien to Henry F. Ashurst, September 9, 1918, #54261/158, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.; J. M. Willson Jr. to Secretary of Labor, June 24, 1918, #54261/158, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

²⁹ Herbert S. Giesy to the President, August 3, 1918, #54261/158, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

the President to arrange for the importation of Japanese laborers, proposing that once the war had ended, the imported Japanese then be “taken to Mexico or South America, where they are wanted and not feared, as in our Western States.”³⁰

Others justified the importation of Chinese laborers for the duration of the war so as to limit women from entering the workforce. As one smelter company owner explained: “It seems to me that the plan of importing Chinese would appeal especially to the Labor Unions as a means of combating the method now in vogue of replacing men workers with women workers, the majority of whom will remain here after the war, thus placing themselves in direct competition with the men workers who relinquished their places to serve the Government, and creating a serious problem when the men return to civil life after the close of war.”³¹ Rather than continuing to upset gender roles and women’s expected place at home as opposed to the factory floor, some employers thus sought the importation of Chinese labor. To placate labor unions concerned about competition with Chinese workers upon the American soldier’s return home, the owner suggested that “[t]his competition would naturally be eliminated . . . [by] exporting the Chinese after the war.”³² Similar to how Mexican laborers would soon be treated, Chinese

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Daniel Guggenheim to Joseph P. Tumulty, Secretary to the President, January 22, 1918, #54261/158, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C. For more details about women workers in the United States during World War I, see Maurine Weiner Greenwald, *Women, War, and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980).

³² Daniel Guggenheim to Joseph P. Tumulty, Secretary to the President, January 22, 1918, #54261/158, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

laborers were valued not only for the cheapness of their labor, but also for their ultimate disposability and impermanence.³³

Thus key to many of the proposals for the importation of Chinese laborers was the supposed impermanence of any racial disruption resulting from their presence. Such impermanence could be anticipated not simply by planning for their disposability. Other Americans assumed that, in addition to deporting some of the Chinese out of the country, those Chinese who remained in the United States would never fully assimilate, waning instead in segregated bachelor societies with no long-term growth prospects in the United States. One prospective employer proposed the importation of three million Chinese laborers to work on “the farms, the factories and the mines, or wherever it is needed, so as to increase our production . . . This would relieve the strain of the high cost of living immediately and give greater prosperity.”³⁴ What would then happen to the three million Chinese? “Later,” the writer explained, “they [the Chinese laborers] would die off, so it would be a gradual adjustment. The past experience of the Chinese in the United States has shown that as women were not allowed to be imported, that practically all evidences of the race rapidly died out.”³⁵ The threat of racial mixing, then, would resolve itself.

Chinese Americans also pushed for an opening in the Exclusion laws, writing to officials directly as well as working behind the scenes. El Paso resident E. V. Berrien explained to Arizona senator Henry Ashurst in September 1918 that all of the Chinese gardeners in the valley

³³ Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 132.

³⁴ Francis M. Brooke to Woodrow Wilson, April 13, 1917, #54261/129, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

³⁵ Francis M. Brooke to Woodrow Wilson, April 26, 1917, #54261/129, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

had grown too old to continue gardening: “I have spoken to a number of them and asked them why they could not continue and they all state that old age and the impossibility of securing help made it impossible.” Unable to recruit Mexican laborers away from railroad work, Berrien – presumably at the suggestion of the Chinese growers themselves – asked for “some five hundred Chinese farmers” to help the aging growers, take over the work, and cultivate the 250,000 acres of valley land that remained adaptable for gardening.³⁶ Another landowner in Kissimmee, Florida wrote to the Secretary of Labor, “There is a chinaman here running a laundry, he has been all over my farm and says if I can get a permit, he can send to his old home in China – Chung Lau, Sun Ning, Canton China – and get some of the china farmers [sic] to come and raise big crops on that land.”³⁷ Encouraged by this “chinaman,” he thus requested permission to bring 20 Chinese immigrants to farm his 550 acre property.

Ultimately, such efforts in support of Chinese immigration to the United States failed. Outside the case of Pershing’s Chinese refugees, who in 1921 were granted the right to permanent residency by congressional legislation, U.S. officials refused to budge on the exclusion of Chinese.³⁸ The only softening of the exclusion policy came in 1922 for Chinese Mexican merchants residing “adjacent to the border.” In order to ease the flow of cross-border commerce, the Immigration Service in 1922 decided to permit certain Chinese Mexican merchants to enter at El Paso, as well as at certain other Mexican border ports which were not

³⁶ E. V. Berrien to Henry F. Ashurst, September 9, 1918, #54261/158, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C. The El Paso resident wrote to the Arizona senator because the two states’ interests were tied together, in Berrien’s opinion.

³⁷ J. M. Willson Jr. to Secretary of Labor, June 24, 1918, #54261/158, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

³⁸ For more on the 1921 granting of permanent residency to Pershing’s Chinese refugees, see Julian Lim, “Immigration, Asylum, and Citizenship: A More Holistic Approach,” *California Law Review* (forthcoming 2013).

designated as regular Chinese ports of entry, in order to conduct their business. As long as they resided in Mexico “adjacent to the border,” and made a sufficient showing of mercantile status and legitimate business purposes for entering the United States, such Chinese Mexican merchants were admitted for temporary business purposes without the usual Section 6 certification requirements. They could not proceed beyond the American towns “adjacent to the border,” and could remain on the American side only as long as “absolutely necessary to transact the business for which the visit [was] made,” but the waiving of Section 6 certificates and the permission to cross at points along the border not regularly open to Chinese merchants significantly made their business trips easier.³⁹

The slight opening of the border to Chinese merchants during the 1920s may reflect, in some ways, the diminishing anxieties that U.S. immigration officials expressed about Chinese immigration at the border. Though illegal Chinese immigration at the border continued into the 1920s and 1930s, U.S. immigration officials now faced growing numbers of unauthorized entries across the U.S.-Mexico border by other immigrant groups, some familiar and some new. During the 1920s and 1930s, immigration officials shifted their attention to the “problems” posed by Mexican immigration and, to a lesser but still significant extent, European immigration. As Patrick Ettinger put it, beginning with the 1920s, U.S. immigration officials faced the “sisyphean task” of policing the border against undocumented entries by Mexicans and Europeans.⁴⁰ By 1923, El Paso supervising inspector Berkshire reported that European smuggling had displaced

³⁹ Office of Supervising Inspector, Mexican Border District, El Paso, Texas to John W. Dye, August 19, 1922, Correspondence, 1922, vol. VII, Records of Foreign Service Posts, Consular Posts, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, RG 84, NARA/CP. If the Chinese Mexican merchant was also a citizen of Mexico, the officials also waived passport requirements.

⁴⁰ Patrick Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines: Border Enforcement and the Origins of Undocumented Immigration, 1882-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 145.

Chinese smuggling as a top concern.⁴¹ After the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act, those numbers of undocumented European entry surged.

Following World War I, in response to consular reports flooding back to the United States about hundreds of thousands of “undesirable” Europeans waiting to emigrate to the United States, Congress closed the door on European immigration just as it had with Asian immigration. Albert Johnson, chairman of the House Committee on Immigration, went so far as to propose a total suspension of immigration so that the United States would not become “the catch basin for the permanent reception of these undesirables,” also popularly referred to as “the dregs of Europe.”⁴² Although a complete ban on immigration – no matter how temporary – proved politically unviable, as Aristide Zolberg explains, “[i]n the aftermath of World War I, the United States loudly proclaimed to the world its determination to cease being a nation of immigrants. In one of the most spectacular displays of legislative power in American history, . . . Congress sought to make immigration disappear.”⁴³ Terrified that the United States would be deluged by waves of immigrants deemed “filthy, un-American, and often dangerous in their habits,” leading restrictionists and officials made haste to enact new immigration laws to address the national “emergency.”⁴⁴ Otherwise, Representative Johnson warned, ships leaving Europe would bring a flood of over 2 million immigrants a year.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Ibid., 148.

⁴² Committee on Immigration, “Emergency Immigration Legislation,” Senate, Part I, 66th Congress, 3rd Sess., 1921, 10-16, 18.

⁴³ Aristide R. Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 243.

⁴⁴ Committee on Immigration, “Emergency Immigration Legislation,” 11.

⁴⁵ Committee on Immigration, “Emergency Immigration Legislation,” 31.

The threat of these European immigrants came not only from the fact that they were poor, displaced migrants from a war-torn continent, and thus undesirable from a resource-standpoint. The other palpable threat came from the fact that they were primarily from southern, central, and eastern Europe, and thus racially undesirable. As Matthew Frye Jacobson points out, though Jews, Italians, Poles, Greeks, and a host of other European immigrants might have been able to reach American shores as “free white persons,” their “racial credentials were not equivalent to those of the Anglo-Saxon ‘old stock’ who laid propriety claim to the nation’s founding documents and hence to its stewardship.”⁴⁶ Although they eventually became accepted as “Caucasians” over time, they faced, as Jacobson puts it, “certain challenges to their racial pedigrees along the way.”⁴⁷

Immigration lawmakers, in particular, came under the powerful sway of restrictionists who began to raise questions about racial pedigree, national identity, and the proper role of the state in engineering the American body politic.⁴⁸ As turn-of-the-century reformers brought greater attention to the effects of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration in major American cities, restrictionists combined the “science” of eugenics with the state, using immigration law as a blunt instrument to eradicate what they saw as the appalling consequences of undesirable immigration. Striving for more precise categories of classification and hierarchical comparisons of nationality and race, eugenicists and social scientists provided the intellectual framework for prioritizing nationality as the determining factor for deciding who can be admitted and who

⁴⁶ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 3-4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

could not. As Mae Ngai astutely observes, they did this by supplanting the idea of racial superiority with the idea of racial “difference” as the basis for exclusionary immigration laws.⁴⁹

Key for nativists and race scientists was racial purity, and an urgent need to keep the American people from becoming “hopelessly bogged down in the mire of mongrelization.”⁵⁰ As explained by eugenicist Harry Laughlin to Congress during later debates over immigration restriction,

Racially the American people, if they are to remain American, are to purge their existing family stocks of degeneracy, and are to encourage a high rate of reproduction by the best-endowed portions of their population, can successfully assimilate in the future many thousands of Northwestern European immigrants . . . But we can assimilate only a small fraction of this number of other white races; and of the colored races practically none.⁵¹

What emerged from this movement of race-based nativism were policy proposals that explicitly favored the “Nordics” of northern and western Europe over the “other white races” – the less white immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, such as Italians, Hebrews, and Slavs. While deriding such immigrants for resisting assimilation, nativists at the same time worried about what the assimilation of “other white races” would mean for the “American people.”

Congress thus passed the “Emergency” Quota Act of 1921, which limited immigration to “3 per centum of the number of foreign-born persons of such nationality” residing in the United

⁴⁹ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 25.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 313; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 68-90. See also Zolberg, *A Nation by Design*, 199-216 (describing how racial concerns influenced “social scientists” to push for the literacy test requirement that eventually was enacted with the Immigration Act of 1917).

⁵¹ Quoted in Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 84.

States as determined by the 1910 census.⁵² The quota requirements effectively restricted European immigration to a maximum of about 350,000, and more importantly, reserved most of the quota slots for immigrants from northwestern Europe.⁵³ Concerned that the 1921 quota law was still letting in too many racially undesirable immigrants into the country, restrictionists led by Johnson pushed for an even stricter quota law. The resultant Immigration Act of 1924 reduced the quota from 3 percent to 2 percent, and changed the census base from 1910 to 1890, when immigration from southern and eastern Europe had constituted a barely perceptible segment of the American population.⁵⁴ Although deemed legally white by courts for purposes of naturalization, their racial identities remained legally and socially suspect, to be contained by severely restrictive immigration policies. Southern and eastern European immigrants were marked by “whiteness of a different color,” as Matthew Frye Jacobson describes it, which made their ability to reach American shores more difficult.

The Immigration Act of 1924 thus cleaned up some of the murky racial lines in U.S. society, drawing thicker boundaries between whiteness and non-whiteness. In addition to hierarchically categorizing and restricting European immigration, the Act also extended the policy of exclusion to all Asian immigration, by means of which Ngai argues “Asian” identity was constructed as a “peculiarly American racial category.”⁵⁵ Whereas the 1917 Immigration Act had not included Japan in the “Asiatic barred zone,” the 1924 Act now prohibited the admission of all “aliens ineligible for citizenship,” thereby barring the immigration of Japanese

⁵² Act of May 19, 1921, 67 Cong. Ch. 8, 42 Stat. 5.

⁵³ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 311.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 315. For a detailed discussion of the Immigration Act of 1924, see Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 21-55.

⁵⁵ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 37.

persons.⁵⁶ In doing so, the intersections of citizenship and immigration embodied in the “aliens ineligible for citizenship” bar placed Asian immigrants outside the boundaries of American identity altogether. The privilege of citizenship was reserved only to “free white persons” under the Nationality Act of 1790 and to “persons of African nativity or descent” through the Fourteenth Amendment. Deemed not “white” by the courts, and never making claims to blackness, Asian immigrants found themselves erased from the official black-white racial taxonomy of the United States.⁵⁷ They were erased from the very category of “immigrant” itself.⁵⁸

Those who also chose to associate themselves in multiracial unions with “aliens ineligible for citizenship” were also erased from American national identity. Shortly before Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924, it had passed the Cable Act of 1922.⁵⁹ The Cable Act significantly revised a previous law that divested American women of their American citizenship if they married noncitizen men.⁶⁰ With the passage of the Cable Act, American women who

⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, 37-50.

⁵⁷ Japanese and Asian Indians were deemed not white for purposes of naturalization in two Supreme Court cases, *Takao Ozawa v. U.S.* (1922) and *U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind* (1923), respectively. See Ian F. Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 41-47.

⁵⁸ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 27.

⁵⁹ Act Relative to the Naturalization and Citizenship of Married Women (Cable Act), ch. 411, 42 Stat. 1021 (1922).

⁶⁰ Expatriation Act, ch. 2534, §§ 3-4, 34 Stat. 1228, 1228-29 (1907). The legal doctrine of coverture conceptualized a woman’s citizenship status as dependent on her husband, so that women who married U.S. citizen men automatically became U.S. citizens themselves. The Expatriation Act negatively extended the logic of dependent citizenship to American women who married noncitizen men; because women took on the nationalities of their husbands, American women who married noncitizen men were now stripped of their U.S. citizenship. For additional details on the legal history of the Expatriation Act, see Leti Volpp, “Divesting

married noncitizen men retained their U.S. citizenship and nationality, but only if they married noncitizen men who were ultimately eligible for naturalization. The law thus only partially repealed the gendered expatriation laws, mandating instead that “any woman citizen who marries an alien ineligible to citizenship shall cease to be a citizen of the United States.”⁶¹ In other words, as Leti Volpp has explained, the Cable Act allowed white or black women expatriated for marrying white or black noncitizen men to be renaturalized as U.S. citizens.⁶² Those who married Asian men would continue to face the loss of their citizenship. For these women, marrying Asian men placed them outside the American body politic, into a state of exile and potentially statelessness. The law was no doubt meant to deter white American women from entering into unions with “unassimilable” and “undesirable” immigrants.⁶³ At the same time, however, by stripping such women of their American citizenship, and the whiteness that nativists sought to associate with American national identity, the law also thereby erased the multiracial union from the nation in a powerfully symbolic way.

While southern and eastern Europeans were differently white, and Asians (and those who married them) not white nor black at all, Mexicans in the 1920s and 1930s found themselves in a

Citizenship: On Asian American History and the Loss of Citizenship through Marriage,” *UCLA Law Review* 53 (2005), 419-31.

⁶¹ Cable Act § 3, 42 Stat. at 1022.

⁶² Volpp, “Divesting Citizenship,” 433.

⁶³ Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 45. Though the majority of women affected by the Cable Act were likely Asian American women who were U.S. citizens by birth, and had married noncitizen Asian men, there were also significant numbers of white women married to Asian men who lost their citizenship. See Volpp, “Divesting Citizenship,” 435-42.

space wavering between whiteness and blackness.⁶⁴ As Kelly Lytle Hernández explains, the fluid nature of Mexican racial identity defied racial understandings of a clear black/white divide, and “[t]he overwhelmingly marginalized but generally unafixed positions of Mexicanos in the separate and unequal borderlands contrasted sharply with the America that the nativists were trying to formulate through U.S. immigration restrictions.”⁶⁵ Indeed, though the main target of the 1924 Immigration Act were European immigrants, many grew alarmed at the rising numbers of Mexican immigration to the United States. Mexican citizens made an unprecedented one million border crossings into the United States during the 1920s.⁶⁶ By the mid-1920s, a vast majority of agricultural workers in the Southwest were Mexican. Of the estimated eighty thousand migrant workers in central and southern California, between 80 and 95 percent were Mexicans by the mid 1920s. Mexican agricultural workers also comprised 80 percent of the migrant laborers in Texas, with south Texas claiming 98 percent of its agricultural workers as Mexican.⁶⁷

Wary of these rising numbers, politicians, labor organization, social scientists, eugenicists, and patriotic societies thus sought to extend the quota regime to Mexicans so as to limit the admission of what they saw as another group of inferior immigrants. The *Saturday Evening Post* published an editorial asking, “How much longer [are] we going to defer putting

⁶⁴ Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Kelly Lytle Hernández, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

⁶⁵ Lytle Hernández, *Migra!*, 31.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 24-25.

the Mexican Indian under the quota law we have established for Europe?”⁶⁸ An avid opponent of Mexican immigration, east Texas congressman John C. Box warned that continued Mexican immigration threatened to further the “mongrelization” of white America and thus create additional race problems in the United States.⁶⁹ For others, the confusion of Mexican racial identity itself impeded plans to exclude Mexican immigrants. As Secretary of Labor James Davis wrote to Albert Johnson, “The Mexican people are of such a mixed stock and individuals have such a limited knowledge of their racial composition that it would be impossible for the most learned and experienced ethnologist or anthropologist to classify or determine their racial origin. Thus, making an effort to exclude them from admission or citizenship because of their racial status is practically impossible.”⁷⁰ Although Mexicans were legally deemed white in the United States, most Americans continued to look upon Mexicans as impure, with mixed Indian and Spanish blood, and thus racially dangerous. The construction and celebration of a postrevolutionary Mexican national identity based on *mestizaje* and *indigenismo*, as will soon be discussed, further confounded American racial sensibilities.

The extension of quota limits to Mexican immigrants failed to occur. However, this does not mean that the United States opened the door completely to Mexican immigration. By the 1920s, Mexicans were already encountering more difficult, stricter, and humiliating checks at the border. Claiming public health reasons, El Paso immigration officers instituted invasive and

⁶⁸ “Time to Put Up the Bars,” *Saturday Evening Post*, November 24, 1928, quoted in Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 52.

⁶⁹ Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 164.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 54.

embarrassing personal inspection and delousing procedures.⁷¹ In addition, as Patrick Ettinger has shown, from the 1920s on, officials increasingly resorted to visa controls, border patrol mechanisms, and the criminalization of entry without inspection as a way of regulating Mexican immigration in a flexible way.⁷²

With the coming of the Great Depression, agricultural work fell as one of the first casualties of the economic crisis, leaving Mexicans who dominated agricultural labor in California and Texas among the first to feel the consequences of the Depression. As Anglo Americans begin to find themselves without work, they began to pressure authorities and employers to employ only “citizens,” and laundries, factories, stores, and construction companies began to replace their Mexican workers with Anglo Americans. President Hoover also began to scapegoat Mexicans for “[taking] jobs away from American citizens,” and began to formulate mass deportation plans. Ultimately, it appears that fewer than 300 Mexican aliens were actually deported by federal authorities. But the discrimination and scare tactics had their desired effect. In studying the effects of the Depression on Los Angeles, Sánchez found that “Mexican residents of Los Angeles responded to the worsening economic conditions and growing patterns of discrimination by returning to Mexico. Although most of the early repatriates came from Texas border towns, during the winter of 1929-30 a sizeable group of Los Angeles residents departed for their homeland.” By the end of 1930, nearly 10,000 Mexicans had returned across the border

⁷¹ Alexandra Minna Stern, “Buildings, Boundaries, and Blood: Medicalization and Nation-Building on the U.S.-Mexico Border, 1910-1930,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79:1 (1999); John McKiernan-González, *Fevered Measures: Public Health and Race at the Texas-Mexico Border, 1848-1942* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

⁷² Ettinger, *Imaginary Lines*, 165-66.

to Mexico.⁷³ El Paso again emerged a prominent transit point – previously the busiest port of entry for Mexicans entering the United States, it became one of the main ports of exodus for repatriates returning to Mexico. Between 1931 and 1933, almost 65,000 were estimated to have made their way south through El Paso.⁷⁴

Southern Closures

The regulation of Mexican immigration to the United States was not entirely an American affair, however. The Mexican government itself played a role in managing the emigration of Mexican laborers to the United States. The Mexican Constitution protected the right of Mexican nationals to freely enter and exit the country, and for the most part Mexican authorities did not prevent Mexican nationals from crossing the border. Although the government would have preferred its citizens to remain in the country and help rebuild the nation after years of destructive revolutionary violence, it also saw emigration as of potential benefit to the national rebuilding project. As struggling families sent able-bodied men to the north to work and send back money, it eased some of the economic and political pressures for leaders seeking stability during the postrevolutionary period. In addition, leaders hoped and expected that many Mexican immigrants would eventually return home, bringing not only their hard earned money but also their training in the fields and shops with them. Similar to how the Chinese government had shifted its position with respects to Chinese living abroad, Mexican consulates now actively refashioned Mexican nationalism to include those living in the United States, encouraging the

⁷³ George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 210-14.

⁷⁴ Monica Perales, *Smelertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 217.

identification with Mexican national and cultural pride across borders.⁷⁵ As George Sánchez explains, “the construction of a Mexican national identity was never more ferociously pursued than in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution – at the very moment thousands of Mexicans were making their way north.”⁷⁶

At the same time, the government did not abdicate all control over emigration. In 1926, Mexico established the Department of Migration, which was soon renamed as the Instituto Nacional de Migración (INM) in 1933. Responsible for enforcing Mexican immigration law, INM officers regulated and policed migration into and out of Mexico, applying restrictions against foreign nationals while managing the movements of Mexican citizens.⁷⁷ Kelly Lytle Hernández has noted that despite the Constitution’s guarantee of free exit and entrance, Mexican officials at times vigilantly screened passengers on trains heading north to the United States. If a passenger did not appear to meet the literacy and fee requirements of U.S. immigration law, Mexican officials themselves would deem them unlikely to gain legal entrance into the United States, confiscate their passports, and send them back home.⁷⁸ In addition, Mexican officials stepped up efforts to crack down on the smuggling of immigrants into the United States.

In flexing state power in these ways, Mexican officials lined up its immigration law and policies with those of the United States. As Lytle Hernández observes, the history of the INM “speak[s] against the tendency to frame U.S. immigration control and border enforcement exclusively in terms of U.S. based concerns regarding sovereignty, labor control, and unwanted

⁷⁵ Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 109-25; Lytle Hernández, *Migra!*, 83-84; Perales, *Smelertown*, 163-64.

⁷⁶ Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 9.

⁷⁷ Lytle Hernández, *Migra!*, 7.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

migration. . . . [T]he rise of the U.S. Border Patrol in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands developed in partnership with the establishment and expansion of cross-border systems of migration control.”⁷⁹ Mexico was, in other words, “a crucial partner in the development of modern migration-control and border-enforcement practices in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.”⁸⁰

The INM’s regulation of immigration and the border, however, was not always subservient to the will of American interests, and neither was it limited to regulating the exit and entry of Mexican nationals. Rather, Mexico began to assert more of its own authority to regulate the admission and deportation of foreign nationals, including Americans. In 1922, for example, the American Consul in Juárez reported on a “campaign initiated by certain business men of El Paso and backed by the churches to have the International Bridge between El Paso and Juarez closed every evening at 6 o’clock.”⁸¹ The proposal was intended to give effect to Prohibition, by physically closing off Americans’ access to alcohol and related businesses across the border in Ciudad Juárez. In response, Juárez stepped up its own reform efforts, kicked off with a visit by Governor Ignacio Enriquez. He promised to clean up the city by closing seventy five saloons, regulating cabarets, and moving the vice district out of the heart of the town and away from the city.⁸² In addition, he promised that “[w]omen who loiter about cabarets and restaurants will be

⁷⁹ Ibid., 7. It should be noted that Lytle Hernández places these mutual developments as occurring during the 1940s and early 1950s, later than the period under study in this project.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ “Promise of Reforms in Ciudad Juarez,” October 10, 1922, Correspondence, 1922, vol. VII, Records of Foreign Service Posts, RG 84, NARA/CP.

⁸² “Gov. Enriquez Tells El Paso Business Men He is About to Campaign to Clean Up Juarez,” *El Paso Times*, October 10, 1922. It should be noted that many of Ciudad Juárez’s less reputable establishments appeared as a result of Texas’ prohibition law, passed on April 15, 1918. The law did not exactly lead to the closing of El Paso’s 250 saloons and 50 liquor stores. Rather, many of El Paso’s saloon-keepers simply moved their business into Ciudad Juárez, “arm-in-arm with the less socially acceptable prostitutes and gamblers.” Oscar J. Martínez, *Border Boom Town*:

ordered arrested and deported.”⁸³ The cleanup began, in fact, with the deportation of 17 Americans – twelve women and five men, two of whom were “negroes” – to the U.S. side of the Rio Grande, where the deported Americans were then immediately arrested by waiting El Paso police officers and charged with vagrancy. “The cleanup campaign will be continued until all desirables [sic] are run out of Juarez,” Mexican officials reportedly promised.⁸⁴ No doubt, the deportation of “undesirables” to El Paso was not quite what El Paso reformers had in mind.

The concerns about public health and safety, however, that informed immigration practices were never just that. Rather, as it happened in the United States, Mexican reformers assigned immigrants different assessments of moral and public health based on racial identity, and Mexico’s postrevolutionary immigration policies were infused with racial anxieties. While the United States turned to immigration law and racially exclusionary policies to solidify a white national identity based on Anglo-Saxon ideals, Mexico also developed a system of racially exclusionary immigration programs to consolidate national identity during the 1920s and 1930s. It began to close its own borders to immigrants not merely deemed morally or physiologically dangerous, but also racially undesirable, ridding its territories from and barring the further admission of certain groups that supposedly did not meet definitions of *mexicanidad*.

One such group, as demonstrated in the introductory vignette and as discussed in chapter 1, were African American immigrants. The international border had carried great significance for enslaved African Americans since the antebellum years, as Mexico had banned slavery and

Ciudad Juárez since 1848 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), 52. Although Chihuahua Governor Abraham González wanted to close all such establishments in the state, city leaders were reluctant to let go of a solid source of revenue and prohibited activities thus continued in Ciudad Juárez.

⁸³ “Enriquez Tells Plans to Limit Bars in Juarez,” *El Paso Times*, October 11, 1922.

⁸⁴ “Cleanup of Juarez Begins; Officials Expel 17 Americans,” *El Paso Times*, October 10, 1922.

locals were known to resist slaveholder efforts to retrieve runaway slaves. With the end of slavery, African Americans flexed their new-found freedoms in a variety of ways, not least of which was through movement – movement away from their former masters, across county and state lines to find long-lost family, to the north and to the west in search of new opportunities in the United States. But as those new opportunities failed to materialize as many had hoped, and as the promising era of Reconstruction gave way to Jim Crow and the rise of white supremacy, African Americans began to ask again whether the freedoms for which they struggled lay beyond the country's borders.⁸⁵

Encouraged by the Porfirian government's open-door stance towards immigrants, and assured by Mexican officials that Mexico would be their "Canaan, the land of hope and promise, where they would find relief from the persecution of southern whites," hundreds of African Americans experimented with Mexican colonization schemes during the late 1880s and 1890s.⁸⁶ Some, like Langston Hughes' father, rejected notions of U.S. citizenship that ultimately afforded

⁸⁵ On post-emancipation migration, see Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 292-335; Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South, from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 317-63.

⁸⁶ Quoted from Gerald Horne, *Black and Brown: African Americans and the Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 21. Horne describes various emigration schemes in further detail on pages 21-24, 81-85. See also González Navarro, *Los extranjeros en México*, II, 235 (describing a failed black colonization plan in Tlahualillo, Durango after a smallpox epidemic spread throughout the colony); McKiernan-González, *Fevered Measures*, 78-122. (describing same and the public health response by officials when the colonists sought to return to the United States); Karl Jacoby, "Between North and South: The Alternative Borderlands of William H. Ellis and the African American Colony of 1895," in *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History*, ed. Samuel Truett and Elliott Young (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 209-39; Delores Nason McBroome, "Harvests of Gold: African American Boosterism, Agriculture, and Investment in Allensworth and Little Liberia," in *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, ed. Lawrence B. de Graaf, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor (Los Angeles: Autry Museum of Western Heritage, 2001), 149-80.

little protection. They left the United States to go to Mexico, “where a colored man could get ahead and make money quicker . . . where there wasn’t any color line, or any Jim Crow.”⁸⁷

Certain black presses and newspapers such as the *California Eagle* reported positively about Mexico’s relaxed racial attitudes and sympathies for African Americans in the U.S. under Jim Crow; one prominent Mexican lawyer was quoted as saying, “My only regret is that it is not physically possible to immediately transport several millions of these fine [African American] people who are my brothers and sisters to my beloved Mexico, where the earth yields her riches, as nowhere else and where life has a charm to be found nowhere else and where people are not disturbed by artificial standards of race or color.”⁸⁸ Or as legendary black boxer Jack Johnson put it in 1919, in his advertisements in black newspapers inviting colonists for “Jack Johnson’s Land Company”:

Colored People. You who are lynched, tortured, mobbed, persecuted and discriminated against in the boasted “Land of Liberty.” . . . OWN A HOME IN MEXICO where one man is as good as another and it is not your nationality that counts but simply you! . . . 5.00 an acre and up . . . best of all there is [no] “race prejudice” in Mexico and in fact, severe punishment is meted out to those who discriminate against a man because of his color or race.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea: An Autobiography* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 1940), 39.

⁸⁸ “Says Mexico Welcomes American Negro,” *California Eagle*, September 13, 1919, 8. The lawyer, Juan Uribe, was visiting Los Angeles to wind up legal matters related to the transfer of nearly nine thousand acres of land in Lower California (Baja) to the Lower California Mexican Land & Development Company, a company formed for the development of an African American colony in Mexico dubbed “Little Liberia” by the *Los Angeles Times*. For more on “Little Liberia,” see McBroome, “Harvests of Gold,” 157-70.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Horne, *Black and Brown*, 2.

Mexico was depicted as a land of refuge for African Americans kept down by Jim Crow and white supremacy in the U.S., a place where the free individual represented by U.S.' liberal discourse could actually be realized by all, regardless of skin color.

Of course, colonization efforts proposed by men such as Johnson were largely motivated by entrepreneurial factors. But the social and political messages that accompanied the commercialization of emigration were not merely cheap window dressing for consumers.⁹⁰ Rather they resonated with black men and women struggling against the constraints of Jim Crow – social and political rights went hand in hand with economic rights. The positive descriptions of Mexico thus correlated with black discontent with the Jim Crow U.S. As William Pickens, founding member of the Niagara Movement and the NAACP, wrote in an article for *The Nation* in 1923 as field secretary for the NAACP:

I sit in a Jim Crow [car] as I write, between El Paso and San Antonio, Texas. The Jim Crow car is not an institution merely to 'separate the races'; it is a contrivance to humiliate and harass the colored people and to torture them with a finesse unequaled by the cruelest genius of the heathen world. The cruder genius broke the bodies of individuals occasionally, but Jim Crow tortures the bodies and souls of tens of thousands hourly.⁹¹

For the past two months, Pickens had travelled across the country from New York to the Northwest, on to California and into the Southwest. It was on the eastward leg from Albuquerque to El Paso, however, that the comfortable accommodations turned sour. "El Paso is where the train would enter Texas, and both my tickets terminated there. But so thoroughly is it understood that Jim Crowism is not designed merely to 'separate,' but also to humiliate, [sic]

⁹⁰ There were a reported "ten large colonies in Mexico" during the 1890s, including hundreds who left Alabama in "one of the greatest colonization experiments in Alabama history." Quoted in *ibid.*, 21.

⁹¹ William Pickens, "Jim Crow in Texas," *The Nation*, August 15, 1923, 155.

colored passengers that the thing is always in the consciousness of the railway employees, even those who operate in and out of Jim Crow territory, and they begin to ‘work on you’ as soon as you buy a ticket that leads even to the limbo of this hell.” The Pullman conductor loudly informed him that “you can’t ride in this car after you get into Texas. You’ll have to get out of this car in Texas, and I supposed you know that?” To rub it in even more, Pickens described the insult he felt at the train station in El Paso:

I was meanwhile shown to the “Negro” waiting-room, a space of about twenty by twenty, away off in one corner of the station structure like a place of quarantine or a veritable hole in the wall. I had to traverse the entire length of the great main waiting-room in order to reach this hole. The main waiting-room has all the conveniences, ‘phone booths, ticket offices, and what not. And whom do you suppose I saw in this main waiting-room as I passed through? Not only the “white people,” but all the non-American “colored peoples,” yellow Chinese, brown Japanese, and the many-colored Mexicans, some dirty with red handkerchiefs around their necks and carrying baskets and bundles with fruits, vegetables, and live chickens. . . . And when I reached the little humiliating hole assigned to “Negroes,” I found there only four or five colored people, all intelligent, not one of them conspicuously unkempt like some of the Mexicans in the main waiting-room.⁹²

Pickens found it unbearable that “Mexicans were being treated as human beings,” while the “colored people” in El Paso had to tolerate “their humiliation and attempted degradation.”⁹³

Despite such ambivalent statements about Mexicans, Pickens would find it refreshing to cross into Juárez: his African American companions in El Paso “took me across the shallow Rio Grande into Mexico, just a few hundred yards from Jim Crowism. And over there, bless you, white and black people come out of Texas and gamble at the same table, drink at the same bar, and eat in the same restaurant, while the dark and almost black Mexican stands around as the

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 155-56.

policeman and the law.”⁹⁴ Indeed, as one colonization leader, J. D. Pettigrew from Los Angeles, explained in a letter addressed to President Obregón in 1921, “On account of the many outrages and harsh and un-indurable treatment constantly practiced upon the Colored People in the United States by the dominant race there, the Colored People are now aroused as never before, and are preparing to leave the United States, in large numbers, and seek homes in a better country.”⁹⁵

This movement, Pettigrew later explained, was “a Race movement” of thousands of industrious farmers, professionals, and business men composed – he felt inclined to emphasize – “only of the manly, intelligent, progressive, self-respecting members of the Race” who, having been so oppressed in the United States, “are now hopefully knocking at the door of your good country for admission.”⁹⁶ As African American historians have already pointed out, emigration – the freedom of movement across the nation’s borders, permanently even – was intricately tied to black freedom struggles at home.⁹⁷

Some African Americans even looked to Mexico as an ally against white supremacy more broadly. In 1922, one J. W. Williams from Olathe, Kansas wrote to President Obregón: “Im [sic] sure His Majesty are cognizance [sic] that the English Speaking People of the World

⁹⁴ Ibid., 156.

⁹⁵ J. D. Pettigrew to Alvaro Obregón, July 22, 1921, Folder 823-N-4, “Negra, colonización en México de la raza” (Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Mexico) [hereinafter “Negra” folder, AGN].

⁹⁶ Pettigrew to Obregón, August 5, 1921, Folder 823-N-4, “Negra” folder, AGN.

⁹⁷ See, e.g., Claude A. Clegg III, *Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Kenneth C. Barnes, *Journey of Hope: The Back-to-Africa Movement in Arkansas in the Late 1800s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); James Campbell, *Middle Passage: African American Journey to Africa, 1787-2005* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006); Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

have declared for White supremacy [sic], and the only logicle [sic] way to conquer [sic] this prejudice idea is for that [sic] people who are threatened and being unjustly discriminated [sic] against to unite their strength so as to be ready to meet the crisis [sic] when they come. This discrimination is not confined to the Negro alone but to all the dark skinned people.”⁹⁸ Finding commonality with Mexicans as similarly “dark skinned people,” this African American living still in the United States assured President Obregón that “[i]f 15 Million Negors [sic] embark on the shores of Mexico it will mean 15 Million more of True Mexican Citizens.”⁹⁹

The problem for African Americans, however, was that their options for emigration to Mexico were increasingly coming to a close. Mr. Pettigrew’s letters to President Obregón requesting a meeting to discuss colonization plans went apparently unanswered by the administration. Instead, the Mexican government proceeded to revise its immigration policy into a much more strict and racially restrictive one. By March 1923, American border officials from Laredo, Texas reported to the U.S. Secretary of State that Mexican immigration officials across the border had received instructions from Mexico City to “prohibit [the] admission of members of the Negro race.” “American citizens,” the same telegram acknowledged, would be “seriously affected.”¹⁰⁰ The Mexican Department of Foreign Affairs reassured U.S. diplomat George T. Summerlin in July that the government’s policy on the border “prohibits the Immigration [sic] of negro citizens and not the transit of them through the national territory,” insisting that African

⁹⁸ J. W. Williams to Alvaro Obregón, June 20, 1922, Folder 823-N-4, in “Negra” folder, AGN.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Walsh to Secretary of State, March 5, 1923, Diplomatic Correspondence, Central Files of the Department of State, 1778-1963, RG 59, NARA/CP [hereinafter Diplomatic Correspondence, RG 59, NARA/CP].

Americans who return to their own homes in the United States would not be affected.¹⁰¹ But just over a week later, one Mrs. J. A. Williams from Eagle Pass sought the attention of the N.A.A.C.P., complaining that “[a]ll local Americans except those of Negro blood pass back and forth from Eagle Pass to Piedras Negras daily. Colored American citizens can pass if some white Americans vouch for them.” Mrs. Williams concluded with, “Please give this matter your attention as the Mexicans say we are helpless because we are poor and few in number. . . . There has not been any trouble with the local colored people and Mexicans at this place.”¹⁰²

There are some suggestions that Mexico’s bar against African American migration was a conciliatory gesture to southern whites in the United States, who were anxious about losing their control over black labor.¹⁰³ But the shift in Mexico’s immigration policy also correlated heavily with the post-revolutionary processes of nation-building that relied, in large part, on the racializing and racist discourse of *indigenismo* (an idealization of Native peoples and cultures) and *mestizaje* (an idealization of mixed-race people and their culture). The overthrow of Díaz meant not only the rejection of the regime’s dependence on foreign powers but also the “scientific” theories that had defined Indians as backward and *mestizos* as degenerate. As reconstructing national identity became a central project of the post-revolutionary period,

¹⁰¹ A. J. Pani to George T. Summerlin, July 5, 1923, Diplomatic Correspondence, RG 59, NARA/CP.

¹⁰² J. A. Williams to N.A.A.C.P., July 18, 1923, Diplomatic Correspondence, RG 59, NARA/CP.

¹⁰³ See, e.g., White to Secretary-General, Mexican Federation of Labor, July 18, 1935, Box C-283, Folder 15, NAACP Papers; “Mexican Labor Federation Asked to Fight Color Bar,” July 19, 1935, C-283, Folder 15, NAACP Papers.

Mexico's indigenous past was reclaimed and the mestizo turned into an icon of racial and social integration of the "new" Mexican nation.¹⁰⁴

The celebration of an indigenous and racially mixed past may have looked especially promising for African Americans confronted with the terrorism of white supremacy. But as Gerardo Rénique argues, the prominence of *indigenismo* and *mestizaje* in the national culture was modified by a preference for the *blanco-criollo* (white Creole) racial ideal of the Mexican northerner, which, through a succession of several Sonoran presidents, came to dominate Mexican politics and state formation.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, intellectual leaders such as Manuel Gamio advocated the celebration of an *indigenismo* that was informed and shaped by racial homogeneity. An anthropologist trained in the United States, Gamio was struck by how, as he saw it, white racial uniformity drove national unity in the neighboring country:

[A] large part of the great development actually obtained by the United States is originally due to their racial homogeneity and to

¹⁰⁴ Gerardo Rénique, "Anti-Chinese Racism, Nationalism and State Formation in Post-Revolutionary Mexico, 1920s-1930s," *Political Power and Social Theory* 14(2000), 91-140; Gerardo Rénique, "Race, Region, and Nation: Sonora's Anti-Chinese Racism and Mexico's Postrevolutionary Nationalism, 1920s-1930s," in *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*, ed. Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Roseblatt (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 211-36; Alexandra Minna Stern, "From Mestizophilia to Biotypology: Racialization and Science in Mexico, 1920-1960," in Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Roseblatt, *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*, 187-210; Beatriz Urías Horcasitas, *Historias secretas del racismo en México (1920-1950)* [Hidden histories of racism in Mexico (1920-1950) (México, D.F.: Tusquets Editores México, 2007), 85 ("entre 1920 y 1940 dominaron aquellos que estaban en la agenda del nacionalismo posrevolucionario: la integración racial de la población mediante el mestizaje y el de la definición de referencias culturales que permitieran pensar la unidad social").

¹⁰⁵ Rénique, "Race, Region, and Nation," 211-36. See also Minna Stern, "From Mestizophilia to Biotypology," 187-210. Indigenous groups thus continued to suffer marginalization and subordination, despite the valorization of indigeneity as core to Mexican national identity. Rick López, "The India Bonita Contest of 1921 and the Ethnicization of Mexican National Culture," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82:2 (2002), 291-328; Jan Rus, "The "Comunidad Revolucionaria Institucional": The Subversion of Native Government in Highland Chiapas, 1936-1968," in Joseph and Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, 265-300.

the unity of their culture, their ideas, habits, customs and language. The North Americans are bound to one another by ethnical affinities founded in their common Caucasian origin. The Indians, insignificant in number, and the colored people which amount to several millions, are fatally condemned to be absorbed by the white population. As to culture – that is, as to ethic, aesthetic and religious ideas, to ambitions, ideals and national institutions, to customs and usages, etc. – a surprising cohesion and uniformity are observed.¹⁰⁶

As intellectuals and political elites understood it, to rise up strong out of the rubbles of civil war, Mexico would need to fashion a uniform national identity based on a particularly homogenous reading of the country's indigenous and Spanish past.

Thus while the Mexican Revolution and the increased contact among nationally oriented Mexicans from all corners of the republic diminished regional oppositions and prejudices, it also sparked a new brand of nationalism that intensified violence and persecution against certain foreigners.¹⁰⁷ While racial anxiety was not a new phenomenon, it took on marked urgency from the 1920s to 1940s.¹⁰⁸ As in the United States, eugenics moved to prominence as a means of socially engineering a more modern, unified Mexico, and prominent eugenicists called for studies that determined the qualities of the Indian, criollo, and mestizo that would better promote

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 121.

¹⁰⁷ Miguel Tinker Salas, *In the Shadow of the Eagles: Sonora and the Transformation of the Border During the Porfiriato* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 223, 37.

¹⁰⁸ Mexican elites had not only marginalized indigenous groups during the Porfiriato but some had also warned about the dangers of Chinese immigration, miscegenation, and racial contamination. Grace Peña Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 30-31.

the health of the “great Mexican family.” As for immigrants responsible for “all those harmful elements for the race,” deportation was the only solution.¹⁰⁹

The politics of “*mestizofilia*” thus found expression in immigration control.¹¹⁰ The seeds had been sown in the 1917 Constitution and Article 33, in which Mexicans and Mexican citizens were legally defined and delineated from “foreigners,” the latter against whom the Constitution reserved the right of the Executive Branch of the federal government to immediately expel from the country, without any trial, if their presence were considered to be “inconvenient.” Combined now with the discourse of *mestizaje* and *indigenismo*, Mexican policy on immigration marginalized several immigrant groups in Mexico. For African Americans seeking to cross the border, as Marta Saade Granados explains it, “Mexico, which during its colonial past had included more than 110 thousand Africans within its territory, declared itself then as a mestizo nation, as a product of Indian-Iberian mixture that had given birth to the ‘true Mexican’: a

¹⁰⁹ Joaquín Izquierdo, “Necesidad de que en México emprenda el Estado estudios de Eugenesia,” quoted in Urías Horcasitas, *Historias secretas del racismo en México*, 116 (“el estudio serio de la distribución de los caracteres individuales que corresponden a la gran familia Mexicana; determinar las características del indio, del criollo y del mestizo; precisar los resultados de sus unions para que se logre exaltar las cualidades del mexicano y de apartar sus defectos; [examinar] las diversas inmigraciones; [así como la] deportación de todos aquellos elementos nocivos para la raza.”). The original quote was initially published in a February 1923 issue of *Revista Médica*.

¹¹⁰ Marta Saade Granados, “Una raza prohibida: afroestadounidenses en México” [A prohibited race: African Americans in Mexico], in *Nación y extranjería: la exclusion racial en las políticas migratorias de Argentina, Brasil, Cuba Y México* [Nation and alienage: racial exclusion in the migratory policies of Argentina, Brasil, Cuba, and Mexico], ed. Pablo Yankelevich (México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2009), 171 (“Abordamos un period en el cual se constituyen las bases de la institucionalidad postrevolucionaria y se diseñan los instrumentos de una política pública modernizante, en la cual la salud, la educación y la migración forman parte de una política mestizófila, no exenta de debates y contradicciones.”).

‘bronze race,’” one that had no place for those of African descent in its idealization of the indigenous past and the mestizo.¹¹¹

The government denied any racial animosity in its immigration laws and policies, explaining :

[I]t is logical to assume that foreigners will be obliged to furnish the requisites specified by the laws, regulations and other dispositions on immigration and to exhibit to the Mexican authorities those documents which prove their statements. . . . [T]he intention of the Government is not to restrict the immigration of safe and industrious elements and those who are not going to become a charge upon society; but to free itself from the imposition of undesirable elements and those who do not produce the requisites required by our laws. . . . [I]t is to be inferred that Mexico rests upon the necessity of applying definite restrictions upon immigration, but it is certain that these are not going to be directed against one particular race or nationality, but that they have been adopted through being absolutely necessary for the protection and conservation of its internal order.”¹¹²

The Mexican government thus characterized its immigration policies as representative of and in line with the power to regulate immigration shared by all other nations.

Meanwhile, the director of the U.S. Veterans Bureau sent a letter to the U.S. State Department requesting that the State Department take up the matter of Austin J. Halliday, “a colored man rehabilitated by this Bureau [Veteran’s Bureau]” who was “furnished transportation to proceed to Laredo, Texas, for the purpose of entering Mexico to engage in employment as lawyer with Halliday’s Pharmacal Laboratories at Mexico City, but who was denied permission

¹¹¹ Ibid., 231 (“México, que durante su pasado colonial había contado con más de 110 mil africanos en su territorio, se proclamó para entonces como una nación mestiza, como producto de una mezcla indo-ibérica que había dado a luz al ‘verdadero mexicano’: una ‘raza de bronce’ como ‘síntesis ejemplar’ de las virtudes de su doble raíz.”).

¹¹² Leland Harrison to James W. Johnson, NAACP, September 29, 1923, Diplomatic Correspondence, RG 59, NARA/CP.

to enter Mexico “because of a ruling of the Mexican government prohibiting the immigration of negroes.” A registered chemist and a graduate in law from Howard University, one would think he would meet the preferences for the “safe and industrious elements” that the Mexican government prioritized in immigrants, but as of September 21, 1923, the Veterans Bureau was still requesting “that the State Department take up this matter and endeavor to secure Mr. Halliday’s admission if it is possible.”¹¹³

The policy to exclude African Americans from Mexico appears to have continued throughout the 1920s. In 1924, Mexican officials detained “El negro William Mac. Donald” and deported him under the directive of an internal memo titled “Circular number 33,” dated May 13, 1924, and directing agents to “restrict the immigration of persons of the black race.”¹¹⁴ In 1926, the *New York Times* reported that “[o]rders have been issued by the Immigration Department [of Mexico] to prevent all negroes from entering Mexico. Twenty-six negro working men who entered the country from British Honduras have been ordered deported. It is rumored that the Government is planning to deport all alien negroes already in Mexico to their native countries.”¹¹⁵ Through a series of confidential circulars directed to border agents and official immigration laws, Mexico thus began to close the border to black immigration, denying admission to African Americans seeking to cross the border and deporting others already in the country.¹¹⁶ According to Circular number 157 in 1934, the Department of Migration confidentially released a list of those immigrant groups designated as “undesirables” whose

¹¹³ Frank T. Hines to Secretary of State, September 21, 1923, Diplomatic Correspondence, RG 59, NARA/CP.

¹¹⁴ Quoted from Saade Granados, “Una raza prohibida,” 174.

¹¹⁵ “Mexico Forbids Negroes to Enter,” *New York Times*, October 31, 1926, 17.

¹¹⁶ Saade Granados, “Una raza prohibida,” 174-76.

immigration into the country were to be prohibited. The list began with “la raza negra” (the “black race”) right next to “la raza amarilla” (the “yellow race”).¹¹⁷

The shift in Mexico’s policy toward African Americans desiring to cross the border – whether they intended to come as colonists, workers, students, or tourists; on a permanent or more transient basis¹¹⁸ – was not lost on African Americans. Indeed, the significance of the exclusionary move was not lost on observant Americans more generally. As the *New York Times* noted in 1926, in a piece concerning the Southwest’s Mexican “immigration problem”:

Whether [Mexicans] should be excluded [from the United States] as are the Europeans will soon have to be decided. In the meantime Mexico herself is beginning to try experiments in restricting immigration. She is reported not only to have decided permanently to exclude negroes, but also to have stiffened passport regulations for tourists as well as for possible future settlers entering Mexico, whether from abroad or from the United States. The primary purpose appears to be to check the entrance of “undesirable” persons. Mexico is learning from us.¹¹⁹

For this writer, immigration law and policy on both sides of the border was clearly running on parallel tracks, though it still remained to be seen “whether [Mexico] will copy our mistakes as well as our wiser policies.”¹²⁰

For African Americans, the stakes were much more immediate. In 1922, dismayed upon hearing news of Mexico’s changing stance towards black immigration, one J. W. Williams from Kansas wrote to President Obregón asking whether “Mexico [had] fallen prey to the disease [sic] of ostracism that have dominated North America for more than Three Hundred Years?” “I do

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 176.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 174.

¹¹⁹ “The Southwest’s Immigration Problem,” *New York Times*, November 10, 1926, 26.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

not believe,” he later added, “there is another Race of people in the world any more worthy of your Citizenship than the Negro.”¹²¹ The N.A.A.C.P. was also paying attention: “Periodically, Mexico has denied that it has any bar against Negroes, but colored Americans continue to have difficulty in getting passports to go there, even for a short period of study and research.”¹²² And according to the *Washington Post*, in October 1923, the National Equal Rights League requested that President Coolidge “hold up diplomatic relations with Mexico until the Obregon government has removed its ban on the immigration of colored citizens of the United States into that country.”¹²³

Here again, African Americans combined domestic civil rights struggles with protests of civil rights infringements at the border and abroad. The NERL, for instance, not only directed President Coolidge’s attention to Mexico’s discriminatory immigration policy, but had combined this with a variety of other civil rights complaints, including a protest against the segregation of African Americans in the government and the disfranchisement of African Americans in southern states, as well as the recommendation that Congress enact the Dyer anti-lynching bill.¹²⁴ Yet now in responding to the indignity of being barred by the Mexican government on account of their race, African Americans brought challenges rooted in the language of rights-bearing U.S. citizens.

¹²¹ J. W. Williams to Alvaro Obregón, June 20, 1922, Folder 823-N-4, “Negra” folder, AGN.

¹²² “To Probe Color Bar in Latin-America,” May 28, [unmarked year], Box C-283, Folder 15, NAACP papers.

¹²³ *Washington Post*, October 7, 1923, 2. See also “Negroes Ask Coolidge Aid,” *New York Times*, October 7, 1923, 2.

¹²⁴ See *Washington Post*, October 7, 1923, 2.

Certain black residents of border regions in Texas lodged complaints with U.S. immigration officials, objecting, for example, to how they were being treated at the border between Del Rio [Texas] and Villa Acuña, Mexico:

We are being excluded from going from this country to another without any cause that we know of. We have the proper passports [sic] that the Mexican Government demand and they ignore [sic] them and they give us any reasons [sic] as to why they do not desire us any more to cross or recross or penetrate their country.

So we as a feww [sic] desirable Citizens do not really understand the ingenious [sic] form of Liberty being excluded from us . . . we fell [sic] as Citizens we should be given American Citizen rights like unto all other nations according to Government [sic] law.¹²⁵

Rankled by the immigration bar, the “Colored Citizens” of Del Rio, Texas, complained to the N.A.A.C.P. that Mexican officials were disrupting their visits across the border as they had been accustomed to from “time immemorial” while white citizens crossed without any trouble.¹²⁶

And one H. M. Smith wrote a letter to the U.S. Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, explaining:

During the past summer, in seeking a tourist identification card for use in Mexico, it was my experience to be refused this necessary paper at the hands of three Mexican Consuls in [Texas].

In each instance a request was made for a cash deposit of \$150.00 in American currency because we were American citizens who happened also to be Negroes. White Americans were not required to post such a bond.

As an American citizen I refuse to accept such discrimination and am asking the Department of State to take whatever steps are necessary to safeguard the rights of other American Negroes so discriminated against by the Mexican Government.”¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Arthur D. Mathews to Davis, August 21, 1929, Box C-283, Folder 15, NAACP papers.

¹²⁶ J. R. Morris, Sr. to James W. Johnson, September 1, 1929, Box C-283, Folder 15, NAACP papers.

¹²⁷ H. M. Smith to Cordell Hull, October 16, 1936, Box C-283, Folder 16, NAACP papers. In a separate letter to the Mexican President, Smith complained that “[p]ersonally this crude discrimination solely on the basis of color seems unworthy of the passion for social justice which

The immigration bar of African Americans by Mexico thus subtly re-shifted their national alliances, reorienting and strengthening African-American identification with U.S. citizenship, and the U.S. nation-state.¹²⁸ Though many of these African American men and women may have been seeking to cross into Mexico to enjoy liberties denied to them in the U.S., the exclusionary policy they encountered from the Mexican side of the border pushed many of them to embrace their status as American citizens more fully, even though the efficacy of doing so remained doubtful.

Indeed, in the end, the U.S. government proved unable or unwilling to challenge Mexico's restrictive immigration policy. After the N.A.A.C.P. launched an investigation into Mexico's "color bar," it concluded "that this barring of American Negro citizens [from Mexico] is either encouraged by the American government, or at least is not resented."¹²⁹ Such conclusions were not helped by the U.S. Department of State, which explained to a black Texan complaining of the new challenges in crossing the border that though the Mexican immigration regulations barred "all persons of certain categories, including negroes, regardless of citizenship, American or otherwise . . . [i]t does not appear that the application of the restrictions in question constitutes a discrimination on the part of the Mexican Government against American citizens as

seems at other points to dominate modern Mexico. Nowhere else in recent years have I encountered such evident racial prejudice and I speak from experience at the frontiers of Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany. Far apart as these countries are in spirit and purpose they are alike in that they make no such racial distinctions as I encountered at the Mexican boundary." Smith to President, October 16, 1936, Box C-283, Folder 16, NAACP papers.

¹²⁸ John McKiernan-González describes how disillusioned African American colonists in Mexico sought return to the United States in 1895 by similarly lodging complaints with and requesting assistance from the U.S. Department of State. McKiernan-González, *Fevered Measures*, 89.

¹²⁹ "To Probe Color Bar in Latin-America," May 28, [unmarked year], Box C-283, Folder 15, NAACP papers.

such.” For the U.S. government, the fact that Mexico was barring all “negroes,” and not only black immigrants from the United States, negated African American protests that such action by the Mexican government constituted a discriminatory affront to U.S. citizenship more generally. Affirming Mexico’s right as a sovereign nation to regulate immigration as it sees fit, the U.S. government “[could] not properly be of assistance to [African Americans] in the matter.”¹³⁰ The logic of Jim Crow thus aligned itself with indigenismo, effectively placing African Americans at the margins of citizenship and belonging in both countries.

The exclusion of immigrants who did not conform to idealizations of the mestizo nation, however, were not limited to persons of African descent. In addition to black persons, Chinese immigrants and Chinese Mexicans came under increasing attack during the 1920s and 1930s. The momentum of the Revolution had crystallized anti-Chinese prejudices into full-blown organized campaigns for several more decades, especially in the northern state of Sonora. Spearheaded by a schoolteacher and small businessman named José María Arana, an organization called the Commercial and Businessmen’s Junta embarked on a campaign to destroy Chinese businesses in Sonora. By the early 1930s, roughly two hundred anti-Chinese committees or nationalist leagues were active not only in Sonora but also in Sinaloa, Baja California, Chihuahua, Colima, Nayarit, Durango, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, Veracruz, Chiapas, and Oaxaca and to a lesser extent in Yucatán, Michoacán, Jalisco, and Mexico City.¹³¹ By 1932, the Chinese were almost completely run out of Sonora, forced to abandon their homes under the oppressive weight of anti-Chinese legislation and racist propaganda.¹³² Between 1930 and 1940,

¹³⁰ Edward L. Reed to Smith, October 21, 1936, Box C-283, Folder 16, NAACP papers.

¹³¹ Julia Maria Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans: Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 70.

¹³² *Ibid.*; Evelyn Hu-DeHart, “Immigrants to a Developing Society: The Chinese in Northern

Sonora's Chinese population dropped from 3,571 to 92. As antichinismo spread to other parts of Mexico, Chinese immigrants and their families fled the country, and the Chinese population of nearly 18,000 in 1930 fell to fewer than 5,000 a decade later.¹³³

As Gerardo Rénique has argued, the effects of Sonora's anti-Chinese racism was not confined to the state though. The succession of four Sonorans to the presidency helped to nationalize the northern state's anti-Chinese campaign throughout Mexico.¹³⁴ In September 1921, President Álvaro Obregón approved a new law banning the entry of unskilled Chinese laborers into Mexico.¹³⁵ In 1926, when the Chinese comprised the second-largest foreign ethnic community in Mexico, the federal government passed another major immigration law, further restricting immigration and expanding the bureaucratic power of Mexico's immigration agency.¹³⁶ After the passage of the 1926 act, the Mexican government aggressively screened

Mexico, 1875-1932," *Journal of Arizona History* 21(Autumn 1980), 301-05; Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Racism and Anti-Chinese Persecution in Sonora, Mexico, 1876-1932," *Amerasia Journal* 9:2 (1982), 16-17; Leo M. Jacques, "Have Quick More Money Than Mandarins: The Chinese in Sonora," *Journal of Arizona History* 17 (1976), 210-13; Charles C. Cumberland, "The Sonora Chinese and the Mexican Revolution," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 40:2 (1960), 201-03; Philip A. Dennis, "The Anti-Chinese Campaigns in Sonora, Mexico," *Ethnohistory* 26:1 (1979), 69; Rénique, "Anti-Chinese Racism, Nationalism and State Formation," 120-23.

¹³³ Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 70.

¹³⁴ Rénique, "Anti-Chinese Racism, Nationalism and State Formation," 101-04, 15-16.

¹³⁵ Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 177; James R. Curtis, "Mexicali's Chinatown," *Geographical Review* 85:3 (1995), 340; Jacques, "Have Quick More Money Than Mandarins," 210; Robert H. Duncan, "The Chinese and the Economic Development of Northern Baja California, 1889-1929," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 74:4 (1994), 633. The law, however, permitted Chinese with a minimum of 500 pesos in capital to enter and settle in Mexico.

¹³⁶ Ley de migración de 1926, *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, sábado 13 de marzo de 1926, número 12, tomo XXXV, 1-8, reproduced in Instituto Nacional de Migración, *Compilación histórica de la legislación migratoria en México*, 27-47; Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*, 183, 186; Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 177-78. According to Delgado, however, the 1926

Chinese immigrants for illnesses such as syphilis, beriberi, leprosy, and trachoma, conducting immigration sweeps in certain municipalities and arresting Chinese residents who could not produce immigrant identification cards.¹³⁷ Calls for the exclusion and deportation of Chinese immigrants already in the country continued. Indeed, noting how California was deporting Mexican laborers in 1926, one individual named Francisco Martínez wrote to President Plutarco Elías Calles asking, “If the Americans can do this to a neighboring country, to Mexicans, why can’t we take advantage of this idea – using it against the Chinese? Mexico is infested and threatened by this pest.”¹³⁸ In 1930, a former Mexican senator Guillermo Laveaga called for the prohibition of the entry of all Chinese into Mexico.¹³⁹ The Immigration Act of 1930 easily accommodated this request, providing in Article 5 the right of the Secretaría de Gobernación to consider the assimilability of foreigners, and whether their immigration would be beneficial or detrimental to Mexico.¹⁴⁰

immigration law’s greatest impact was on American tourists, who were thereafter much more closely screened and regulated.

¹³⁷ Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 182-83.

¹³⁸ Francisco Martínez to Plutarco Elías Calles, Feb. 12, 1926, Caja 28, Exp. 104-CH-1, “Migración Razas no Gratas al País,” Fondo Obregón-Calles (AGN). It should be noted that the letter is addressed from Nogales, Arizona. It is unclear whether he was a long-term resident on the U.S. side of the border, a more recent immigrant, or a migrant laborer.

¹³⁹ “Asks Mexico Ban Chinese. Former Senator Sees Menace to Nationality in Intermarriages,” *New York Times*, November 19, 1930, 10.

¹⁴⁰ Ley de migración de 1930, *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, sábado 30 de agosto de 1930, número 53, tomo LXL, pp. 1-12, reproduced in Instituto Nacional de Migración, *Compilación histórica de la legislación migratoria en México*, 53-54 (“La Secretaría de Gobernación queda facultada para sujetar, a modalidades diversas, la migración de extranjeros que, según su mayor o menor facilidad de asimilación a nuestro medio, sea considerada como especialmente benéfica o perjudicial.”).

The deterrence and restrictions on Chinese immigration to Mexico spoke not only to the growth of anti-Chinese fervor in the north but ultimately to underlying anxieties about the deep relationships that Chinese immigrants were successfully making with their Mexican neighbors and friends. In 1917, Juan R. Mexía invited Arana to deliver one of the organizer's inflammatory anti-Chinese speeches in his town, where "contented Asians are united by indissoluble bonds of friendship and caring with some Mexicans who have forgotten their true roles."¹⁴¹ Other anti-Chinese organizers feared that the nation was at risk of losing its "noble Latino origins," associated with the virile image of Mexico's venerated last Aztec ruler Cuauhtemoc, as a result of the "permanence of these [Chinese] individuals mixing among us."¹⁴² R. C. Méndez, leader of the Anti-Chinese Committee in Torreón, thus urged the President to take measures to prevent "the Chinese race [from] continuing to become mixed with ours, which has already wrought harm to the country."¹⁴³

Perhaps surprisingly, even as the anti-Chinese campaigns vilified Chinese immigrants as antithetical to Mexican national identity and as economic, social, and moral threats to the

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 39. See also Julian Lim, "Chinos and Paisanos: Chinese-Mexican Relations in the Borderlands," *Pacific Historical Review* 79:1 (2010), 70-74.

¹⁴² Liga nacional obrera anti-china, "Por el pueblo y por la raza," to Presidente constitucional de los estados unidos mejicanos," [date unavailable], Caja 28, Exp. 104-CH-1, "Migración Razas no Gratas al País," Fondo Obregón-Calles, AGN ("Las Colectividades Nacionales ante la INVACION ASIATICA en nuestras costas y hasta en el centro de la Republica, se encuentra amenazada de perder su noble origen latino; por que sabido es que ningún producto reporta a la Nación la permanencia de esos individuos MANCOMUNADOS ENTRE NOSOTROS, pero que si son los propagadores de las epidemias del Asia en la nuestra viril de Cuhautemoc [sic].").

¹⁴³ R. C. Méndez to Presidente, August 1924, Caja 28, Exp. 104-CH-1, "Migración Razas no Gratas al País," Fondo Obregón-Calles, AGN ("Le suplican nuevamente ayudarles con su influencia ante las Cámaras de la Unión y ante la Secretaría de Gobernación, para que se resuelva el Problema chino en la forma que lo han propuesto, tomando medidas para evitar que la raza china se siga mexclando con la nuestra, ya que ésto redundo en perjuicio del país.").

Mexican people, they also called attention to how profoundly integrated some of the Chinese had become in their Mexican communities. The threat was not that Chinese immigrants were not assimilating, but rather that some were assimilating all too well, settling down, marrying Mexican women, and building Chinese Mexican families. As one organizer explained in a letter to the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Labor, the “problem of the yellow invasion” was not merely one of economic monopolization, but rather the racial menace confronting Mexican society by the mixing of Mexicans with the “physical and moral degeneracy of the Chinese.” “Even more serious is the threat to the country,” the writer specified, “from the fact that the Chinese, monopolizing our means of life, and taking advantage therefore of the poverty of our humble people, take Mexican women [and produce] unhealthy and degenerate children.”¹⁴⁴

What is important about the charges made by anti-Chinese agitators against Chinese and Mexican unions is that they were not merely hysterical, far-fetched, propagandistic rhetoric. Accusations that the Chinese were threatening Mexican women’s honor and subverting the Mexican race by producing “unhealthy and degenerate children” were racist, no doubt, but the passage of Sonora’s 1923 legislation banning marriages between Mexicans and persons of Chinese heritage also testifies to the prevalence of such unions and to the number of Chinese Mexican children born from them. Although many Chinese men had wives in China, some of whom were successfully brought to North America, substantial numbers of Chinese men married

¹⁴⁴ Letter to C. Ministro de Industria, comercio y Trabajo (Don Luis N. Morones), December 5, 1924, Caja 28, Exp. 104-CH-1, “Migración Razas no Gratas al País,” Fondo Obregón-Calles, AGN (“El problema de la invasión amarilla . . . es el mas serio . . . La numerosa invasión de asiáticos no solamente es un perjuicio para los nacionales, en el sentido de que aquellos acaparan, como lo están haciendo, todos los recursos de la vida, entre ellos el ramo de comercio, sino hasta las mas pequeñas industrias . . . Mas grave aun es la amenaza para el País, el hecho de que los chinos, abarcando nuestros medios de vida, y aprovechándose por ende de la meseria [sic] de nuestra gente humilde, se adueñan de las mujeres mexicanas, haciendolas procrear hijos enfermizos y degenerados como consecuencia natural y fisiológica de la degeneración física y moral de los chinos que les es reconocida de siglos atrás.”).

or entered into common-law unions with Mexican women as well, not long after their arrival in the border region.¹⁴⁵ Esteban Flores of the Department of Labor reported that by 1919 there were nineteen mixed households in Colima with twenty-five children, thirty-five mixed households in Sinaloa with seventy-four children, and seventy-five mixed households in Sonora with 125 children. Although Flores noted that the Mexican wives endured a certain marginalization in society, he surmised that conditions were changing and would continue to improve with increasing numbers of Chinese Mexican marriages.¹⁴⁶ In 1930, former senator

¹⁴⁵ For example, Delgado describes the history of Lee Sing, a successful merchant with businesses in Tucson and Nogales, Arizona, who liquidated his assets and properties to marry a Mexican woman to whom he had been long engaged, moved south across the border into Sonora, became a Mexican citizen, and fathered three children with his wife. Grace Peña Delgado, “At Exclusion’s Southern Gate: Changing Categories of Race and Class Among Chinese Fronterizos, 1882-1904,” in Truett and Young, *Continental Crossroads*, 187. Although less commonly documented, Chinese women married Mexican men as well: Lily Liu and her sister Amelia Mendez, for example, both married Mexican men in Tucson. Grace Delgado, “In the Age of Exclusion: Race, Region and Chinese Identity in the Making of the Arizona-Sonora Borderlands, 1863–1943” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2000), 271. Since under Chinese custom a daughter left the home of her family at marriage, marrying into the house and family of her new husband, such intermarriages between Chinese women and Mexican men could suggest even stronger identifications with Mexican culture and society. Ronald T. Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, revised ed. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1998), 36-37.

¹⁴⁶ Esteban Flores, “Informe que rinde el jefe de la seccion sobre la situacion de las colonias asiáticas en la costa occidental de la republica” [Report of the head of relations in the Department of Labor on the situation of Asian colonies on the west coast of the republic],” (1919), 55-56, photocopy of manuscript in Raymond Craib’s possession. Robert Chao Romero, in disputing the characterization of the Chinese in Mexico as organized into deviant “bachelor societies,” appropriately emphasizes the marriage and family patterns that Chinese men created and maintained in Mexico. He aptly notes a discrepancy between the number of Chinese female immigrants registered as entering Mexico from 1911 to 1928 and the rate of growth of the Chinese female population in Mexico during those same years. Only 307 Chinese women reportedly entered Mexico from 1911 to 1928, but the Chinese female population in Mexico gained 2,626 persons between 1910 and 1930. Whereas the Chinese female population grew from 245 in 1921 to 2,711 in 1930, a mere 168 Chinese women were recorded as entering Mexican ports within those years. Although gross errors in governmental statistical data gathering may have been at play, Romero also suggests that “a more plausible explanation relates to Chinese Mexican intermarriage patterns and the concomitant birth of female offspring as a result of these unions.” This explanation becomes likelier when considering that Mexican

Laveaga claimed that “[f]orty per cent of the children born in the State of Sinoloa [were] the children of Chinese fathers and Mexican mothers, . . . [and thus he] appealed to all inhabitants of the State to assist in social reforms tending to prevent the constantly increasing influx of Asiatics, which he claim[ed was] fast developing into a grave menace to Mexican nationality.”¹⁴⁷ By 1941 the U.S. Department of State counted 10,120 Chinese in Mexico, with fewer than 200 Chinese women and not counting offspring. The balance of Chinese males, the U.S. State Department reported, were “mostly liv[ing] with Mexican women.”¹⁴⁸

Thus, as Julia Schiavone Camacho points out, “[t]he complex ties Mexicans and Chinese formed in northern Mexico during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the integration of Chinese men into local communities led to racial and cultural fusion and over time to the formation of a new cultural identity – *Chinese Mexican*. Racially and culturally hybrid families straddled the boundaries of identity and nation . . . [making] alternating claims on Chineseness and Mexicanness during their quest to belong somewhere.”¹⁴⁹ Despite the celebration of racial fusion suggested by the ideology of *mestizaje*, however, opponents deemed this hybrid identity as falling outside the boundaries of Mexico’s national identity. In order to curb and minimize such undesirable multiracial interactions, nativists called for severe

women and Mexican Chinese children were generally considered Chinese nationals, at least for purposes of the census, if their husbands and fathers were Chinese nationals. Romero, “The Dragon in Big Lusong,” 119-20. See also Evelyn Hu-DeHart, “Coolies, Shopkeepers, Pioneers: The Chinese of Mexico and Peru (1849-1930),” *Amerasia Journal* 15:2 (1989), 99.

¹⁴⁷ “Asks Mexico Ban Chinese. Former Senator Sees Menace to Nationality in Intermarriages,” *New York Times*, November 19, 1930, 10.

¹⁴⁸ Office of Strategic Services, Research and Analysis Branch, Department of State, “Report on the Japanese and Chinese in Mexico and Central America,” (October 1941), photocopy of manuscript in author’s possession.

¹⁴⁹ Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 3.

restrictions in the immigration laws. Impatient with the slow pace of federal immigration policy, some nativists also turned to increasingly strict laws regulating labor, residential, and family relations at the state level. Sonora, in particular, aggressively passed legislation to weaken the economic stability of Chinese immigrants by requiring that eighty percent of all workers employed by businesses be native Mexicans, enacting residential segregation, and passing a ban on all unions between Mexicans and persons of Chinese descent.¹⁵⁰

The Chinese in Mexico responded to the anti-Chinese measures in a variety of ways. Some challenged the laws in the courts as unconstitutional, invoking their rights not only as individuals but also as Mexicans entitled to all of the civil rights guaranteed under the Constitution of 1917.¹⁵¹ Some Mexican women also challenged Law 31 openly, claiming their right to enter into relationships of their choosing in letters published in newspapers.¹⁵² But as states such as Sonora and Sinaloa made it more difficult for Chinese Mexicans and their families to live and work in peace, many again turned to migration. When Sonora began to enforce its Eighty Percent labor law against Chinese businesses in 1919, for example, U.S. immigration officials expected to feel its effects at the border. As one U.S. agent explained, “if two Chinese were conducting a small business, they were told that they would have to employ eight native Mexicans to help in the conduct of their business.” Chinese businessmen who refused to comply were fined heavily, and then jailed. With Sinaloa and Lower California similarly treating

¹⁵⁰ The Eighty Percent law (Article 106, the Labor and Social Provision Law) was passed by the Sonoran legislature in 1919. Sonora passed the residential segregation decree known as Law 27 in 1923. Law 31, which banned marriages and civil unions between Chinese and Mexicans, was also passed in 1923. Romero, *Chinese in Mexico*, 165-66.

¹⁵¹ Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican*, 157; Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 60.

¹⁵² Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 61. Some politicians also refused to support Law 31, and authorities never consistently enforced it.

Chinese immigrants harshly, “and as they are too much afraid of the Villistas to attempt to cross the rough mountainous country into Chihuahua,” the agent predicted that “it appears practically certain that many of them will attempt to gain unlawful entry into the United States if the present conditions in Sonora and Sinaloa does not soon improve.”¹⁵³ The anti-Chinese legislations resulted in immigrants “self deporting,” as we might call it today, generating new migratory flows that sent Chinese immigrants and Chinese Mexicans across state lines within Mexico and over international boundaries.

The most dramatic movement of Chinese immigrants and their families came in the early 1930s, when the United States itself was in the midst of mass deportations of Mexican laborers. As Schiavone Camacho explains in her study of the Chinese Mexican expulsions from Sonora, “[m]irroring the treatment Mexicans received north of the border, anti-Chinese crusaders blamed the Chinese for northern Mexico’s social and economic woes.”¹⁵⁴ Nativists thus counterbalanced the deportation and forced repatriations of Mexican workers from the United States by throwing momentum behind their own programs for forcibly removing those who were blamed for the region’s economic and social problems.¹⁵⁵ Through mob violence and intimidation, arrests, heavy fines, deportation processes, and exit deadlines, local and state authorities in Sonora worked to expel all the Chinese from the state by 1932.¹⁵⁶ Even as they were pushed out, expelled Chinese were reportedly “charged prohibitive prices by Mexican immigration officers for permits to leave the country . . . [and] [t]hose unable to purchase the permits, the Orientals

¹⁵³ Thomas P. Cook to Supervising Inspector, Immigration Service, El Paso, Texas, Sept. 27, 1919, #54261/158-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

¹⁵⁴ Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 13.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 67-68.

said, on some occasions were stripped of all their clothing except their trousers.”¹⁵⁷ Reports of brutality against the Chinese in Sonora and Sinaloa abounded, leading some Mexican citizens to protest “as civilized human beings, . . . that it may not be said later that we stood silently by and tolerated these inhuman acts.” Other Mexicans would not go so far as to suggest “that the deportation of the Orientals be discontinued, but [rather], in the name of humanity and of patriotic Mexican populace, that steps be taken to place the deportation of Chinese in the hands of people who will respect the laws of the land.”¹⁵⁸ Such appeals to conscience and rule-of-law patriotism had little effect. In the end, officials and “mobs” removed not only Chinese immigrants and their Mexican-born offspring, but the Mexican wives of Chinese men and their Chinese Mexican children.¹⁵⁹ In this way, anti-Chinese nativists sought to remove all traces of Chinese contact in Mexico, erasing the Chinese from its national history and identity.

It should be noted that although anti-chinismo was nationalized through the succession of several Sonoran presidents, federal anti-chinismo was not as clear-cut as the campaigns in Sonora. When Sonorans attempted to expel the Chinese from the state in 1919, President Carranza reportedly intervened to prevent the expulsion and instructed Governor de la Huerta of Sonora “to employ such measures as he should find necessary to prevent local officials from carrying out their plans for expulsion of Chinese.”¹⁶⁰ In 1924, the Mexican government had again responded to anti-Chinese legislation coming out of Sonora, conveying to state authorities the federal government’s objection to Law 31 (banning Chinese-Mexican unions) and Law 27

¹⁵⁷ “Mexico City Halts Chinese Oustings,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1931, 7.

¹⁵⁸ “Mexicans Protest Cruelty to Chinese,” *New York Times*, March 1, 1933, 18.

¹⁵⁹ Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 65-70.

¹⁶⁰ “Stops Chinese Expulsion. Carranza Intervenes in Action Threatened in Sonora,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1919.

(enacting residential segregation).¹⁶¹ When Sonoran nativists announced an exit deadline of September 5, 1931 for all Chinese “to leave Mexican territory or face the risk of being taken across the border,” the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, Genaro Estrada, reportedly insisted that “[o]ur Federal Government will give guarantees to Chinese residents in this country.” The trouble, the press reported, was still “blamed on the State and not to the Federal authorities.”¹⁶² As the expulsion deadline approached, federal authorities reportedly increased the “military forces in the affected area,” sending federal troops to various points in Sonora “where Chinese were located to afford them every protection.”¹⁶³ On September 4, officials in Mexico City sent an order indefinitely extending the expulsion deadline.¹⁶⁴ Ultimately, however, the federal government proved unable to quell the momentum of Sonora and Sinaloa’s expulsion campaigns, and as officials and citizens in the northern states pushed the Chinese out of their territories, they forced their own immigration policies onto the nation.

Some Chinese men remained defiant, refusing to leave Sonora and their communities, and relying on their family and trusted friends to physically remain in hiding or pass as Mexicans.¹⁶⁵ Most, however, left, setting sail for China from the Sinaloan port of Mazatlán or retreating southward instead into other parts of Latin America.¹⁶⁶ Many of the Chinese

¹⁶¹ Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 49.

¹⁶² “Chinese Minister Asks Mexico to Intervene. Hears Sonora Has Ordered All His Co-Nationals to Leave State by Sept. 5,” *New York Times*, August 30, 1931, 14.

¹⁶³ “Mexico Condemns Chinese Plea to US,” *New York Times*, September 5, 1931, 4; “China’s Envoy Hopeful of Mexican Solution,” *New York Times*, September 6, 1931, 8.

¹⁶⁴ “Mexico City Halts Chinese Oustings,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1931, 7.

¹⁶⁵ Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 76.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3-4, 68.

Mexicans expelled from northern Mexico moved farther into Mexico; the *New York Times* reported in 1933 that “[a]nti-Chinese agitation in Pacific Coast States has resulted in an invasion of the State of Jalisco by more than 800 Asiatics, most of whom are hiding, fearing expulsion.”¹⁶⁷ Large numbers of expelled Chinese also sought refuge in northern areas of Mexico that remained less affected by anti-Chinese campaigns at that moment, such as Baja California and Chihuahua.¹⁶⁸ U.S. immigration officials noticed in June 1932 that “a considerable number of Chinese male aliens have proceeded from the states of Sonora and Sinaloa to the state of Chihuahua instead of coming to the United States.”¹⁶⁹

In short time, however, anti-Chinese agitation followed them to Chihuahua. By December that same year, the state legislature considered passing its own anti-Chinese measures targeting Chinese-Mexican marriages and forcing the Chinese to reside in segregated districts.¹⁷⁰ Chinese residents in Chihuahua opposed the decree, challenging it as going against the Mexican Constitution.¹⁷¹ Chihuahuan officials also proceeded more cautiously than their Sonoran

¹⁶⁷ “Tampico Boycotts All Chinese Stores,” *New York Times*, August 7, 1933, 7.

¹⁶⁸ Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 69. The relative safety of Chinese in Baja California was attributed to Governor Esteban Cantú’s tight oversight of the district. Indeed, Governor Cantú’s relationship with the Chinese of Baja California seemed so extensive that some officials feared that he would summon the Chinese to fight against the Government in 1920. Wu Yu Kan, President of the Chinese Fraternal Union, wrote to the Chinese Chargé d’Affaires at Mexico City, T. K. Fong, “urging him to ask the Mexican Foreign Office and the Chinese Legation at Washington for protection for the Lower California Chinese, who are declared to be ‘menaced by Cantu’s [sic] rebellious plans.’” “Mexican Election Favors Obregon, Congressmen of His Party Lead in the Capital. Want Chinese Protected, Washington Legation Asked to Safeguard Chinamen Against Cantu’s ‘Rebellious Plans,’” *New York Times*, August 2, 1920, 4. See also Lim, “*Chinos and Paisanos*,” 70.

¹⁶⁹ G. C. Wilmoth to Commissioner-General of Immigration, June 22, 1932, #55771/718-B, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

¹⁷⁰ “Chihuahua Curbs Chinese,” *New York Times*, December 17, 1932, 12.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

neighbors, wary of the devastating economic downturn that Sonora experienced following the expulsions.¹⁷² When anti-Chinese activists in Ciudad Juárez picketed Chinese stores and placed Mexican flags across the doors of Chinese businesses, the mayor publicly stated his regrets and both he and the governor offered their protection to the local Chinese. Still, anti-Chinese leagues continued their campaigns in Ciudad Juárez, calling for the expulsion of all Chinese in Mexico. By July 1933, U.S. immigration officials closely watched for signs of another mass expulsion of Chinese from Mexico, this time from Chihuahua. In such a case, U.S. officials expected that the thousand or so Chinese from Ciudad Juárez would attempt to cross into Texas or New Mexico, from where the United States would have to deport them at the cost of somewhere between \$130,000 and \$150,000.¹⁷³

As suggested by this statement, then, a great many Chinese also turned to the United States. The appearance of large numbers of Chinese “refugees” again at the U.S.-Mexico border in the early 1930s complicated the work of U.S. immigration officials, still operating under the heavy mandate of Chinese exclusion. To “prevent congestion” and accommodate the high numbers of in-transit requests to travel through the United States to San Francisco, from where Chinese Mexicans planned to sail for China, the U.S. Department of Labor lifted the daily cap on in-transit movement. Previously set at nine, the officials permitted unrestricted in-transit movements, resulting in an average of around fifty a day, principally from Nogales and

¹⁷² The expulsions nearly bankrupted the Sonoran government as Chinese merchants liquidated their businesses and fled their creditors. The government also lost the economic benefits associated with Chinese businesses, in particular the great tax revenues that those businesses had previously generated. “Chinese Fail in Mexico. Radical Campaign Results in Closing of Many Shops,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1931; Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 71-72.

¹⁷³ Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 99; Telegram from Wilmoth to Immigration Bureau, May 25, 1933, #55771/718D – 55771/794, RG 85, NARA/D.C.; R. B. Matthews to Commissioner General of Immigration, July 26, 1933, #55771/718D – 55771/794, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

neighboring border points. “This arrangement appears to be taking care of the emergency,” the *New York Times* reported in 1931.¹⁷⁴

It only partly took care of the “emergency,” however, as not all Chinese immigrants fleeing Mexico were in a position to leave just yet, either because they still had unfinished business to conclude in Mexico or simply because they ultimately did not have the funds to pay for such travel themselves. Reminiscent of the refugee crisis that had surfaced during the violent years of the Mexican Revolution, Chinese officials apparently considered asking the United States to extend the protection of “temporary refuge” in the United States to Chinese immigrants in Mexico again, emphasizing that “the situation is critical and . . . the treatment of the Chinese [was] inhumane.”¹⁷⁵ China reportedly authorized Samuel Young, the Chinese Minister to Mexico, to approach the United States Government and make the request as “a precautionary measure to save the Mexican Government embarrassment if it fails to afford protection promised to the Chinese.”¹⁷⁶

The care with which Chinese officials had to delicately navigate China-Mexico-United States relations reveals the extent to which Sonora’s actions and Chinese responses threatened to disturb the entire balance of international relations between Mexico and China and the United States. Chinese officials must have been aware of the implications of turning to the United States in their dealings with Mexico, which still eyed its northern neighbor with caution and unease.¹⁷⁷ Though concern and desperation may have compelled China to consider asking the

¹⁷⁴ “China Seeks Entry Here for Refugees,” *New York Times*, September 2, 1931, 12.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ No doubt aware that nativist anti-Chinese activists would be alarmed at reports of Chinese immigrants in Mexico turning to U.S. officials for assistance, and seeking to avoid further

United States for help in its relations with Mexico on the subject of Chinese immigrants, it also reflected a more subtle power move, using the threat of U.S. interference to leverage control of the situation. Indeed, the idea to bring in the United States as “a third power to bring about an amicable settlement” could have not been more disagreeable to Mexico.¹⁷⁸ Upon hearing of China’s request to the United States to intervene on behalf of the Chinese in Mexico, Mexico’s Foreign Affairs Department declared the action was “unwarranted because of its imprudence” and could not be accepted by the Mexican Government.”¹⁷⁹

Ultimately it does not appear that any further appeals were made by the Chinese government for the United States to negotiate a solution to the Mexican expulsion of Chinese immigrants. In addition, the United States reportedly received no official appeal from the Chinese Government to temporarily admit Chinese immigrants forced out of Mexico. “Should such an appeal be made,” the U.S. State Department reported, “it would have to be denied under the exclusion act.”¹⁸⁰ Whereas previously the border remained flexible enough to accommodate humanitarian demands, immigration officials refused to waive, even temporarily, any part of the Exclusion Act now.

For Chinese immigrants fleeing *antichinismo* persecution, crossing illegally into the United States was thus sometimes the only option. One day before the original September 5th exit deadline that Sonora gave to its Chinese residents, Arizona jails in Nogales, Bisbee,

backlash as anti-Chinese campaigns began to take off in northern Mexico in 1919, “T. K. Fong, the Chinese Chargé, . . . flatly denied dispatches stating the Chinese residents in Northern Mexico have petitioned the American government for protection.” “Stops Chinese Expulsion. Carranza Intervenes in Action Threatened in Sonora,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1919.

¹⁷⁸ “China Will Ask Us to Help in Mexico,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1931, 12.

¹⁷⁹ “Mexico Condemns Chinese Plea to US,” *New York Times*, September 5, 1931, 4.

¹⁸⁰ “China Seeks Entry Here for Refugees,” *New York Times*, September 2, 1931, 12.

Douglas, and Tucson were reportedly “crowded with Chinese unable to give bond, who were arrested by American officials as they crossed the border.”¹⁸¹ Arrested for being illegally in the United States, such Chinese were then processed for deportation to China. In early 1932, the detention center at Angel Island in San Francisco Bay held more than four hundred Chinese refugees from Mexico awaiting their deportation to China.¹⁸² On the walls of the barracks were inscribed:

Detained in this wooden house for several tens of days,
It is all because of the Mexican exclusion laws which implicates me.
It's a pity heroes have no ways of exercising their prowess.
I can only await the word so that I can snap Zu's whip.

From now on, I am departing far from this building.
All of my fellow villagers are rejoicing with me.
Don't say that everything within is Western styled.
Even if it is built with jade, it has turned into a cage.¹⁸³

Whether written by someone detained at Angel Island as a result of Mexico's 1921 exclusion of Chinese laborers, or as a result of the Sonoran expulsions, it no doubt expressed the sorrow, frustration, and pain that all felt at the hands of Mexican *antichinismo*, in all the forms in which it came.

For their part, U.S. immigration officials preemptively sought to avoid the costs of deporting Chinese from Mexico by preventing them from crossing the border in the first place. This strategy proved futile, however, to the great frustration of immigration agents. “We have met with little success in preventing illegal entry,” said W. W. Husband, Assistant Secretary of

¹⁸¹ “Mexico City Halts Chinese Oustings,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1931, 7.

¹⁸² Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 86.

¹⁸³ Him Mark Lai, Genny Lim, and Judy Yung, *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 134-35.

Labor, “[for as] soon as we chase one band back across the border our patrol picks up the same band attempting to cross at another place.”¹⁸⁴

What frustrated U.S. officials more, perhaps, were the range of actors assisting Chinese immigrants in their illegal crossings into the United States. U.S. immigration agents at Nogales suspected that, rather than crossing the border on their own, many Chinese immigrants had been assisted and had been coached to provide answers that obscured the role of their guides.¹⁸⁵

When interviewed upon his arrest for crossing illegally from Mexico, Chow Fu claimed that he had asked a random Mexican passerby, in the little Spanish that he knew, “how can a fellow get to the International Line?” When the examining officer in Chow Fu’s case asked the Spanish and Chinese interpreters in the room to ask Chow Fu to say this again in Spanish, Chow Fu was apparently unable to do so. In response, Chow Fu then backtracked, “I did not speak to the driver, one of my other companions did the talking.”¹⁸⁶

In particular, U.S. immigration agents found Mexican authorities not only uncooperative, but suspected them of flagrantly taking advantage of U.S. immigration laws to deport the Chinese at minimal cost to Mexican states. The U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor reported that “when efforts were made to send the [Chinese] aliens back across the border the Mexican authorities refused to accept them, and accusations have also reached the department that authorities of Mexican States had assisted in transporting the Chinese to the border in trucks.”¹⁸⁷ Chinese immigrants arrested for entering illegally from Mexico reportedly alleged that “Mexican

¹⁸⁴ “To Deport 3,000 Chinese,” *New York Times*, March 18, 1932, 43.

¹⁸⁵ G. C. Wilmoth to Commissioner General of Immigration, May 27, 1932, #55771/718-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ “To Deport 3,000 Chinese,” *New York Times*, March 18, 1932, 43.

policemen and other Mexican officials are deliberately driving the Chinese residents from Mexico” into the United States.¹⁸⁸ Meanwhile, Sonoran governor Elías Calles denied INS allegations that he had ordered his officials to force or help Chinese refugees across the border into the United States, while the federal government publically distanced itself from the expulsions and reassured everyone that it would protect all Chinese residents in Mexico.¹⁸⁹ The expulsion campaigns thereby generated several political tensions at both the domestic level and across international borders, as the Mexican government negotiated the difficult path of maintaining its authority over states, such as Sonora, that risked offending not only China but also the United States through their anti-Chinese campaigns and expulsions. The only persons that the U.S. legal system ultimately tried for breaching U.S. immigration law were low level actors, such as police officers and smugglers.¹⁹⁰

One Chinese Mexican that U.S. immigration agents kept a particularly close eye on was Alejandro Ung Son, who was later tried for aiding Chinese in crossing the border illegally. Working in concert with some police officers as well as the Chinese Consul in Nogales, who immigration agents suspected was “advising, encouraging and assisting Chinese residents of Mexico to enter the United States” by referring them to the man, Ung Son was the primary “smuggler” of the expelled Chinese around Nogales. Although some Chinese apparently viewed Ung Son as a villain who cooperated with Sonoran police to profit from their expulsion, and to

¹⁸⁸ W. W. Husband to Secretary of State, June 6, 1932, #55771/718-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.; Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 89.

¹⁸⁹ Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 95; “Chinese Minister Asks Mexico to Intervene. Hears Sonora Has Ordered All His Co-Nationals to Leave State by Sept. 5,” *New York Times*, August 30, 1931, 14; “Mexico Condemns Chinese Plea to US,” *New York Times*, September 5, 1931, 4; “China’s Envoy Hopeful of Mexican Solution,” *New York Times*, September 6, 1931, 8.

¹⁹⁰ Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 95.

forestall his own expulsion, his motivations and actions appear to have been more complicated.¹⁹¹ U.S. officials culled from interviews with detained Chinese that Ung Son “assist[ed] the Chinese to enter the United States without a charge for his services,” though at times he appears to have been paid between two to five pesos to help some cross the border.¹⁹² In the case of Ng Chok, moreover, immigration officials noted that “after assisting the alien NG CHOK to enter the United States, UNG SON voluntarily gave the alien an American dollar bill – a very strange procedure for a professional smuggler.”¹⁹³ Although normally Ung Son drove his Chinese charges up to the international border, shoved their belongings through a hole in the border fence, then pushed the Chinese through the hole and told them to head away from the border as quickly as possible, Ng Chok was paralyzed from the waist down and unable to meet the physical demands of these steps. Ung Son thus placed himself at risk of being caught by U.S. authorities by crossing the border himself to help Ng Chok. According to Ng Chok:

[Ung Son] drove the car right up to the fence. . . . At this place there is a big hole under the fence where a person can crawl under. Ung Son helped me to get under the fence and, when I was on this side, he came under also. He then helped me to my feet and, carried me about 20 feet on this side of the fence and, told me that after I had rested a little to be sure and try to get as far as I could away from the line. Then he went back through the fence to the Mexican side, and got into his car. Then he came back to me on this side and, asked me if I had any money, I told him no so, he gave me a [sic] American dollar bill. Then he went back again to the Mexican side and drove off.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 95-96.

¹⁹² W. W. Husband to Secretary of State, June 6, 1932, #55771/718-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.; Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 95.

¹⁹³ G. C. Wilmoth to Commissioner-General of Immigration, May 6, 1932, #55771/718-A, Records of the INS, RG 85, NARA/D.C.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

Physically exhausted, Ng Chok waited in place until INS agents spotted and picked him up. But he was out of immediate harm. And in generously assisting Ng Chok onto the U.S. side of the border, physically placing his own security at risk, Ung Son may have been making a humanitarian gesture. Ultimately, his cross-border activities may have forced the United States, however reluctantly, to take up a de facto humanitarian solution to the Sonoran persecution and expulsions of Chinese.

It thus appears that Mexican nativists relied on the cooperation, however reluctant, of the United States to bring its expulsion campaigns to complete fruition. By forcing the Chinese across the border into the United States, these Mexican actors forced *antichinismo* onto the United States, requiring the United States to use its own resources to detain and deport the Chinese to China. In unexpected ways, Mexican nativists strategically took advantage of U.S. immigration and deportation laws to rid their own territories of Chinese immigrants, and forms of humanitarian aid came not from the state but at the instigation of smugglers.

In these ways, the anti-Chinese expulsions of Mexico merged with the anti-Chinese exclusions of the United States, coming together powerfully to expel great numbers of Chinese immigrants from North America. Of course, the effort to stamp out “undesirable” immigrants was never completely attainable. By August 1933, the anti-Chinese campaign had followed the Chinese to Tamaulipas, holding demonstrations to force a boycott in Tampico and using guards “to prevent local residents from entering Chinese commercial establishments.” In addition, Tampico authorities reportedly cut off city water from “houses in which reside Mexican women who married Asiatics.”¹⁹⁵ In other words, *antichinismo* continued in Mexico, but so did the Chinese in Mexico, even if in smaller numbers. Despite the efforts of northern Mexico’s anti-

¹⁹⁵ “Tampico Boycotts All Chinese Stores,” *New York Times*, August 7, 1933, 7.

Chinese activists to expel all Chinese from Mexico, Chinese-Mexican relations continued to persist.

At the same time, racially exclusionary immigration law from both sides of the border had made a lasting imprint on immigrants, as well as both nations. Starting in 1917 and continuing into the 1920s and 1930s, the immigration law systems of the United States and Mexico steadily developed on parallel tracks, both informed by their own racially exclusionary logic. As these two systems converged and diverged, Mexican, Chinese, and African American immigrants on both sides of the border found their migratory plans challenged again and again. As a result, they would continue to redefine their sense of belonging, national identity, and citizenship well into the twentieth century. But the “nation” would be redefined as well. As the history of the multiracial borderlands was erased from the national landscape, a more rigidly stratified and monochromatic narrative of national identity and state formation would come to replace it. In the United States and Mexico, the segregationist premises of Chinese Exclusion, Jim Crow, and *indigenismo* would not only marginalize the presence of racially undesirable immigrants within each nation’s borders, but would also place the realities and experiences of their multiracial lives outside the boundaries of national belonging altogether.

EPILOGUE

For this project, I have had to dig deep into the dusty, sometimes untouched bins of several archives, and even more deeply into the reservoir of patience and determination of not only myself but the staff and researchers at several different archives and libraries around the United States and in Mexico. Unfortunately, the evidentiary traces of multiracial interactions are often buried deep below the documentary surface, more commonly having gone completely unacknowledged and unrecorded in the published sources upon which historians heavily rely to recapture the public and social life of a past community – the daily newspapers, published records of municipal governments, printed city guides, and public commentaries of local leaders and civic organizations. When it comes to researching race relations, archival materials are organized, at best, by particular racial and ethnic groups, limited almost always by a restrictively narrow focus on the internal dynamics of the particular racial group or the group’s relation to the larger white community.

The work of the historian intent on recovering the multiracial past is hampered then by both substance (the lack of documentation in the first place) and method (how the records are organized and rendered meaningful – or conversely, are buried – in archival collections and, by extension, national narratives). The archive, in other words, physically reproduces the ideology of racial differentiation and segregation that this manuscript addresses. In the archive we see the legacy of the “traffic-habits,” as Benedict Anderson might say, that were created by the state to suppress and obscure multiracial identities and relations.¹ The difficulty of researching

¹ Benedict Anderson describes this process as: “Guided by its imagined map [the state] organized the new educational, juridical, public-health, police, and immigration bureaucracies it was building on the principle of ethno-racial hierarchies which were, however, always understood in

multiracial history today in the archives is a direct product of the processes of racial differentiation, segregation, and exclusion that occurred in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands a century ago, and to a significant degree by means of immigration law and practices from both sides of the border.

Deep within the recesses of the archives, however, the multiracial past emerges. The portrait of the borderlands that I have presented in this manuscript resulted, fortunately, from stumbling enough times upon the random legal case, the isolated newspaper passage, or the occasional reference in a turn-of-the-century diary, and by piecing all of these disparate parts together with the scattered data of census records, city directories, maps, and immigration records. We may only be able to recover a glimpse of this dynamic past, but as this dissertation has shown, Mexican, Chinese, and black men and women carved significant new paths in the late-nineteenth century U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Their migrations were shaped by dramatic economic transformations and political developments on both sides of the border, but once in the borderlands they also traversed new racial and social boundaries.

The multiracial world that African Americans, Mexicans, and Chinese forged with others “not of their own race,” however, proved too dangerous a proposition for borderland reformers. By harnessing the power of federal immigration law, El Paso elites rid the city of its multiracial realities and replaced it with ideologies of racial purity and segregation. The process of racial differentiation, moreover, never remained solely a localized one. Rather, by engaging national

terms of parallel series. The flow of subject populations through the mesh of differentiated schools, courts, clinics, police stations and immigration offices created ‘traffic habits’ which in time gave real social life to the state’s earlier fantasies.” Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism, revised ed.* (London: Verso, 2006), 169.

immigration law and policy, elites and the immigrants they sought to regulate brought the power of the U.S. government to the borderlands.

The practices and language of total differentiation and segregation thus developed on a national scale as well, and increasingly on both sides of the border. As the United States and Mexico each developed its own body of immigration law and respective vision of a racially pure national identity, multiracial relations as a social phenomenon was deemed perilous to the nation itself and placed outside the parameters of each nation. From the 1910s to the 1930s, both the United States and Mexico steadily attempted to tighten their control of the border, codifying their respective nationalist projects in immigration law and policy, and resorting to exclusion, expulsion, and deportation practices to minimize the multiracial proportions of the body politic and diminish opportunities for racial mixing. By the 1930s, U.S. and Mexican immigration law and policy converged powerfully at the border, turning Chinese, Mexican, and African American immigrants into emigrants in new form, exiling many as refugees or deportees and banning them altogether from the places that they hoped to call home.

The legacy of these transborder developments in immigration law and the historical suppression of multiracial relations and identities is not limited to the archives today. As I completed the final chapter of this manuscript, everywhere in the background rose the sounds of “the Immigration Spring,” as the *New York Times* called the movement for comprehensive immigration reform in the United States.² Following the re-election of the country’s first multiracial president – secured by the overwhelming support of Latino voters – a bipartisan group of senators, dubbed the Gang of Eight, immediately rolled up their sleeves and got down

² “The Immigration Spring,” *New York Times*, March 31, 2013, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/01/opinion/the-immigration-spring.html?_r=0, last visited May 6, 2013.

to the work of reforming the nation's immigration system. Hoping to find a middle ground between politics and economics, and seeking to attract the electoral loyalty of Latino voters, the Gang of Eight steadily drafted a new immigration law that attempts to exchange stronger border security for an expanded guest worker program and a pathway to citizenship for those undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States. Despite the continuous delay in the passage of a bill, the Senate recently passed the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act, and many remain hopeful that the House will soon act as well. If Congress does, it may well lead to a significant overhaul of the current immigration laws. Reshaping the immigrant face of the nation, and redefining the terms upon which immigrants can join the body politic, comprehensive immigration reform will inevitably produce new economic, political, and social relations.

Despite the significant, life-altering changes that comprehensive immigration reform promises, Asian Americans are slow to engage in the immigration debates.³ Mexican immigrants, instead, are seen as the central subjects of immigration law and policy today. Meanwhile, some vocal African Americans oppose any changes to the immigration system that would place more poorer, working class American citizens in competition with non-citizen workers from Mexico.⁴

³ See Michael Liu, Shauna Lo, and Paul Watanabe, "Interest and Action: Findings from a Boston-Area Survey of Chinese and Vietnamese American Attitudes on Immigrants, Immigration, and Activism," *Asian American Law Journal* 16 (2009), 173; see also Pat K. Chew, "Asian Americans: The 'Reticent' Minority and Their Paradoxes," *William and Mary Law Review* 36:1 (1994), 4 ("Compared to the other major ethnic groups in this country, for instance, Asian Americans are less politically organized and vocal.").

⁴ "Workers Claim Racial Bias in Farms' Hiring of Immigrants," *New York Times*, May 6, 2013, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/07/us/suit-cites-race-bias-in-farms-use-of-immigrants.html?hp&_r=0, last visited May 6, 2013.

These fractured responses to immigration debates are also the legacies of the transborder immigration laws that reshaped race and migration in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands from 1880 to 1936. A disconnect has emerged between the shared histories of immigration-based discrimination that Mexican, Asian, and African American men and women simultaneously combated in the past, and the workings of immigration law in the lives of these diverse groups today. The multiracial movement at the U.S.-Mexico border has been practically concealed from view, leaving these groups with little memory of their intersections and common causes.

Despite the segregationist nationalist projects of the turn-of-the-twentieth century United States and Mexico, multiracial relations and peoples never totally went away. They were merely driven underground, erased from our documents and made invisible in our national narratives. By recovering the lost history of the multiracial borderlands, and by continuing to uncover other moments and forms of multiracial relations and intersections, perhaps we can find more common ground between Asian American, Latino, and African American struggles. In doing so, perhaps we can stretch out the boundaries of racial identity once again. But more than this, perhaps we can better protect some of the most vulnerable individuals in our midst today – those residing physically within the nation’s borders, and yet pushed to the margins and peripheries of the nation by the harsh practices of our immigration laws.

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